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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ELLEN LEVIS: A NOVEL ***

ELLEN LEVIS *A NOVEL*

BY
ELSIE SINGMASTER

Author of "Katy Gaumer," "Basil Everman," etc.



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CONTENTS

I.	A FRIEND IN NEED	3
II.	ELLEN REFUSES TO HEAR A CALL	15
III.	TWO VERSIONS OF THE SAME STORY	22
IV.	A SLUMBERING TERROR	32
V.	LEVIS SPEAKS HIS MIND	39
VI.	STUDYING IN VACATION	48
VII.	AN EVENING PILGRIMAGE	54
VIII.	MATTHEW MAKES HIS CHOICE	61
IX.	A GROWING MIND	73

X.	UNEXPECTED GUESTS	83
XI.	CHANGE	92
XII.	A QUICKENING TERROR	99
XIII.	MATTHEW COMES HOME	102
XIV.	AMOS VENTURES INTO THE WORLD	108
XV.	ELLEN IS OFFERED A WAY OUT	120
XVI.	ELLEN SOLVES HER PROBLEM	126
XVII.	GOLDSTEIN'S JEWELRY STORE	133
XVIII.	A CLOCK RUNS DOWN	141
XIX.	FETZER ENGAGES A NEW MAID	150
XX.	MASTER AND MISTRESS	156
XXI.	A LOST SHEEP	163
XXII.	A CRISIS AT HAND	168
XXIII.	A STRANGE JOURNEY	178
XXIV.	AN UNHAPPY SCHOLAR	184
XXV.	A PROJECTED ATONEMENT	187
XXVI.	A VISIT TO EPHRATA	196
XXVII.	ELLEN'S DREAMS COME TRUE	204
XXVIII.	FETZER'S EYE IS OPENED	214
XXIX.	GRANDFATHER AND AMOS MAKE DISCOVERIES	217
XXX.	FETZER DELIVERS A SERMON	226
XXXI.	ELLEN REMEMBERS BROTHER REITH	233
XXXII.	GRANDFATHER PLANS A CRIME	237
XXXIII.	ELLEN UNDERTAKES TO CONQUER HERSELF	242
XXXIV.	A DARK TOWER	246
XXXV.	AN UNDELIVERED MESSAGE	257
XXXVI.	MATTHEW AND ELLEN	261
XXXVII.	A BITTER WAKENING	272
XXXVIII.	A QUIET HOUR	280
XXXIX.	FETZER CLOSES A DOOR	283

ELLEN LEVIS

CHAPTER I

A FRIEND IN NEED

ON a dismal day in March, four years before Ellen Levis was born or dreamed of, the slight acquaintance of Stephen Lanfair and Edward Levis was quickened by an unpleasant incident into friendship. Both attended the University Medical School in Philadelphia and both were ambitious, but there the resemblance between them ended. Stephen, an underclassman, the only son of a physician, had been started early and well in his career, and was the youngest student; Levis, a Senior, had fended for himself and was almost the oldest. Stephen had an allowance which was not large, but which sufficed for all necessities and some luxuries; Levis had only that which he earned by tutoring, and by acting as substitute instructor, laboratory assistant, and editor of the *Students' Quarterly*. Their acquaintance began when Stephen, wishing to win a place on the editorial board of the *Quarterly*, and conferring with Levis, had been invited by him to become a contributor to the next issue.

On the morning of that dismal March day Stephen sat, far from Philadelphia, in the room which had been his father's office in Chestnut Ridge, a coal-mining town above Wilkes-Barre, waiting until it was time for the train which should take him back to the Medical School which he had left to attend his father in his last illness.

He looked drearily and absent-mindedly out into the thick mist which hid all but the immediate neighborhood, a dirty, unpaved street, a stretch of sidewalk made of powdery black culm, and the front of a large dim building, the "company store." He saw not only what the mist revealed, but what it hid, a continuation of the dreary street, running between a black hill and a blacker culm bank, and terminating in a towering breaker, shapeless and hideous in design. There was no color in the landscape; all was a dense black or a soft, woolly gray. The company store had once been painted red, but the red had long ago been overlaid by black.

With him sat the superintendent of the mine, Harry Kinter, a plump, friendly young man with a pendent under lip and easy manners. He slouched, cigarette in hand, in what had been Dr. Lanfair's office chair, looking with dull, kindly eyes at his companion. He was sorry for the distressed youth and was doing his best to comfort him in a practical way.

"Now I can get the old fellow from Hazelton to come up for a couple of years, Stephen. He'll be good for that long, I'm sure, and perhaps longer. But we must have your word to settle here when you're through school; otherwise we'll try to get a permanent man. The advantage to you would be a salary from the beginning, which is what most young fellows don't get. Wouldn't you like the place for the sake of your father? Perhaps the company would be willing to pay you something to help you along if they could have your promise."

Stephen glanced toward the superintendent and then away, unable to command his voice. He was tall and thin and the looseness of his clothing and the length of his hair which he refused to have trimmed by the Chestnut Ridge barber, as well as his expression of fatigue, made him look forlorn. The offer of a position indicated a willingness of the mining company to take doubtful risks, since other lives could hardly be of much importance to one who valued his own so little.

His pale cheeks and swollen eyelids indicated not only the weariness of nights spent in watching, but a copious shedding of tears and also an acute present anxiety. Alas! it might be that he would have no other place to go, that this dreary settlement would be his sole refuge, a gravelike refuge, but a refuge none the less. If, as he anticipated, disgrace awaited him at the University, he might be only too happy to return to this inaccessible spot whither it was not likely that a rumor of his misdeed would ever penetrate, or where, if it did penetrate, it would be vaguely understood and condoned. Physicians willing to bury themselves in Chestnut Ridge were not so easily found that the mining company could afford to be fastidious.

It was not that Chestnut Ridge offered no opportunities to a physician. One could not look casually out of the window at this hour without seeing opportunities, even on a morning when most of the world was hidden from view. Four out of the ten women who stood gossiping in strange tongues before the company store—Austrian, Hungarian, Bohemian, Lithuanian—would need in a short time the attention of a physician. The children tugging at their skirts were undernourished. It was still too early for the men of the night shift to have had their rest and be on the street, but when they appeared their faces would show the effect of the long hours spent away from the sunlight and of the liquor with which they enlivened their periods of idleness. There was no doubt that Chestnut Ridge needed a physician.

But such work would be done by Stephen only under compulsion. Here his father had wasted his life; he had been at the call of every foreigner, had spent day after day at the squalid bedsides of suffering women, waiting upon uncleanness, and had died at the age of fifty of blood poison, contracted in an emergency operation performed hastily and without gloves, to save two lives far less valuable than his own. He had apparently not regretted his course; he had accepted his fate quietly and without complaint and had been anxious only that Stephen should understand exactly about his small inheritance. Afterwards he lay low in his bed, his hands clasped across his breast, repeating the poetry he loved, a little, lean, bearded man, with eager eyes and a heartening smile, wholly unconscious of the loftiness of his own soul.

Presently he became confused and tried to remember a formula which he frequently recited at the bedsides of dying patients, sometimes in English for Protestants, but more often in Latin for Catholics who could not be reached in time by the busy head of a wide parish. It was a formula which for him explained the world, made sacrifice easy, and a solution of all life's difficulties

certain.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," he said faintly and could go no further.

He had looked at his son earnestly and Stephen had prompted him, not without embarrassment. Stephen had been trained in the principles of the Christian faith and he had believed them, but they were now with him wholly a matter of rote; religion was not, he believed, a necessity of his life.

Stephen meant to be not a general practitioner like his father, but a specialist in the diseases of the eye like Professor Mayne of the Medical School, and his ambition aimed not only at such skill as Professor Mayne possessed and such fame as he had won, but also at a similar accumulation of wealth. He did not expect to attain his end without hard labor. He was a diligent student, and he was willing to devote himself night and day to his task.

His hopes of success were not unfounded, and his unusual ability was appreciated not only by himself, but by his teachers. He had won the First Year prize, and Professor Mayne had intimated to him that of all the candidates for the position of interne at the Ophthalmic Hospital he was most likely to be appointed. Such a position as that at Chestnut Ridge should be given to a man like his acquaintance, Levis, who had worked his way through school and who had endured so much hardship that a regular salary would be desirable, even with all the accompanying disadvantages. He might even describe the place to Levis and suggest that he apply for it, or he might mention his name to the superintendent as a possible employee. He pitied men like Levis with all his heart.

But he might need the Chestnut Ridge practice for himself—let him not forget that! He rose and walked up and down the room, still without answering Kinter, who seemed half asleep.

If only he had not imperiled his future by a piece of madness! Having signified his willingness to contribute to the *Quarterly*, and being immensely pleased and flattered by this opportunity to shine, he was visited by the sterility of mind common to youth which has a creative task set for it. When he was summoned to his father's bedside, his article was not yet begun; indeed, he had not yet selected a subject—and he had expected to make with this contribution an impression upon the whole of the Medical School and the Faculty as well!

During an unoccupied hour when the fatal termination of his father's illness was still in doubt, he had found in an old yellowed medical journal in the drawer of the office desk, an article proposing an ingenious and at the same time unfounded and actually ludicrous theory of the origin of cancer. The magazine was published in England—he did not know how it had come into his father's possession.

The theory seemed to him novel and ingenious, though possibly mistaken; he did not realize that it was ludicrous. In one of those moments of madness which are part of youth, he condensed the article, copied it, and sent it to Levis. The act was like the occasional thefts of children who take pennies in order to buy candy and who repent bitterly and are forever after honest. He was ambitious as children are hungry; the desire for fame was his strongest impulse and he could not let pass even so small an opportunity to shine.

As he sat by his father's bedside, where stupor had at last succeeded paroxysm and the end had become the matter of a day, he realized suddenly what he had done. It may have been that the principles in which he had been trained reasserted their power over him; it may have been that his father's face, which looked in its sunken condition like the face of a tortured saint, recalled him to himself; at any rate, he saw as by a lightning flash the foolishness of his act.

Having realized his mistake, he tried to remedy it. Calling from his window to a passing miner, he sent a telegram to Levis, "Do not publish my article." In a few hours he received word that the magazine had gone to press. Levis had added a sentence at which he groaned aloud, "Article all right."

If the college officials detected his plagiarism, it would mean the end of all his hopes. Professor Mayne would no longer distinguish him by his commendation and friendly attentions; he would have no chance of becoming an interne at the Ophthalmic Hospital and thus of pursuing immediately his longed-for work; he would have to accept the position at Chestnut Ridge and bid good-bye to his proud hopes.

It might be that he would have to suffer actual punishment. The prize, which was to add a hundred dollars to his income, might be taken from him and public mention might be made of his disgrace. It would not be greatly to be wondered at if the Faculty chose to assume that all his carefully wrought papers, all his well-prepared examinations, were accompanied by a similar dishonesty.

In the midst of his distress, he realized that the superintendent had waited a long time for an answer.

"I'll have to think it over, Harry. It's time for me to start now."

Kinter rose lazily and lifted Stephen's satchel.

"You let me hear from you in the course of the next few weeks; and in the meantime we'll engage the old man for a year at least. You won't find it so dreadfully dull here, believe me. It's possible to get down to Wilkes-Barre on the evening train and back in the caboose of the freight; gives you a nice long evening. I know some girls and I'll introduce you to them. They have dances once in a while. You'll get accustomed to it. I have. I guess diseases are pretty much the same as mines,

alike everywhere."

In the train Stephen sat close to the window, a forbidding shoulder turned toward a possibly loquacious seat-mate. His very heart was sick, but he fancied that it was his body, made so by the motion of the car. Usually he enjoyed the ride, first through the region of breakers and culm banks which took on a weird picturesqueness on a bright day, then along the upper reaches of the Susquehanna and the narrow defile through which the Lehigh passes at Mauch Chunk, and into the farm lands farther down. He liked also to note the changing speech, the foreign tongues in his own neighborhood, the broad Pennsylvania German at Allentown, the less accented speech near Philadelphia. But to-day nothing engaged his attention but his own misery.

On the news-stand in the station in Philadelphia he saw the *Students' Quarterly*. He was tempted at first to pass quickly by and thus put off for a while the final realization of his shame, but he bought a copy and walked through the station to a bench so placed that he could turn his back to all the world. When he sat down he found that he was holding his breath, though suspense was not exactly his condition of mind, since suspense implied some hope, and he believed that there was none for Stephen Lanfair.

Then his lips parted and his eyes dilated and a deadly paleness spread over a countenance already white. The day of miracles was not past; God did not mean him to be destroyed.

He found the article, "A New Theory," and his name "Stephen Lanfair." He found under his name a note: "This article is not original, but is an abstract of a mistaken and amusing but ingenious treatise by John Dalling, a famous London physician. It was first published in England in 1837." The note, a reader would have said, was placed there by the contributor himself.

Saint Elizabeth, finding in the fifteenth century the loaves in her apron turned to roses in answer to her prayer, may have been surprised. Stephen Lanfair, finding a similar benison in the nineteenth, was stupefied.

When the machinery of his brain began to operate, he tried to fathom the mystery. He had not written the note himself, that was certain—some good angel in the guise of a critic had saved him, and the only person through whose hands the manuscript had passed was Edward Levis.

Having crossed the city he knew not how, he found Levis in his poor room. He was as thin as Lanfair and looked, with his black beard, twenty years older. He took off a pair of large spectacles and bade his guest sit down. Stephen remembered having heard that he had been a foundling, brought up at Girard College.

He did not answer Levis's greeting, he simply held out the magazine.

"Did you put that note in, Levis?"

Levis flushed. His nature was one of intense reserve and he anticipated and deplored the unpleasantness of a confession. He believed that he understood the boyish rashness which was to blame for Lanfair's mistake, and he had added the note for his sake as well as for the sake of the magazine.

"I saw you had forgotten it," said he lightly.

"Did you know the real author?"

"Yes. I saw this article alluded to humorously long ago in Thurber's textbook and I looked it up. The old magazine is on file here."

"It is commonly known, then?"

"Yes, I should say so, as a sort of absurdity. You see, of course, that it is an absurdity."

To this Stephen made no answer. He would have proved himself a fool, then, as well as a knave!

"Do you think many persons beside yourself would have recognized it?"

"I think it likely, and of course one would have been enough. It was all right for you to send it in, though; it has roused a great deal of interest; it shows we have a sense of humor. I was very sorry to hear that you lost your father, Lanfair."

Stephen would have liked to lay his head on Levis's shoulder; instead he laid it on Levis's desk.

"I didn't mean to add a note," said he in a thick voice. "I meant to pass it off as my own. I have been a dishonest fool."

Levis stirred uneasily.

"We all have to learn lessons."

Stephen was crying like a child.

"Don't, my dear fellow," said Levis.

Stephen lifted his head.

"I promise you that never in my life will I do anything of this kind again. It's nearly killed me. If my father had known—I don't know what he would have felt or done or said. He would have been heart-broken. When I'm tempted to do anything wrong, anything of any kind, I'll think of you. I promise you faithfully!"

Levis smiled.

"Promise yourself, Lanfair!"

Stephen remembered at the end of the week to write his decision to Kinter. He would not need, thank God, to go to Chestnut Ridge and fix his eyes for the rest of his life upon the dirty street and the dismal breaker and the ignorant, unclean women who were so often and so direly in need of waiting upon! He thought of his father with an almost intolerable tenderness of heart. His father had suffered everything, cold and weariness and loneliness and hunger of mind, separation from all that was interesting and profitable, and finally martyrdom itself in a ghastly form. His father was a saint; he would always remember him and love him, but he would not need to follow exactly in his footsteps. He would have a career of which his father would have been unspeakably proud; he would establish principles by which the whole race of eye specialists would be governed; he would have an immensely wide influence, and it would all be his father's doing.

He told Levis about the position, feeling a little ashamed, and was relieved when Levis explained that he had agreed to take a country practice in Lancaster County.

He was given the next day new reason to expect success. Professor Mayne summoned him to his desk at the end of his last class and congratulated him upon his answers in a recent examination. Mayne was as large in body as he was in estate and his manner expressed his opulence. He had a full round voice, he used long words deliberately and with perfect correctness, and spoke with an old-fashioned rhythm, which accented now important, now unimportant words, as though he obeyed some queer quantitative law. He seemed to be health of body and mind incarnate, but an inherited susceptibility to mental disorder had forbidden his continuing his race. Life, he believed, was on the whole hideous if one stopped to consider it; but clever men did not contemplate it, they simply secured for themselves all the pleasures of the eye and the mind and the body that it was possible to get without transgressing the laws of health and common sense.

Sitting at his desk, dressed in broadcloth, he looked pleasantly at his pupil. Stephen's appearance had improved; his hair had been trimmed after a homely bang-like fashion then prevailing, sleep had refreshed him, and only the black band on his sleeve distinguished him as one afflicted. His eyelids were no longer swollen and his eyes had resumed a natural brilliancy which drew attention away from his somewhat attenuated features.

"I was interested in your contribution to the *Quarterly*, Lanfair. Where did you discover that antediluvian absurdity?"

"In an old magazine of my father's." Stephen could not suppress the tears which burned his eyes. His relief from anxiety softened his heart and the least expression of sympathy made him almost hysterical. "He had evidently kept it because it was a curiosity. He was a great reader. I didn't know that attention had been called to it in Thurber's textbook until Levis told me."

"We cannot be reminded of a good joke too often. I had forgotten it entirely. Continue your general reading; it will eventually prove profitable to you, no matter what department of medicine you select."

Then, remembering that Lanfair's father had just died, Professor Mayne invited him to dinner. His niece was to go with him to the theater and they would dine at six o'clock at the New Windham Hotel. His carriage was outside the building. Lanfair might just as well accompany him now. Stephen followed down the hall, his heart thumping.

His heart beat still more rapidly when he was seated opposite to Mayne and next to his niece in the hotel dining-room. The girl, Hilda Fell, was a little creature in exquisite clothes who looked up from under a pair of brows which almost met and which gave to her face a willful and imperious expression. She was very young and light as thistledown and was already spoiled by wealth and idleness. The men whom she had known hitherto were familiar with her type, but Stephen was not; he thought of her as a charming princess, and when her bright eyes met his, he looked back into them smiling, and not recognizing the intense and somewhat unwholesome curiosity about life which animated them. He had frequently heard of her as an orphan with a large estate of which a great stone house on the river front in Harrisburg near the governor's mansion was only a small part. She was an object of interest to the students who knew her by sight and who discussed endlessly her wealth and her fashionable clothes and admired her free manners. There was a current rumor that she smoked cigarettes, a habit then almost unknown among women.

Professor Mayne teased her and she answered saucily. He deplored his own ill fortune, and still more that of this little creature in whom the taint of insanity was darker than in himself. He believed that his sister, Hilda's mother, would have developed, if she had lived, a serious melancholia ending possibly in suicide for which the family history furnished abundant precedent. He was convinced of the present soundness of Hilda's mind, but with him and Hilda the family must end.

He looked at her and young Lanfair earnestly. Lanfair was ambitious; he would improve and develop, and to him certain matters could be explained. Before they parted he had invited Stephen to his house.

Stephen went from the hotel table to Levis's room. He asked merely to sit there with his book before the fire, which was the only means of heating here where living was cheap. He was like a child who finds assuagement for hurt in the silent company of an older person.

Levis smiled and went on with his work. It was not often that students sought him out merely for the pleasure of his company and he was touched by this youthful devotion.

Nor was it often, at least during his occupancy, that a girl's figure and a pair of dark eyes were visualized against the background of the old mantelpiece. Levis himself did not give one hour's

thought in a year to women; he believed that he was growing too old for love-making and that hardship had made him immune to love. Certainly there was no profit in thinking of a state of matrimony into which one was too poor to enter!

Stephen contrasted his fearful anticipations with what had actually occurred. He had expected to be by this time disgraced and despairing. Instead he was at peace. He had been more honored than he had dreamed of being, and now a new and wilder possibility dazzled him.

His thoughts recurred to his father, and he dwelt with gratitude upon the self-sacrificing care which had always been his. If his father had been willing to provide less generously for his education, to stint his pocket-money, or to leave a smaller inheritance, he might have had a larger library with which to make Chestnut Ridge tolerable and an occasional journey for diversion or improvement. He might even—Stephen flushed a little as this notion came into his mind—he might even have contracted a second marriage, his first having ended tragically with Stephen's birth.

Stephen avoided thinking of the piety which was after all his father's distinguishing characteristic, even though he was aware that his father would rather have bequeathed to him faith than money, and that his effort to recite the Creed was not a last reassurance to himself as it had seemed, but a final reminder of the faith without which he believed his son would perish. Stephen saw him clearly as he lay in his bed and heard his voice reciting the treasured verses which he had memorized in dreary journeys over the bleak hills. The lines which he repeated most often acknowledged with what was to his son a ghastly frankness his dire plight:

"In the hour of death, after this life's whim,
When the heart beats low, and the eyes grow dim,
And pain has exhausted every limb—
The lover of the Lord shall trust in Him."

He resisted not only this memory, but others, a tiny, dismal schoolhouse, half filled by a little flock of mourning women and children bereft of husbands and fathers by a cruel death; he saw weeping eyes and sad faces in which apathy had followed tears. He hated all sorrow and trouble and he connected religion with them. Religion was for the old, the dying, the afflicted, the needy, and he was none of these.

He looked from time to time gratefully at Levis bending over his books. Whatever good fortune should be his, Levis should share. Levis had saved his honor, had saved him from pitfalls for the rest of his life. He would never, never forget him.

For the most part, however, he thought of himself, of his excellent marks, of his grasp of the subjects which he studied, of admirable Professor Mayne, and especially of Professor Mayne's niece. He had, he was sure, the ordering of his life in his hands; he could make it what he chose.

CHAPTER II

ELLEN REFUSES TO HEAR A CALL

OUTSIDE the Saal or meeting-room of the old Kloster all was hot and bright in the sunshine. The thick grass in the enclosure which surrounded the group of strangely fashioned buildings was ready for cutting, the foliage was at its greenest. Ellen Levis could see between the two wings of a bowed shutter the sloping plot and half of a willow tree whose plummy branches hung motionless in the still air. She could see also sheep feeding in the fields across Cocalico Creek and in imagination she played with them and with herself a childish game, making a silly wager that a certain black lamb would come again into sight before Grandfather Milhausen had finished his lengthy exposition of trine immersion. It was Saturday morning when most children were, like the lambs, at play, all but the children of the Seventh-Day Baptists.

Presently, when her eyes grew tired of the glare of sunshine, she turned them upon the scene nearer at hand.

In the meeting-house all was cool and dim. A soft golden light fell upon the worn benches, the long tables running the length of the room, the pulpit covered with a white homespun cloth, the ancient stove. All was old and strange and brown with the stain of time. Hung upon the wall, close to the heavy beams of the ceiling, were crumbling paper charts with intricate and graceful lettering which had been made in 1740—it was natural that now, after almost two centuries, the inscriptions should be faded and dull.

The congregation sitting motionless in the shadowy place had an unearthly aspect. There were three young mothers, with heads bent in somnolent maternity above the infants in their arms; there were a few older women whose heads were likewise bent; there were half a dozen men; and last of all, a few children, dressed like their fathers and mothers in clothes which betokened indifference to changing styles.

Only Ellen Levis and her brother were clad in any modern fashion. Their mother, long dead, had been a Seventh-Day Baptist and their father, who was not a church member, not even a worldly Lutheran, sent them to the meeting at the Kloster because of a promise made to her.

The two children, Matthew, a sturdy, blond boy of sixteen, and Ellen, who was almost two years younger, sat a little apart from the others, Matthew with his arms folded like the brethren, and Ellen close beside him. Sometimes she laid her head for a moment on his shoulder. She was a child of intense affections to whom the sight and touch of the beloved object gave unspeakable satisfaction. Matthew was to go to school in the fall to study medicine and at the thought of separation from him tears came into her brown eyes.

The meeting seemed interminable. It was not always possible for the little flock to gather together on the Seventh Day, and once assembled they communed long together. This evening after the solemn ceremony of Foot-washing, the Lord's Supper would be celebrated, as was proper, as an evening feast.

The attendance was comparatively large, all that remained of the Ephrata flock having gathered, as well as a few members from Franklin and Bedford Counties; and Grandfather Milhausen, feeling the occasion to be important, was delivering himself of the fruits of a lifetime of meditation. He proved the necessity of baptism; he proved that baptism by sprinkling had no warrant in Scripture; he dwelt in conclusion with passionate outpouring of words upon the efficacy and comfort of trine immersion.

His voice, now loud, now soft, kept throughout a monotone. His hearers grew drowsy, slept, woke again, changed their positions, and slept once more. The little black lamb came again and again into the field of Ellen's vision, fifty accurately counted automobile horns sounded from a curve near by, and each member of the congregation was in turn gazed at and meditated upon.

"I like Sister König because she is so very fat and when she is not in meeting she smiles pleasantly.... I pity Brother Reith because they had to take his wife to the asylum, but I do not like him.... I pity Sister Herman because she had to be baptized in the cold creek last winter. I should choose the summer. I should"—there was a slight admonitory motion of the shoulder against which she leaned. But she was disturbed only for a second; then she settled her plump body still more closely against her brother's arm. He was tired, she was sure, and she was very, very tired. Grandfather's eyes, lifted a moment ago toward the ceiling, were bent now upon his congregation. He must see that they were tired, that they longed to go, but he took no heed of their misery.

Once more Ellen returned to her musing. She journeyed through the strange old building, passing from the meeting-room into a kitchen where, long ago, meals were prepared for visiting brethren, and climbing up into large empty lofts which had been their dormitories.

Then she sped in imagination out the door of the meeting-room and across the angle between the Saal and Saron. In Saron had lived a conventual sisterhood, young women who had left their fathers' houses, and older women who had left their own homes and their husbands and children, to pray, to spin and weave, to letter the old charts, and to sing morning, noon and midnight, strange, attenuated music from a latticed gallery.

The old building was an enchanting place—if only one were sometimes allowed there alone, so that one might dream without the guiding admonitions of Grandfather, to whom these women were all saints. Here were old spinning-wheels and a curious tower clock which struck the hours,

and pieces of pottery and old books and still other elaborate charts. Climbing a narrow, winding stairway, one came to tiny cells where the sisters had slept on narrow benches fastened to the wall, with blocks of wood for pillows. Ellen pictured them lying stiffly; sometimes she imagined them falling with a crash from their narrow couches; sometimes she fancied herself pursued by them, and taking refuge with Matthew or her father. They wore, she seemed to remember, thick white dresses, tied about with ropes. The poor things lay now, dead and done for, in the little cemetery between the meeting-house and the road.

After a long time she resumed her meditations upon the subject of immersion.

"I would not like to be baptized when the water was high, either. I would do like Millie König"—her eyes turned toward one of the youngest of the sisters, a girl about Matthew's age, with a meaningless, saintlike beauty. "I would take a nice day like Millie." She looked again at the downcast eyes and the crossed hands. "I hate Millie," said she calmly. Then her weariness became acute. It was dreadful to have to sit here while the world went on, dreadful, dreadful. She began to pity herself and saw her whole life wasted.

Suddenly she was acutely disturbed. It was not alone the admonitory motion of Matthew's shoulder; it was the preacher's eyes, bent directly upon Matthew and upon her. She sat upright. Something was going to happen after all—she anticipated that it was something more trying than the monotony.

"There are those in our midst who should be of us," said Grandfather, with jealous passion. "The children of a good mother who was a Seventh-Day Baptist should follow in her footsteps, should go down into the cleansing flood and there wash themselves clean of sin, should make a fresh start in the world, should put upon themselves the badge of separation. They have heard the call many times; they must be no longer disobedient to the heavenly vision. Brother Matthew, Sister Ellen, is it well that you should postpone what is right for you to do, that you should longer reject the peace of God?"

Ellen's head turned sharply, her eyes seeking her brother's. A shaft of sunshine fell upon his thick, light hair and across his smooth cheek. For a long time he did not answer and an awful fear began to take shape in her heart. Was he not going to answer, to get somehow between her and the dreadful eyes, the deathlike beard of Grandfather? Still he sat motionless.

Grandfather lifted his arms in supplication.

"Father in Heaven, Thou that takest care of the least of Thy children, Thou who rejoicest over each lamb brought into the fold, help us in this hour!"

Ellen leaned forward and grasped the edge of the seat with both hands. Was not Matthew angry, would he not be angry, would he not take her and himself away from this glittering, searching eye? She thought with sick longing of her father, so comfortable at home, or riding to see a patient. No one would dare, she was certain, to talk to him about his soul, or to suggest that he should take off his clothes and put on a long black robe and kneel in Cocalico Creek and let Grandfather dip him back and forth! Neither would Matthew submit to such indignity. Outraged and insulted, she tried to find his hand to assure him of her sympathy.

But her hand was not taken. Matthew sat motionless staring at the floor. Her eyes sought the watching faces. Mothers had lifted their heads, the few fathers in Israel bent forward. Sister Herman was crying. Sister Millie's eyes were different from the rest; their expression was sharper and more eager; they were hungry eyes, bent upon Matthew's thick, light curls. Without understanding, Ellen hated her even more vehemently. Her hand, creeping into Matthew's, would not be withstood.

"Oh, Matthew, let us go home!"

Holding her hand, Matthew rose. It seemed that only the blood of his mother filled his veins. The love of the soil was in him and of the heavy, unthinking, comfortable life which his mother's people had lived for generation upon generation, life founded upon a conviction that in the next world all would be well. He could not remember his mother, but he had thought much about her.

He took now the most important step of his life. Inclination, inherited tendencies, and a piety, deep and authentic, though narrow, indicated his path.

"I have thought about these matters for a long time," he said slowly. "I believe that we should be baptized by trine immersion, that there is no salvation outside it. I believe that we should observe the ordinance of Foot-washing because our Lord commanded it. I believe in the holy kiss and in the communion. I believe we should be a separated people and that we should keep the peace, not going to law, and not making or engaging in war, and observing temperance and charity. I am ready to be immersed when it seems best. I am—"

But he could say no more. Even so well thought out a declaration proved difficult to deliver. Sister Herman began to sing, a high, shrill song, not the strange part singing of a century and a half ago, which had become merely a tradition, but a modern revival hymn,

"The Lord's my strength,
In Him I'll trust,
A Shelter in the time of storm."

Sister König joined and the tenor of Brother Amos fell in. Brother Amos, a nephew of Grandfather Milhausen, was only twenty-one, but he was a school-teacher and had already been appointed a preacher.

The music caught Ellen by the throat; it seemed to drown her in thick, overpowering emotion. An

inner voice admonished her to yield; that it was easier to yield, better to yield, to give up one's own desires, one's own will, to walk in an appointed path. Matthew grasped her hand closely and then laid his other hand upon it. He was undemonstrative and his unwonted gesture softened her heart still more. For him she had fetched and carried all their short lives; he believed that she would obey now as she had always obeyed, and he would bring her into the kingdom.

Grandfather had not finished his appeal. He looked down at Ellen and it seemed that his bright eyes burned her through. She thought of a dreadful picture of God and the judgment, she thought of every wrong she had done; of disobedience, of impertinence to the housekeeper, of excursions into forbidden books, of wandering thoughts in meeting. She heard him plead, she felt Matthew's hand clasp hers still more closely. Like Matthew she was compelled suddenly to decide, but unlike Matthew she had not thought on these things, and except in amused speculation the possibility of being immersed or of baring her feet before the women had not occurred to her.

Then Ellen made the choice by which she was to abide. The blood which flowed in her veins was different from that in her brother's; the paternal inheritance was paramount, the choice was, after all, made for her. Though Matthew's caress thrilled her with delight, she rose unsteadily. She saw in all eyes a pleased conviction that she was about to imitate him; she noticed for the first time that Amos's eyes could gleam like her grandfather's, and she trembled. Standing for a moment she was a pleasant picture, a round and still childish figure whose future appearance was not to be certainly prophesied, but possessing two features whose beauty would be for years to come certain, thick, curly, brown hair, now braided primly, and dark eyes shaded by lashes so black that they seemed immeasurably deep and tender.

Suddenly she felt wings given her. Out of the brown shadows, across the shaft of light which illuminated the bent, blond head of her brother with a symbolism marked by the congregation, she fled. The sunlight, the green grass, the trees, now waving in a gentle breeze, and most wonderful of all, the unlimited blue sky, seemed to hold out welcoming arms. She began to cry and to run as she cried. She feared that she might be pursued. Though she was not afraid to drive Matthew's young horse, she did not think of taking him, but sped on foot up Mount Zion toward the bounds of the enclosure, across the site of a more ancient church to the hill-top. There she usually looked down through a thick bit of virgin woods toward the smoothly flowing Cocalico, and beyond to pleasant Ephrata. But now she opened the rude fastening of an old gate, and ran across a field past a tall monument, toward a pair of arms of whose welcome she was certain. There was peace, and not in the dim cavern from which she fled!

CHAPTER III

TWO VERSIONS OF THE SAME STORY

AFTER Ellen had beaten her way with gasps for breath up the slope beyond the meeting-house, she slackened her pace. She began to doubt pursuit, and besides she could now trust to her power of swift locomotion. For a while she kept inside the fences on the grass borders from which a dash into the wheat would have been easy, but after she had gone half a mile she wormed her plump body between two spreading rails and took to the road.

The sense of escape from prison was not new; many times when church was over she had looked up and round at the arching sky and the waving trees and had danced her way out to Matthew's buggy, and sometimes, from behind the safe shelter of its curtain, she had made atrocious faces at the back of Millie König's sleek head.

Presently, her joy at having escaped was tempered. She did not like to have the brethren consider her wicked. But penitence weakened and finally faded entirely away, its departure hastened by reflections of a nature common to mankind. Millie had copied her sentences in school—it did not make much difference what Millie thought of her. Brother Herman was notorious for his keenness in trade and he had cheated her father when he sold him a horse. As for Grandfather—she was sorry to hurt his feelings, but Grandfather was old. It is very easy to be good, Ellen believed, when you are old.

Suddenly the full import of the morning's events was clear to her. She was free, but Matthew was in prison! As she walked on she began to cry again. Perhaps he would let his beard grow until he looked like Grandfather and Amos and like the pictures of Father Friedsam and Brother Jabez and all the worthies of the past. He would not belong to her; he would belong to all those grim and pious people. Most dreadful of all, he would belong to Millie. At this, she stopped short in the road, remembering Millie's possessing eyes.

Again she began to run, dashing through the little hollow made by the creek, where the odors of fresh earth and the intense sweetness of elder blossoms would at any other moment have made her loiter. The creek bounded her father's farm and, taking a short cut, she left the road and crossed a meadow and then ran along the edge of a field of corn until she came to a gate which let her into the yard.

The Levis house was one of the large, many-windowed brick houses common to the neighborhood. It was built solidly and its correctness of proportion gave it a comfortable beauty. The porch was not a part of the original structure, but had been added, as running water and other conveniences had been added within. Behind the house stood a large barn. The place had not the trim look of adjacent farms; there was a good deal of brush along the fences, the fences themselves needed rebuilding and the woodwork of the house needed paint. After looking carefully at the premises an observant person would have made up his mind that the owner was neither by taste nor by inclination a farmer.

The property had one glorious beauty, the thick and lofty grove of oak trees which stood behind and above the house and barn. They were a landmark for miles. In them hundreds of birds nested and squirrels played and scores of little creatures had their homes. In spring anemones and hepaticas were to be found beneath them and nowhere else in the immediate neighborhood; in summer they spread a thick canopy of shade, and in autumn they burned with a glowing red. In them in all seasons the wind spoke continuously, now in a whisper, now in thunderous diapason.

Dr. Levis sat on the porch of his house, his pipe in his hand, his tall, thin figure comfortably disposed in an old rocking-chair. He had long since got rid of his black beard, and he looked, if not younger in body, at least younger in spirit, than in the days of his friendship with Stephen Lanfair. This morning he had seen a few office patients and had paid the two visits which were all that were needed by his healthy clientèle, and he was now waiting comfortably until the rural mail carrier should leave his newspaper.

He received little mail besides his papers and magazines and an occasional printed notice from the University. A connection with one's Alma Mater soon lapses when one has formed no close friendships, and he had formed but one. He looked very sober when he thought of Stephen, not chiefly because Stephen had forgotten him—he was a boy with a boy's short-lived enthusiasms—but because Stephen had succeeded so well and he had succeeded so little. The possession of a fair practice, a productive farm and two fine children might be thought to represent a sufficient attainment, but there was in his heart a bitter sense of dissatisfaction and disappointment. He had been tricked, bewitched; forgetting his superiority and immunity to love he had married soon after leaving the University, and had thus fettered himself for life.

He heard the first thump of Ellen's small but heavy shoes on the porch steps and moving with the physician's swift response to sounds heard during sleep, he sat upright, his pipe slipping from his hand. Then, seeing that it was only Ellen come from church, he sank back and closed his eyes.

"Are you back? Come pick up Father's pipe and tell him about the sermon."

Rendered speechless by the consciousness of her misery and of her tear-streaked face, Ellen moved no farther, and hearing no advancing step and feeling no warm creature against his knee, Levis opened his eyes.

"Why, Ellen, dear, what's the matter? Why are you home so early? Where's Matthew? Come here quickly!"

Blinded afresh by tears, Ellen started toward her accustomed sanctuary.

"What a heavy Ellen it is! Is there anything the matter with Matthew?"

Ellen shook her head. There was nothing the matter with Matthew in the sense in which her father spoke, yet there was everything the matter with him.

Suddenly tears seemed an inadequate expression of her trouble. Her father's face, seen above hers, was pitying, yet a little amused. The woes of childhood were so small—he wondered whether it was a sick kitten or a lame horse that had stirred Ellen's tender heart.

"Now, Ellen, tell me what is the matter."

Ellen sat up and dried her eyes on her father's large, smooth handkerchief. She remembered—oh, blessed relief!—that of course her father could stop Matthew. Matthew was to go away to learn to be a physician; he could not be a Seventh-Day Baptist!

"I ran away from meeting," she confessed, feeling the first doubt of her course.

Levis's face was grave, but his eyes twinkled.

"Why?"

"It was so long and I got so tired looking at half a tree and a little grass, and at the brothers and sisters and Grandfather's white beard."

"Why, Ellen!" Levis frowned, not in anger, but so that he might concentrate both physical and mental vision upon his daughter.

Now Ellen revealed the heart of the trouble.

"Grandfather preached at Matthew and me!"

"Oh, he did!"

"Yes, and Matthew made a speech about believing in everything. He's going to be immersed, Father, and he will be at the Foot-washing. They wanted me to, but I ran away. I couldn't stand it."

"Why couldn't you stand it?"

Ellen laid her hands across her plump body.

"It makes me feel all tight here. And I couldn't bear to take off my shoes and stockings."

"No," answered Levis. "I should think you couldn't! Can you remember just what was said to you and Matthew?"

"Grandfather said we ought to come to the meeting and get into the cleansing flood. It was very dark and uncomfortable."

"And what did Matthew say?"

"He said he'd been thinking about these things for a long, long time and he thought it was all right. Then they sang about a shelter and they prayed over us. Grandfather said we were the children of a good sister."

Levis put Ellen off his knee and began to walk up and down the porch. He knew his own origin as little as he knew the origin of his unusual name, which the neighborhood turned into Lewis, but he believed himself to be entirely Anglo-Saxon and he hoped that his children were Anglo-Saxon rather than Teutonic. Left alone, Ellen ran after him and took his hand and walked with him, a quaint imitator of his step and carriage.

"Can't you stop him, Father?"

"We shall see."

"If you told me to stop it—that is, if I were doing it—you know I'd stop, don't you?"

"Yes, Ellen."

Ellen tightened her hand on the three fingers which it held.

"I'll never do what you don't want me to do."

Levis made no answer, but exchanged the three fingers for a whole hand. After a while he stopped walking long enough to light his pipe. At that moment a buggy turned into the lane, not the well-painted, swiftly moving rig of Matthew, but an older vehicle in which the housekeeper had driven to town to do her Saturday shopping. Levis provided ample transportation for all his family.

"She's coming, Father," said Ellen in a whisper.

Levis stepped off the porch, calling, "Home so soon, Manda?" and received a solemn nod from a large, white, and somewhat reproachful face. He went round the house and down to the spring house and up a slope into the woodland which was his pride. There he sat down on a fallen tree and bade Ellen sit on a stump opposite him. She smiled and blinked her reddened eyes. It was her favorite spot and she liked to have her father here with her.

Suddenly Levis leaned forward. Ellen's news shocked him into the recollection of important plans, sometimes dreamed of and smoked over, sometimes forgotten for long periods, sometimes recalled with a pang of self-reproach, and again forgotten. It was his fault that Matthew had impulsively committed himself to this foolishness—the separation from Grandfather Milhausen,

which would be complete in the fall when Matthew went to school, should have been brought about long ago. Ellen showed more common sense, but he had neglected her also, and for all her protests she might hold some of these foolish ideas. He had meant long since to take her education in hand. Amos Milhausen's instruction was good as far as it went, but it was now inadequate. He began to her astonishment to ask queer questions.

"How many bones are there in the human body?"

"I don't know. I think Matthew knows."

"What is the shape of the earth?"

"Round like a ball and flattened at the poles."

"What are the poles?"

"I don't know."

"Why are the days shorter in winter?"

"I don't know. Matthew knows."

"Are you going to let Matthew do all your knowing?"

Tears came again into Ellen's eyes. Matthew had abandoned her.

"I'm at the head of my class," she boasted in feeble self-defense. "I can write good compositions and do any kind of examples and I'm excellent in geography."

"I should think it would be a very simple matter to stand at the head of your class!"

"It is," confessed Ellen. "I don't work hard at all."

But now Ellen worked very hard. In the next half-hour her father drew from her small head all the knowledge which it contained and tried to find a great deal more than had been put there. A few times, for sheer nervousness and shame, she cried. The amount of her knowledge seemed infinitesimal, the abyss of her ignorance unfathomable. It was all the more humiliating because when the catechization was over, her father started to the house without reproving her for her dullness. It was hard on one who had prided herself on her brains!

Matthew returned, driving slowly, a grave expression on his handsome face. Having unhitched his horse he came round to the porch where the flutter of a short skirt vanishing indoors did not escape him. He was deeply angry with the anger of a superior toward an inferior or an elder toward a child. He could not understand Ellen. For the first time in her life she had not been willing to go his way, and she had marred what would otherwise have been a perfect experience.

Hitherto he had not thought much about his father or his father's convictions, his father's neglect of church having been a condition with which he had always been familiar, but now it seemed unnecessary and wrong. Realizing in his new devotion that it was his duty to admonish his careless parent, he prayed for opportunity and strength.

The three Levis ate their dinner silently, the housekeeper sitting with them. She had, seen close at hand, an air of patient endurance under affliction. She had expected, according to custom, that the man of whose house and children she had taken such good care for so many years would marry her, though she had already been married twice and was somewhat older than he. She had even, being hopeful of Dr. Levis, discouraged the advances of a neighboring farmer. The short lives of her two husbands and the oaklike hardness of Levis made her lot a very disappointing one. Having just heard of the marriage of a friend, she was more than usually depressed, a condition which did not escape her master, to whom her mournful disposition and her extraordinary combinations of English and German were sources of deep and silent amusement. He could not always remember her expressions, but Ellen could repeat them at length. "Unsere number iss 1 long and 2 short and sis very hart zu's distinguise," she would say into the telephone and be perfectly understood by the person at the other end. Or, "I sink it will give rain," or, "Ach, Ellen, what do you make, then!"

At another time, with amused recollection of Mrs. Gummidge, Levis would have rallied her back into cheerfulness, and, unconsciously, into some hope, but to-day his thoughts were upon his own affairs. He did not hear when she invited him to a second helping of potatoes, a piece of absent-mindedness which seemed insulting and which would furnish her material upon which to brood through the long afternoon.

When dinner was over, Matthew followed his father to the porch. Levis looked at him curiously. He had something to say to Matthew, but it seemed also that Matthew had something to say to him! Matthew took his seat in a rocking-chair, and another prayer for strength concluded, spoke.

"Father, Ellen behaved very badly in church."

"Ellen told me about it," said Levis.

"She ought to be punished."

"That is, she told me her side of it. Perhaps you'd better tell me yours."

"Well, Grandfather made a fine address about immersion. Then he said that since we children had such a good Christian mother, we, too, should be immersed and come into church. I said that I would. Then he spoke kindly to Ellen and she got up and ran out in a senseless way."

"Ellen was frightened."

"She's old enough not to be frightened. She has an immortal soul. She should have obeyed me. And you have an immortal soul, Father," said handsome Matthew. "Would you not become converted and be immersed? It is a very blessed condition."

In delivering this quotation from Grandfather, Matthew's voice had a slightly hollow ring, as though even he were aware that the situation had unusual aspects.

Levis rose and knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Suppose you come into the office, Matthew," said he crisply. "It will be easier to talk there."

Within doors Levis walked up and down. He did not seem to belong here in this country office, with its simple fittings, its serviceable but unmodern appliances, its outlook on farmland; he belonged in a city where he could attend fifty instead of five patients in a day.

"Matthew," said he frowning, "until this morning, it never occurred to me that it would be necessary to speak to you as I am going to speak. But I've been overreached and deceived. I don't blame you; you too have been a victim. If you're old enough to take the stand which you took this morning, to describe the convictions of your heart before strangers, you're old enough to hear what I have to say.

"You have always had smooth sailing; you can't understand what it means to be without living kin, to be bound out, to suffer intentional or unintentional slights, to have always to overcome difficulties, to deny yourself a little more when you've already next to nothing, to be cold and hungry and miserable. I wouldn't wish you to know; I want never to think of the miseries of my youth. I've done my best to shield you from all hardships; but it won't hurt you to know that such hardships exist.

"Through it all, I was determined to be a physician, and that is what I succeeded in becoming—older than most men when I graduated, but eternally grateful.

"I came into this neighborhood to begin a practice, or rather to take a practice temporarily. I didn't expect to stay beyond a year, but I married here and your mother would not leave."

For a moment Levis paused and looked out at the fields and the woodland and the empty sky. Old conflicts in which he had lost, old miseries, old thwartings came back to him, and especially, painted against the woodland, a face, exquisite in line, delicate in coloring. The face before him resembled it in outline and in expression.

"After she died, I couldn't go away because of you and Ellen. I couldn't take you, neither could I leave you; so I stayed here. I've brought you up according to my best judgment, and I've made you good children.

"Before your mother died, I gave her a promise. She was concerned that you should be 'saved'"—Levis's voice laid a lightly scornful emphasis on the "saved." "She held the strict notions of the Seventh-Day Baptists, and I promised I'd do nothing to alienate you from her father and would let you go to church. It was foolish, but your grandfather promised to exact no religious vows from you. I felt that his promise was unnecessary. I didn't dream that children brought up in a household where English was spoken, with books at hand, would return to the fifteenth century!"

"The Gospel is the same now," said Matthew neatly.

"I agree with you. Everything is the same as it has been, always." Levis spoke with sarcasm. Then he went on—"You can have no deep conviction of sin. You have committed no great sin."

"You don't know my heart, Father!"

"I know you and your heart. I've had you under my eyes ever since you were born, and I know you're neither gross nor wicked. You can't be repentant except in a sentimental, superficial way; neither can you know that the doctrines of the Seventh-Day Baptists are right and others wrong. You know no others."

"I—" began Matthew.

"You're under my control, you're supported by me. You'll go to college in September as we planned and then to the Medical School, and when you're through you shall decide about the Seventh-Day Baptists. If your religion is what you think it is, delay will make no difference; it will rather strengthen you. This will be a test which you should welcome."

"I do welcome it, Father."

A slight contraction of the muscles changed the expression of Levis's face. Meekness—that was one of the weapons of Abraham Milhausen's daughter!

He felt an almost irresistible desire to pour out upon his boy all the heretical beliefs, all the unorthodox speculations which had for years filled his hours of meditation, to fortify him with skepticism against the foolish hopes built up by the Christian religion. He believed he had, like the Stoics, the possession of his own soul. Once he had expounded his convictions to the boy's mother and she had withdrawn herself physically and mentally until she died. But the world would take care of Matthew!

"You don't suppose that all wisdom is incarnate in Grandfather, do you, Matthew?"

"He's only a human being," answered Matthew, with the same trying neatness of response. "But even children can understand all that is necessary to be saved."

Levis rose.

"Well, my boy, when things begin to seem puzzling to you, your father may be able to help."

Matthew rose also. He was tired and he had many things to think of. He looked at his father with strong disapproval; he thought of Grandfather's saintliness and the pretty face of Millie König. His father lit a cigarette; it was as alienating an act as could have been committed.

"I think Ellen should be punished for disturbing the meeting," said he. "It shamed me for her."

"I'll attend to Ellen," promised Levis with a satisfying grimness.

But, having reached the doorway, Matthew suffered misgivings.

"You don't mean that I'm not to go to church at all?"

"Not to the Seventh-Day Baptist church."

"Not this evening!"

"Not at all," was the decisive answer.

Having opened his lips and closed them, Matthew withdrew, backwards, and went upstairs.

CHAPTER IV

A SLUMBERING TERROR

IT was not because of ingratitude or altogether because of forgetfulness that Stephen Lanfair had neglected his friend. Their association had continued as long as circumstances made the seeing of one another possible. When the longed-for internship was won, Levis had been for two years out of the Medical School and Stephen was preoccupied with the straight, dark gaze and free and saucy manners of Hilda Fell. After Hilda had seen him, she had, for reasons as yet unexplained by psychologists, forsworn all other company. He was awkward, he knew none of the lively give-and-take of her set, he was grave in manner and thought; but she would have no other. Her passion for him assumed an ominous intensity; she was happy only when she had before her a definite prospect of meeting him, she was unhappy when the character of the meeting was such that she must share his attention with others.

Mayne related frankly the history of his family, but Stephen found in that no impediment to marriage. The insanity appeared—at least he received that mistaken impression—invariably in early youth. Apparently Hilda's mind was sound. Her education had not been of a very solid quality; in fact, she could do little more than write a presentable note and she did that as seldom as possible, and of general information she had none. But Stephen believed that association with him would largely supplement her knowledge. He believed that Mayne had not given her the proper sort of education and that she would learn from him with delight. He could not know or dream that the slightest opposition, even the thwarting of her whims, would reveal her fundamental instability. Until now life had brought everything to her; it had demanded no adaptations on her part.

He explained to her new and interesting cases which came under his eye, entirely unaware that all her enthusiasm for his profession had its origin in his arm across her shoulders. It was when he was discussing his work that Stephen was at his best.

His marriage, consummated at the end of his course, seemed to him an incredible piece of good fortune. A poor man from a little coal region town, he had none of the wealth or influence which he had always supposed must, even in America, be the contribution of the bridegroom to an alliance with a name so important. He visited before his graduation the gray house in Harrisburg and saw in the city the solid business block, and outside the city some of the farms which poured their revenues into Hilda's lap. He believed himself to be lifted by fortune high above the average of mankind; not only above the great level mass at the bottom of the social pyramid and the dull, superimposed layer which he had learned to call *bourgeois*, but also above the stratum of educated men and women who lacked comfortable wealth, and above the stratum of rich men and women who had no intellectual pleasures. He had, he believed for a month after he was married, everything.

He began then dimly to discern the chasm which divided him from Hilda. His keen mind, delivered from its first blindness, could no longer fail to see that her ignorance was not the result of a poor education, but of natural inability to learn. She failed to grasp the simplest of scientific principles; she could not understand the structure of the eye or remember its chief parts; she made Stephen ridiculous by misquoting him.

He dwelt a little longer in the paradise which he had created for himself. It was absurd to require in an exquisite creature like Hilda the interests natural to an older woman or to a student. Compared with the young women whom he had known in the University, she was immeasurably attractive and she could not be expected to possess every perfection.

It was not long, however, before he understood clearly that her dullness to the passion of his life, his profession, was due not only to ignorance but to indifference. Their first quarrel was precipitated by his announcement of his plans for the future.

"New York is the place for us to live. Each country has one center; England has London, France has Paris, and the United States has New York." Stephen often spoke in this sententious fashion in his youth. "There the world currents—"

"But we are not going to live in New York," said Hilda quickly.

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want to. I'll go there for a few weeks as often as you like in the winter, but I'm going to live in my own house. In New York you're nobody unless you're worth millions and millions; in Harrisburg you can be somebody for a good deal less than that."

"In Harrisburg!" Stephen was not aware of his absurdity until Hilda pointed it out to him.

"I should think that any one who had lived in Chestnut Ridge with a breaker before the door would find Harrisburg heaven!"

Stephen flushed. He had poured out to her in a moment of unique confidence a description of Chestnut Ridge. With it he had told her not only about his father's life, but about his death, and it was unfeeling to recall the conversation in this scornful fashion.

"I have my living to earn!"

"Your living!" repeated Hilda. She uttered a delicate and good-natured pleasantry. "I thought you married me for that!"

Stephen made no answer. After a while, when he could go without seeming to be angry, he left

her on the porch of the hotel where they were spending their honeymoon and went to walk alone. He was shocked, amazed, even appalled.

Once more and only once he broached the subject.

"I am exceedingly anxious to do well in my profession, Hilda," he said earnestly. "New York is the only place where a man can really have a brilliant success."

Hilda shook her head.

"I've made my plans."

In the end, after six months abroad, Stephen hung out his sign upon the Manning Street wing of Hilda's house and there practiced his profession for seven or eight months in the year. The other months he spent in her train, journeying from one fashionable American and European resort to the other. During these excursions he was idle except for stolen visits to clinics and lectures, and he was constantly unhappy. He still had faith in his own powers and he realized that his best years were passing and that other men and even younger men were winning honors which should have been his. He knew that Hilda believed that she had made generous concessions in allowing him to practice at all. He knew that her friends—though her associates could scarcely be called friends, so light were the ties that bound them—thought him exceedingly lucky, but he believed that his colleagues held him to be a fashionable quack. He held himself to be the most unhappy of men.

Further opposition to his wife's decisions was impossible. He learned before the second month of his married life had come to a close that a woman given to hysteria could not be argued with, could not be made to see reason. His ambition was, he knew now, stronger than his affection and he would never be able to gratify it. He came to envy quiet, poor men like Edward Levis, especially those who remained unmarried, who could live their lives in freedom.

He had one or two grossly unpleasant quarrels with Hilda. Once, after she had laughed at his awkwardness in the presence of an acquaintance, he took her to task for a habit which he found more and more odious.

"The boys at the University used to say that you smoked cigarettes, but I never believed them."

They were alone in his bedroom—whose bare floors and almost blank walls acted as sounding-boards for Hilda's shrill denunciation of his prudishness. Terrified, he closed the door quickly.

Within a year her malady took a not uncommon form. He had been, he realized when the ugly scene was over, very stupid not to have recognized earlier the obsessive jealousy and rage which she must have felt for some time, but he had not dreamed that the young nurse in his office, who was pretty, but ignorant of everything outside her profession, could have attracted more than a casual glance. When Hilda began to accuse him, he listened dumfounded, on his cheek a gray paleness which added ten years to his age.

As he listened to her coarse tirade, the shrill accents seemed to ring like an unpleasant soprano aria against a clearly accented rhythmic bass, the voice of Professor Mayne. He had received the impression from Mayne that the family malady never appeared after early youth, but had he understood him aright? Horrified he looked into an abyss to whose precipitous wall he had come blindly, but with the blindness of a madman or a fool.

"But, Hilda," he said slowly, "I am married to *you*."

Hilda uttered a laugh which expressed hideously a variety of emotions—mollification, for his dismay was disarming; amusement, for his innocence was laughable, and even a little shame. Stephen's mind was clean; he looked at her as his good father might have looked.

For a short time she seemed a little disturbed; she regarded him with uneasy inquiry as though she suspected his horror and his inability to forget her outbreak. But he found presently that she watched the coming and going of his patients and that she interrogated his employees with such clever slyness that they did not know they were being questioned. Her jealousy noted only the women with whom he was connected professionally, especially those who were alone with him in his office, and between them, young, middle-aged, or old, she did not distinguish. His dismay at her ignorance had not escaped her; it was the center of her consciousness, the *idée fixe* of her madness. She misinterpreted the present and falsified the past, ascribing to Stephen infidelities in the days of their courtship. Her obsession was hideous, but by no means unprecedented; frequently the newspapers rejoiced in the airing of similar or more sordid cases. Recently an innocent patient waiting in a doctor's office had been shot dead by a suspicious wife.

Mayne, hearing his story from a terrified Stephen, grew white, then shook his head. He laid the case before his intimate friend Dr. Good, who was an alienist and brought him once or twice to Harrisburg to spend the night. It might be necessary eventually to have Hilda go—Dr. Good always put his prescriptions as delicately as possible—to a sanatorium, but there was no immediate danger. Mayne breathed more freely, and only Stephen knew by what eternal vigilance over himself and her the peace was kept, or apprehended the unpleasant and even perilous results which might follow upon its breaking.

His life was not entirely without pleasures, unhappy as it appeared to him. After the first rush of Hilda's fashionable acquaintances, who came filled with curiosity and went away baffled and irritated by his gravity and silence, there applied a more desirable clientèle. He treated the poor in the city hospital, serving them with a pleasure which he did not analyze, but which had its source partly in the satisfaction of returning some of the service which hundreds of working men and women poured out upon Hilda and her kind, and partly in a deep and unrecognized

discontent with his own life. He thought often of his father with a childish turning to the one human being who had loved him deeply and unselfishly. He believed that he still regarded his father's devotion to others with impatience, his life, based upon a simple and childlike sense of duty, as wasted. He did not know that unhappiness had begun to alter the opinions which were the product of youth and good health and material prosperity.

He performed cures which astonished himself. A Mrs. Fetzter, a plain little Pennsylvania German woman, suffered at the hands of a drunken husband a gunshot wound in her face, and he was called to the hospital when it seemed that the sight of both eyes was lost. A nurse, Miss Knowlton, who had frequently attended his patients, faced him one day with defiance and told him that she was going blind and that according to half a dozen doctors there was no help for her. A Miss MacVane came to his office and laid her case before him—she was a private secretary with no other means of support than her own earnings, and her eyes were failing.

He saved one of Mrs. Fetzter's eyes and found for her a place in his house, of which she gradually took entire charge in a manner which suggested now a guardian angel, now a watchful dragon. He cured Miss Knowlton and she replaced a younger nurse in his office. Miss MacVane became his secretary; she could not be entirely cured, but with expert treatment and unremitting watchfulness she might retain a measure of vision for a long time.

He thought, grimly contemplating his assistants, that Hilda could find no fault with these ladies. Fetzter, as Hilda called her after an English fashion, was irremediably disfigured; the insertion of an artificial eye was out of the question and she wore a black patch. Miss Knowlton was tall, her features were large, her red hair was no Titian glory, but was thin and pale, and she had pale blue eyes and skin without color. Miss MacVane was short and heavy and her dim vision increased her natural awkwardness. All three women were of the type by which the world's tasks are accomplished, who take little or no recreation, who do without all luxuries, who desire apparently but one reward, the consciousness of duty done.

Stephen's sense of safety, however, was founded upon a mistaken analysis of Hilda's jealousy. He did not realize that she attributed to him no lust of the eyes, that she believed that it was intellect only which attracted him. She hated Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane and every one with whom he talked about his profession. She hated even Fetzter, though she could not do without her.

He had begun, not without a chastening recollection of his first contribution, to send articles to medical magazines, and he believed that if he could have a year uninterrupted by idle journeying he could produce a valuable work on infectious diseases of the eye. When his first article was finished he thought of sending a copy to Edward Levis, but Levis seemed as far away as his father, and he could not renew the acquaintance in so informal a way. He would some day—no, soon—look him up.

Life had still other satisfactions. A sense of his own ignorance and lack of early opportunity kept him constantly seeking for education. He was interested in art and music and in sciences other than his own and he tried constantly to increase his information about them. During his early married life he had bought a small original painting and Hilda had expressed her approval—it was, she said, a more becoming fad for a gentleman than diseases. He had then ceased to buy pictures until his own income warranted it.

He might have found congenial friends—the city was not inhabited entirely by men and women of Hilda's type—but he knew that his friends could not be hers. It was better to avoid all social connections than to rouse groundless but hideous suspicion.

As the years passed it seemed likely that Hilda's malady would grow no worse. Her uncle felt no more anxiety, and Stephen relaxed into a certain peace of mind. He became thirty-five, then forty. He believed that the course of his life was laid out, and that, unsatisfying as it was, it was still happier than that of the mass of mankind. There were moments when he said to himself that there was no reason for his existence or that of any one else, that human life was ephemeral and purposeless; but he put aside quickly all metaphysical speculation because it recalled his father's last hours and the deep concern in his sunken eyes.

CHAPTER V

LEVIS SPEAKS HIS MIND

LEVIS was the only member of his family who had a great deal to say on the Sunday following Matthew's declaration of faith. At meals Matthew ate with his eyes fixed upon his plate, and Ellen wiped away an occasional tear. Several times since the sad events of yesterday she had tried to open the door of Matthew's room, to tell him that she was sorry she had made him ashamed and to lay before him the reasons for her conduct, but the door was locked. Lying in wait outside had been productive of no better results, for, appearing at last, he had quietly brushed her aside. Manda was more mournful than the young people. She did not weep, but the tip of her nose showed that she had wept in the recent past.

When supper was over, Levis addressed his family, one after the other.

"Matthew, what are you going to do this evening?"

"I'm going to bed," answered Matthew in a low tone. "I promised to help with the wheat in the morning. Soon it will be a loss."

Levis's eyes twinkled. Matthew had lately shown an inclination to observe that his father's methods of farming were not those of the thrifty neighbors.

"Manda, where are you going?"

"In my church," Manda answered in a tone at once humble and reproachful. She was always a person of few words, but her ability to express a variety of meanings with a *H'm* or with the valuable *So!* of the Pennsylvania Germans made a large vocabulary unnecessary.

Again Levis's eyes twinkled and again he thought of Mrs. Gummidge, ever mourning for "the old one."

"And Ellen?"

Ellen's tears refused to be longer restrained. She rose from her chair and went to her father.

"Matthew won't speak to me. I went up seven times to tell him that I was sorry and he wouldn't open the door."

Levis led Ellen into his office.

"Matthew is best left alone. He'll come round, never fear! I have a visit to make which will keep me out till after dark. There is a book and Matthew will hear you if you call. If you get sleepy, go to bed."

Levis kissed her and put on his hat and went away. He did not carry his satchel of medicines nor go to the barn to put his horse into the buggy, but walked down the short lane to the road. Ellen watched him until he reached the gate, and stood for a moment listening to the church bells in Ephrata. When he went on his way, she turned with forgetfulness of all troubles to "David Copperfield." The first paragraphs puzzled her, but she did not linger. Mercifully, one did not need to understand everything in a book in order to get intense enjoyment out of it.

Levis retraced Ellen's journey of yesterday, except that he climbed no fences, but kept to the road until he reached the strange group of old buildings in the hollow, now more uncanny than ever in the twilight. They were entirely dark, and about them in his imagination ghosts seemed to wander, some of them saintly and all pitifully deluded. These old buildings had trapped him; entering them from curiosity soon after he had taken the practice of the old doctor, he had come out bewitched, unable to free himself, the course of his life changed.

Midway between an outer and an inner gate he stood still. He was in the little enclosure beside the public highway where for a hundred and seventy years the Seventh-Day Baptists had buried their dead. Here were no ornate monuments, but a few rows of simple stones, some sunk deep into the soil. One, a little larger and whiter than the rest, seemed to invite contemplation. Levis glanced at it, hesitated for an instant, and then went on. He knew well how unimportant are the remains of mortality and that it is mockery even to pause beside a grave in which lies the object of a love, extinguished not by death, but by life. The shadowy stone recalled not grief born when Mary died, but miseries struggled with long before.

As he passed through the second gate he heard voices. Beside the tall, steep-roofed buildings stood a little cottage where lived Grandfather, the guardian of the property, and Amos, his nephew, protégé, and familiar. Pleased with the attendance at yesterday's meeting, the two sat together on the porch, now for a long time silent, now in earnest conversation. There was now no prophet's fire in Grandfather's eyes. He sat comfortably in an old armchair, the wristbands of his unstarched shirt turned back over his coat sleeves, his loosely hanging hands, his air of negligent repose suggesting the portraits of the aged Whitman.

He spoke rapidly and easily, the young man more slowly and in a questioning tone. The prophet's mantle seemed to Amos a heavy robe, though his piety was sincere and he looked, even more than Grandfather, the part of saint. His features were beautifully modeled; his thick and curling hair was worn a little long, in faint imitation of the pious hermits of long ago. His slightly parted lips and wide gray eyes gave him a look of expectancy which was the expression of his hopes. He anticipated that the faith which filled his soul would be quickened by mystical visions. It had been so in this holy place, it would be so once more. Grandfather had assured him of it a hundred times.

Grandfather believed that in establishing in Amos a preoccupation with spiritual things and with his own soul, he had done him an inestimable service, but to Levis this preoccupation was unwholesome and unpleasant. He felt contempt for Amos and avoided whenever possible the sight of his feminine beauty. Neither Levis nor any one else had realized that Amos, with his magnificent frame, his delicate beard, his long hair, his literary aspirations, and his formal meditations, was not tragic nor profound nor despicable, but perilously like a figure of comedy.

The two did not hear the closing of the gate, and the end of their discourse came distinctly to ears already burning.

"It is a fine thing for us that young Matthew has taken this stand. I'm not afraid for the little one—it was doubtless conviction of sin which made her run away. I will see her alone, and then she too will come into the fold. It has been distinctly prophesied to me in dreams that with you three anything might be done, Matthew the head of a secular congregation, you of a restored brotherhood, and Ellen of a sisterhood."

Levis laid his hand on his heart in an habitual and, almost invariably, an unconscious gesture. The blood seemed to beat behind his eyes and in his throat. He had never been so angry.

"It comes to me sometimes that my life was all wrong," sighed Grandfather. "In my youth I had a call to remain single. But I was like others—weak. When a Seventh-Day Baptist shall show by his life that he really believes the assurances of God, then the Spirit will descend in rich measure, and we shall have again our hundreds devoted to prayer and to good works."

A flattered Amos tightened the grasp of one hand upon another. He knew that he was the foundation upon which his uncle's hopes were built, but he had never heard it so plainly stated. He felt his heart burn, he seemed to see a light over the steep roof of the Saal, and he believed that a higher authority than his uncle was going to communicate with him. Then he saw a tall man approaching from the gate.

"There is some one here, Uncle."

"It's Levis," said a crisp and angry voice. "Father Milhausen, I want a few words with you."

"Sit down, Edward," said the old man.

"I'd rather talk where there's a light." Levis tried to keep his voice steady. He did not mean to have any of his words go trailing off into the darkness without hitting their mark. Moreover, he meant, if need be, to quarrel and perhaps to storm, and he did not think it decent to quarrel so near the white tombstone.

"All right, I'm willing." The old man rose. "Amos, make a light."

The coal-oil lamp revealed a little room which was at once kitchen and sitting-room. It contained a stove, now cold, a table, a shelf holding Latin and German books, and another holding specimens of ancient pottery. All was bare and neat.

The human element was far more interesting than the furniture. Old Milhausen stood for a moment stroking his white beard. His dark eyes, half covered by heavy lids, looked downward without seeing—he was praying for wisdom. Amos stood close to the table fitting a shade over the glaring light.

"Perhaps I'd better go," said he humbly. "I don't wish to be where I have no business."

"There's no reason why you should go," said Levis lightly. "I'd like to have you hear what I say, so that there may be no misunderstanding between any of us." He sat down in a plain wooden chair by the table and Amos sat down on a bench on the other side.

Grandfather opened his eyes, having been assured, in some fashion which he understood, of help from on high. He saw that his son-in-law was angry and he determined to quiet him if possible. Edward was not one who bore the dispensations of God easily.

"This has been a very pleasant—"

Levis had not come to talk about pleasant things.

"I don't like discussions and quarreling," said he. "I have not had a bitter word with you since the hateful scene you forced upon me at Mary's bedside, but now you have brought about the occasion for another scene."

"I promised Mary that the children should not be influenced against her religion, and that I'd let them go to meeting. I've kept my word partly because I usually keep promises, but more because I didn't believe that two children brought up in this century in my house would accept the teachings of your sect. I"—Levis raised a silencing hand. Grandfather smiled, then, instead of going on with the remark which he had tried to begin, he hid his lips—"I still don't believe it, even though Matthew came home yesterday thinking he was 'converted.'"

"While I've kept my promise, you've broken yours. Yesterday, publicly, you called on two impressionable children, hypnotized by darkness and heavy air and too much vague preaching, to confess the most foolish beliefs. You did worse than that—you put them into a position where it seemed wicked not to confess them. I don't doubt that Matthew would give anything in the world to forget that he made such a conspicuous fool of himself. Fortunately Ellen was more frightened than impressed."

"What I have to say about the matter is this—Matthew is going to college in the fall and until then he will come no more to church. If after he has been at college and medical school, he chooses to believe as you do, you may have him."

"I'm not afraid for Matthew," said old Milhausen. "I was bidden to break my word. I had plain directions."

"You see nothing Jesuitical in that, I suppose? Well, neither am I afraid for Matthew. Now about Ellen—"

"I'll say no more to Ellen," promised Grandfather uneasily. Ellen was far more than Matthew his darling, the delight of his eyes.

"That is so; you will not," agreed Levis. He rose and took his hat from the table. The others rose also, Grandfather towering above the younger men. Deeply disturbed, he tried to fathom Levis's meaning.

Amos understood Levis. He had watched Ellen since she was a baby; he had seen her growing toward womanhood and he believed that he loved only her soul.

"What are you going to do about Ellen?" he asked.

It seemed for a moment that Levis meant to brush by him without answering. Then he said to himself that it was just as well to let Grandfather and this saintly young whipper-snapper have their just deserts together and at once.

"Ellen will come no more to meeting. You have had your chance at her now during all her most impressionable years, for which I blame myself. I should have broken my promise long before you broke yours."

"God Almighty will require her soul of you!" Grandfather's calmness vanished, he spoke with gathering power and shrillness. "You came here a stranger, you beguiled my daughter, she married you against my will and against her conscience, but she saw very soon that there was no joy in such a marriage. She gave me her children as a holy gift, and if I died without knowing they were safe, I couldn't be happy in eternity!"

"They're my children as well as hers," answered Levis. "I have just as keen a sense of responsibility as you. You've had more than your share of their souls. You've taught them superstition, now I'll teach them the truth."

"Superstition!" Grandfather made a sweeping gesture in the direction of the dim old buildings. "What do you believe, Edward?"

"I believe in an undefinable creative power," answered Levis sharply. "As for revelation or miracles or immortality or divinity come to earth—they are delusions created by the imagination of men as panaceas for the fear of death."

The old man clasped his hands, anger transmuted into terror.

"Immortality!" he repeated. "You don't doubt immortality?"

"I think we shall be immortal as part of the revolving earth."

"Will you tell Ellen that?" asked Grandfather in a whisper.

"No," said Levis. "If Ellen has as good a mind as I think she has, she will find all that out for herself. Good-night."

Amos barred the way to the door.

"We will pray for them and you," said he.

"I have no objections," answered Levis. "Pray away!"

When the door was shut, Amos saw that Grandfather was weeping.

"Don't worry, Uncle," said he. "Matthew is safe. I'm confident of it. And Ellen will come to school for two more years. She will not forget."

"He came into our meeting from curiosity. He took all I had. He made her like a mad creature; she had only one thought and that was to be with him. But she was punished, poor, poor Mary! and now she is sanctified."

Amos's cheeks burned again. He was curious about such madness.

"They didn't live long together?"

"Four years. At first he was determined to go away, but this Mary resisted. She was like the Anastasia of whom our records tell. The better spirit had begun to work upon her and she knew that if she went from the shelter of this place she was lost."

"I'm not afraid for these children," said Amos again.

But he spoke absently. When the old man had gone to bed, he went outside and walked up and down in the thick grass. After a long time, when it was so late that passers-by were few and no headlights cast their glare over the little cemetery, he passed through the gate and stood by the white stone, thinking of the cousin whose beauty he remembered, in whom love was a sort of madness. Yet religion had been more to her than love! A dreadful word which Levis had used tempted him—was she not a fool to give up love? It seemed to him that the fragrant night was resonant with voices, calling vaguely and unhappily. He looked down upon the white stone and traced with his hand the inscription which he had read a thousand times:

Mary
Wife of
Edward Levis

Daughter of
Abraham Milhausen
Aged 25 years

Suddenly he shivered. The tradition of hearts unsatisfied was more potent than that of the peace of the saints. Then he went indoors and prayed God to forgive him. It was his object to keep himself unspotted, to guard his soul unceasingly. His ignorance of the world was well-nigh unlimited.

Levis walked back more rapidly than he had come. It was against his habit to think much of the past, and now the future held a new interest. It was a relief, moreover, to have spoken his mind, and because of it he felt greater toleration for Grandfather. For beautiful Amos he continued to have only contempt. He wished that it was already September so that he could send Matthew away.

Another educational project he meant to put into execution at once. He went whistling up the lane, noticed without pausing the blackness of the woodland and the slender moon hanging above, and pushing open the door found Ellen asleep, her book clutched in her arms. The light was burning dimly and beneath it lay a note:

"I did not go to bed because of the 'phone. Matthew is asleep. I listened at his door."

Levis stood and looked down upon plump Ellen. Her cheeks were flushed and beadlike drops stood upon her upper lip. Her curls had come out of their ribbon and clustered about her face; her relaxed body seemed tall. Levis drew up a chair and sat down to a closer contemplation. She bore no resemblance to her mother—Matthew had the maternal inheritance. In spite of her discouragement over yesterday's quiz, she had exhibited a surprising maturity of mind.

At this minute she stirred and smiled and appeared for an instant to lose her childishness in a riper charm. Tears filled her father's eyes. Perhaps he should yet have companionship in his own household!

Presently he turned to look round the room; then he rose and brought from somewhere in the house a little table and set it by the window. He went out again and reappeared with a handful of books, worn and dog-eared, and sitting at his desk, looked through them; then taking a sheet of paper wrote several lines upon which he seemed to ponder. He glanced at Ellen as though he meditated rousing her to aid in this planning, but thought better of it, and laid books and papers and two carefully sharpened pencils on the little table together.

Then he lifted Ellen herself. Before he reached the doorway she opened her eyes drowsily.

"Oh, it's you!" said she heavily and with deep content.

He was not yet through with his family. Coming back into his room, his hand again pressed upon his side as though Ellen's weight had exhausted him, he found a figure, large, bonneted, with hands humbly folded. He had a dreadful fear that Manda meant to announce her departure.

"Well, Manda!"

"I have something to say," said Manda in her humblest tone.

"Sit down, do."

Manda shook her head. There were proprieties to be observed by a widow in her position and she knew them.

"I should be called Mrs. Sassaman," said she. "I don't mind Manda, but it is as if I had lost respect for him."

Levis suppressed a hysterical impulse.

"Of course you shall be called Mrs. Sassaman!" said he. "We have all been thoughtless."

When she had gone, he lay down upon the old sofa, still showing the impress of Ellen's body. He had thought of himself till this moment as a young man, but a man is young no longer when his son sets up his will against him. He looked age in the face; he remembered the senility through which many pass to their end. Then he turned his cheek against the pillow which was warm and a little damp. It somehow comforted him.

CHAPTER VI

STUDYING IN VACATION

ANTICIPATION of some unusual happening woke Ellen early on Monday morning. She lay for an instant staring at the whitewashed walls, at the carved pineapples tipping the posts of her huge bed, and finally at a picture above her bureau in which General Washington, in red trousers, a sky-blue coat, and white wig, bowed to the admiring applause of a large throng.

She sat up, clasped her hands about her knees, and looked down upon the wheat-field where already the first swath had been cut by hand and where the reaper, driven by Matthew, was about to begin its more rapid work. At once she sprang from bed. It was Monday and a harvest day and Manda would be cross. Saturday and Sunday had been, in spite of their woe, interesting, but to-day promised only dullness.

But to-day was to have an interest of its own. She washed the dishes and peeled a mammoth bowl of potatoes, then she made up the beds, spreading the covers with care and beating the pillows vigorously. When she had finished, she heard her name called and went down to the office. Her father sat at his desk, a score of little white papers before him on each of which he was laying a bit of powder from a wide-mouthed jar. He seemed to fit in less well than usual with his surroundings, the old book-cases, the rag carpet, the worn furniture.

"Shut the door, Ellen."

Ellen did as she was bid. She lifted a corner of the ugly gingham apron which hung far below the bottom of her skirt and wiped her perspiring face. It was exactly a gesture of Mrs. Sassaman's.

"Take your apron out to the kitchen!" Levis spoke with unreasonable sharpness, not toward Ellen, but toward the apron.

"Now, Ellen"—when the last of the little powders had been folded—"I don't believe that all mental activity should cease because the weather is warm. For two hours each day—morning or afternoon or evening, whichever pleases you and Mrs. Sassaman—you are to sit on yonder chair and study. Each day I shall set you a lesson which you must have ready by the next day. The machinery in your head is good, but it needs steady use. First we shall have an examination. I've marked on that paper a number of sums which I selected from your arithmetic. There are twenty of them. Then here"—Levis opened a little book—"is something new. It's absurd that you shouldn't have been taught about your own body. To-morrow morning at this time, I'll expect you to tell me about these ten pages and to show me your examples. Get them done neatly."

Ellen grew pale with the intensity of her emotions. The lesson seemed long, but she was not one to hesitate when things were hard.

"But I will get ahead of my class! I don't know whether Amos will like that, Father."

"His likes or dislikes make very little difference."

"And Matthew will think it's silly. He says that when girls get learning they are like peacocks spreading their tails in the air."

"In spite of Matthew we shall proceed."

Thus encouraged, Ellen crossed the room and laid her books and paper on the little table. "Example 4, page 50," she wrote, referring to her father's list. Then she put the tip of her pencil into her mouth and laid herself bodily upon the table.

Levis pushed under her feet an old ottoman.

"Sit up, Ellen, sit up! And never put anything but food into your mouth; no pencils or fingers!"

Ellen flushed. She was often offended by the habits of others; she now saw herself sprawling, and blushed scarlet. With the blush her childish unconsciousness of self vanished.

"And don't chew your tongue, my dear!"

"I won't," she promised, deeply mortified.

Example 4, page 50, was promptly finished and ruled off, and Example 8, page 58, was begun. Levis fetched the morning paper and the mail from the rural delivery box and sat down to read. It was only eight o'clock, and he did not start upon his round till nine. Sometimes he glanced toward the window where the scholar labored, jerking herself frequently into the upright position which she had momentarily lost, and striving with many backslidings to control the motions of a tongue which had hitherto assisted in all mental processes. Presently Matthew, covered with dust and grime and perspiration, exhibited with stoical pride a cut hand. Frowning, Levis bathed and dressed the injury. The clean hand and the white bandage looked out of place.

"Matthew, this is entirely unnecessary."

"The wheat must be cut."

"There are enough people to cut the wheat. We had better lose a part than have you hurt your hands."

"It is nothing," protested Matthew.

"This work hardens your skin and a physician can't have hard hands. Get a bath and change your clothes and don't go back."

"The men expect me back!"

Levis made no answer, and Matthew went out sullenly. He thought that Ellen was being punished for yesterday's misbehavior and felt somewhat mollified. But he wanted to go out to the fields. The men would laugh at him. He didn't care about his hands and he was determined not to be a physician.

"I could make more money farming than Father does doctoring—a great deal more. I don't want to go away; I want to stay here."

After changing his clothes, he sat by the window. His room was on the opposite side of the house from the wheat-field and the men would not see him. It was bad enough that they should see his father idling. And Ellen should not be writing; they would think that she was playing. A host of angry protests crowded into his mind. He had been for a long time critical of his father and now his father's opposition to the true religion gave him the right to express his disapproval.

He reached out and took his Bible from the little stand. It had been given him by his grandfather, who had marked many of the passages, and he turned from page to page. There was one verse about being persecuted and reviled for conscience' sake which he smoothed with his hand. Other verses came into his mind about separating one's self from one's family on account of their disbelief. He saw himself a hero, admired and set on high by the church people. He might leave his home and go to live with Grandfather. He thought of Millie whose eyes gleamed at him so pleasantly and so strangely.

But before he had got beyond the most vague of speculations, he found himself rising from his chair in response to a summons from below. Even yet his father lingered!

"Matthew," said Levis cheerfully, "I think that you, too, should do some studying. Here is the University catalogue showing the character of your examinations. Get your books together and after dinner we'll go over the subjects and see whether you are entirely prepared."

"I have all my examples done already," announced Ellen proudly at this ill-selected moment. "Now I'm to study physiology."

Matthew flushed. So Ellen had not been punished at all! And he was to be set down beside a baby to study in vacation. But again he moved obediently.

The examination proved that Amos had done his work well. Matthew's mind, if mechanical in its operations, was tenacious of that which it had once grasped. Mathematics he found difficult, but not impossible; German was one of his native tongues; Latin had been easy, thanks to the fact that some of the early writings of the Seventh-Day Baptists were in that language and that Amos, poring over them, had acquired thorough knowledge and had imparted it to his pupil. In elementary science, he was not well prepared and his father made ready to remedy the deficiency.

"We can easily rig up a little laboratory, and when you see these experiments and perform them, you won't find them hard."

"I don't see any use in it," complained Matthew, almost in tears.

"But you will. And you must do more English reading. Both you and Ellen use abominable idioms. Here are a dozen prescribed books."

"I don't like to read," said Matthew. "I don't believe it's meant for us to read much except the Word of God."

Levis looked at his son with an intense, satiric amusement. But he made no comment. In a few months Matthew would be sitting under teachers whose elaborate astonishment at stupidity Levis remembered. He would like to hurry him away to-day. He needed to see himself as others saw him; he needed to meet amused and astonished eyes, to hear the smothered laughter of fellow students at his boorish ways. It could not be that the boy was irreclaimable who yesterday was playing with his blocks on the floor!

"You'd better go to your room, Matthew. You should study four or five hours a day and you're likely to be interrupted here."

Matthew went slowly upstairs. For a while he sat idle; then hearing his father's voice, he opened his books. They proved hateful; a few weeks without mental effort had made thinking difficult. He heard Ellen, now that her father had driven away, chanting the names of bones and he shouted fiercely to her to be still. He was even young enough to shed tears. Then he prayed for strength to bear the extraordinary burdens of his lot and it seemed to him that his task was lighter. Once, lifting his eyes from his book, he looked steadily for a long time at the wall. He was following a pleasant train of thought which had for some time received a subconscious attention. He was planning what should be done with the farm if he had it. It was a delightful occupation.

After dinner Ellen, who had hitherto always obeyed Matthew and every one else who had given her commands, ceased her singing and studying and went upstairs, creeping softly on hands and knees. It could not be that Matthew would continue "mad" much longer. At other times he had been angry for a day and a night, but now a day and a night had passed. Unfortunately she did not let her approach be known and Matthew, looking up from his meditations, saw her standing in the doorway. As much startled and alarmed as though she had read his thoughts, he flew into a rage.

"You sneak on me, do you? I just tell you this, Ellen, you'll get your punishment, never fear! A girl to run out of church and refuse to listen to the words of her good grandfather! You know what

happens to bad people—that will happen to you unless you repent. The Bible says we shan't have anything to do with people who don't do right. I'll speak to you, but I won't have anything more to do with you until you say you are sorry for the way you acted. Get out of my room!"

Ellen got out quickly and went down the stairs. In the office she hid her face in the pillows of the old sofa. She understood now that the house was divided; she felt division in her own heart. The teaching of the Seventh-Day Baptists was the only religious teaching she had ever had—perhaps Matthew was right. Then what would become of her father who did not go to church? And what would become of her who fled from church?

CHAPTER VII

AN EVENING PILGRIMAGE

THAT Grandfather would give up the children without a struggle was unlikely. When a month had passed and they had not reappeared at service, he went to visit his son-in-law, taking Amos with him. It was Sunday evening and the church bells were ringing. He carried a long staff, and looked, with his silvery beard and his unearthly expression, exactly like the early pilgrims, worn by vigils and fasting, who had set out from this spot in summer's heat and winter's cold to gather into the Net of Heavenly Wisdom all who were willing to be caught therein. Across this undulating land, then thickly forested, had traveled not only Seventh-Day Baptists, but Moravian and Mennonite, Dunker, Quaker, and New Mooner, all on journeys which were concerned with the salvation of souls, all anticipating the coming of the Celestial Bridegroom. They had not walked on a smooth road comfortably as did Grandfather and Amos, but with sandaled, stumbling feet in narrow paths, from which they stepped to let pass a single Indian warrior or perchance a horde going noisily to Lancaster with squaws and papooses, worn old horses and dirty impedimenta, to exchange, for a few hundred pounds, mountains and valleys, great rivers and dense forests.

Grandfather walked silently, his head bowed, and Amos, stepping behind him at the approach of a team, kept that position, his head bent like the old man's.

The beauty of the evening weaned Grandfather for a little while from his anxiety. The wheat was gathered and in the barns, the corn was taller than his head. Over everything streamed a golden light like the imagined light from the portals of the heavenly city. He had often fancied himself laying down his earthly burdens on such an evening, and he had long desired to go. He was desperately tired of life with its complications and unaccountable contradictions. For an instant he wondered whether any future could be better than one of entire rest and blankness of mind, of such sleep as visited the very weary—heavy and uninterrupted by dreams.

Then, with horror, he drove away such speculations. Was he to lose in a moment's doubting in his old age that heaven which he had desired from his youth? Moreover, the most important duty of his life still lay before him, the strengthening of the young in the faith so that the truth should not be left without witnesses. There was Amos of whose devotion he was sure, but the life of a single man was a slender barrier to set up before the waves of indifference and disbelief which were engulfing the world. If he could not count upon his grandchildren, there was no one left. He gauged with a keen eye the quality of the rest of his flock. Feeling suddenly the need of an assurance from his solitary disciple, he called Amos, who stepped to his side, pleased to obey promptly.

"Amos, it will not be long till I am gone."

"Don't say that, Uncle!"

"It is so in the nature of things and I would not have it otherwise. I intend to leave you so that you will need to feel no anxiety about your daily bread. What else I have will go to my grandchildren under certain conditions and some also to the fund to help the repairs. It is a heavy responsibility you have on you, but our founder said that wherever there is a man who has a receptive mind there will the Spirit enter in."

Amos's golden head bent humbly.

"I have no ambition to be prominent, Uncle. I wish there was some one else."

"There is no one else. Besides, you have been trained; there is no one but you to decipher the old writings. If anything should happen to me suddenly, it will be your duty to look after these children. It is my firm belief that Matthew is ours without any question, but it is different with little Ellen. You have her in school; everything will rest with you."

Amos's delicate skin showed a bright color even in the gathering twilight. He had begun to believe that he had unsuitable thoughts about Ellen, that he had noted with unseemly keenness the changes in her youthful figure. It would be sad if at last temptation should come to him in the form of sweet little Ellen, his pupil! He believed that thus the devil answered his desire to remain celibate. Before he had formed this intention, he had not been troubled. He did not quite hold with St. Chrysostom that a woman was a wicked work of nature covered with a shining varnish, but he did believe that she was a serious obstacle to the spiritual life.

There was a light in Dr. Levis's office where he sat reading. Ellen had gone with Mrs. Sassaman to her church, and to their surprise Matthew had brought round the double carriage and had taken the driver's seat.

Levis called "Come in," without laying down his book. When he saw his guests, he sprang up and pushed out two chairs. Now that Ellen was studying and Matthew had gone to the Lutheran church, he felt a little pity for Grandfather Milhausen.

"Sit down," he invited. "This is a very pleasant evening."

The circumstances of his visit to the Kloster were now reversed—it was Grandfather who had no desire to discuss the character of the weather, and to his son-in-law's remark he made no reply. Levis looked at him critically. He must be considerably over seventy, but he might live to be a hundred.

Then Levis looked at Amos whose beauty though unpleasant was extraordinary—what a sensation

he would create among artists!—he might even, with his aureole and his silky beard, produce a sensation upon a city street. Levis wondered with amusement what Amos would say to a suggestion that he allow his body to be made a delight to the eye for centuries, like that of a certain youthful model of St. John.

Grandfather clasped both hands over the head of his stick and leaned forward. His keen eyes fell upon the book which Levis was reading—he knew enough of books to be certain that this was no religious work.

"Edward, I have come to speak again about the children for whom I am accountable. I didn't believe you when you said they shouldn't come to meeting. It seemed that you could not be guilty of such short-sightedness and wickedness."

"I meant exactly what I said—that they should go no longer to the meeting of the Seventh-Day Baptists. This evening they have gone with the housekeeper to the Lutheran church."

"Not Matthew!"

"Yes, Matthew. He went of his own accord. I hope they'll go to other churches, all the churches. Then they'll realize that much that you teach is taught elsewhere, and that will be a step gained."

"The Lutherans are worldly and they don't believe in trine immersion!" Grandfather's voice thundered.

"What do you suppose the Lutherans would say about you? It's only fair that the children should hear both."

"That isn't the way to train children. They should be taught, line upon line, precept upon precept, so that truth is fixed in their minds firmly."

"You've had your chance to fix it firmly."

"I'd like to see them," said Grandfather. If there had been the slightest break in his voice, if his tone had expressed a hundredth part of the misery within him, Levis would have replied more gently. But Levis thought of him only as a bigoted, hard old man.

"You may come here and see them at any time."

"It isn't suitable that I should come to see my grandchildren when they are able to come to see me."

"I'll send for you. I'll drive down and get you myself when you want to come. But the children can't go to meeting, I won't allow it. The other day I passed the door of the Saal and it was open and I went in. It is incredible that you can hold services there. It ought to be torn down; it's like a cave for dampness. I would as soon bury Ellen and Matthew as let them continue under the influence of that place. It's a crime to stand still when the thought of the whole world is changing."

"We've one business in life, to serve God and obey Him. We're not to follow changing winds."

Levis moved impatiently.

"Your lot may have been cast in those dim, musty, horrible places. The lot of my boy and girl is cast in the world where they've got to be better fortified than your doctrine would fortify them. They've got to stand on their own feet and think for themselves. They know right and wrong; the rest they'll have to work out."

Grandfather leaned forward, scorn upon his trembling lips.

"What have you worked out? The doctrine of the Trinity? Or trine immersion? Or salvation by faith? Any of these doctrines?"

"None of them," answered Levis lightly. "Not a single one of them."

"You will be eternally destroyed," warned Grandfather, truly appalled.

"Well," said Levis—then he felt ashamed. There was no use in further horrifying an old man of whom he had so obviously the upper hand. "You and I shouldn't discuss this subject. Each of us knows what the other thinks and there's no likelihood of either of us changing." He tried to recall some pleasant subject upon which he and his father-in-law could agree. Grandfather was not interested in politics, and still less in several wonderful medical discoveries which Levis read about with eyes agleam like those of a traveler at sight of a new continent. Grandfather held the practice of medicine to be useless idling.

"We've had a good harvest," said Levis, at last.

Grandfather stood upright. His beard was blown to one side by a sudden breeze which made the flame of the lamp waver.

"Edward, I ask you once more for the souls of these children!"

"Nonsense," answered Levis. "Their souls aren't mine! If you're going home, you'd better let me drive you down."

Grandfather made a rejecting gesture and walked toward the door. Then he saw that Amos had not risen, but sat, turned in his chair, looking at a little table by the window upon which lay several schoolbooks, a tablet, and two pencils. There was also a glass of water with a few rosebuds in it. A sharp suspicion shot through Amos's heart. Was Ellen studying in advance of her class? Then she would not come back! Burning red dyed his cheeks; he felt that Grandfather and

Levis must both be able to read in his heart the emotions which boiled and raged there, putting his salvation in jeopardy.

"Is Ellen studying in summer?" he asked tremulously. "These look like her books."

"Yes," answered Levis. "You've given her a good foundation, Amos, and she has a good mind. But she must move more rapidly, or she'll get into lazy habits."

"I could give her extra work," offered Amos, trembling.

"It isn't fair to ask you to do that. I'll teach her myself till she goes away."

"Is she going away?" asked Amos.

"She'll have to go to finish her education."

"She'll not need education beyond what she can get in school," said Grandfather. Here was a new and greater danger!

"Oh, yes, she will!"

"What do you mean to make of Ellen?"

Until this moment her father had had no definite plans about what he should do with Ellen once her mind was trained. Now he expressed a sudden alluring thought. She had shown certain aptitudes; even before his sentence was finished it seemed to him that the idea had long been forming.

"I may make a doctor of Ellen."

At that the ticking of the old clock in the corner could be plainly heard. Grandfather was amazed and frightened; Amos felt actually dizzy as though the world were whirling.

"Of *Ellen!*" they said together.

Levis began to elaborate the idea.

"I wish Ellen to earn her own living. Dependence upon any one after one is grown is bad. I wish her to be perfectly independent even of the man she marries, to be able to say to him if necessary, 'I don't need you.' She must have a profession, and it's natural that she has inherited some aptitude for medicine. I mean to give her every opportunity. I'm going to prepare her for college as rapidly as I think wise, and when she is through college she is to go to a medical school if she wishes."

To Grandfather this was the raving of a madman.

"You would turn the world upside down!" he cried.

Levis made no answer. He heard the carriage at the door and Ellen and Mrs. Sassaman coming in. He wished that they had not returned so soon, but here they were. He hoped that his visitors would depart before Matthew finished his work at the barn.

Ellen ran in, her cheeks aglow. When she saw her grandfather, she hurried forward.

"Why, Grandfather, when did you come?"

"A little while ago." There was a quiver under his long beard.

"And Amos! Amos, I'm studying with Father and I'm not coming back to school."

"So I hear," answered Amos.

After this no one spoke, but all looked at Ellen with hunger in their eyes. Standing between them, she felt uncomfortable. She loved them and she knew that they did not feel kindly toward one another. A week ago she would have offered to sit on her grandfather's knee, or she would have taken her fine collection of correct "examples" to show her teacher. Now she moved backward toward her father, who laid his hands on her shoulders and held her close to him.

"I'm studying with Father," said she, as though she were defending him. "Some day I'm going to be an honor to him."

The words echoed in two disturbed hearts until the gate of the Kloster was reached.

CHAPTER VIII

MATTHEW MAKES HIS CHOICE

AFTER stabling his horses Matthew came into the house. One would have thought that any lad would have found the prospect of Ellen on one side of Dr. Levis's desk and the doctor on the other more attractive than the furniture of a bedroom. But Matthew started up the stairs.

"Matthew!" called his father.

Matthew returned obediently to the doorway. He was fast approaching his father's height and promised to be as tall as Grandfather Milhausen.

"Won't you join us?"

Matthew said he thought not; he believed that he would go to bed.

"I hate going to bed," remarked Ellen. Between her and Matthew matters were not yet straightened out, but she was hopeful of a gentle answer.

"You hate many things that are good and right."

Ellen's brown eyes filled.

"Now, Matthew, it isn't necessary to be as serious as all that!" said Levis. "Come and sit down."

"I think I'll go to bed."

Levis half rose, impelled to cross the room and lay an affectionate, persuasive hand on the boy. But he thought better of it and his face colored with relief at an escape from a possible rebuff. Alas, he knew beforehand all that Matthew was likely to do; he remembered another figure with well-set head and gray eyes that had often regarded him unyieldingly from the doorway.

"Very well, my son. Good-night."

When he had gone, Ellen looked at her father. Levis was for the moment off his guard, his past years were moving before him in review. She said nothing, but she began suddenly to feel a deep and loyal indignation.

Matthew climbed to his room slowly, the spark of regret in his heart quenched before he reached the upper step. He sat down at his window and looked out into the moonlight. He said nothing aloud, but what he said in his heart was this:

"The Lutheran preacher prided himself on his learning with his careful pronunciation and his long, long words. The girls stood gayly dressed in the choir for the young men to look at, and each tried to scream louder than the others. I would not look at one of them. Everything was too rich and too comfortable. Ellen's eyes were like bright, shining cat's eyes. It was immodest to stare the way Ellen did."

His gaze sought the moonlit distance as though he would pierce it through. As clearly as though they were before him he saw the old buildings, the low ceiling, the worshipers with downcast eyes. He drew a deep breath of earth-scented air. The field beside the house had been ploughed, and in the dewy night it exhaled a heavy odor, full of decay yet full of promise. He seemed to see the farmer, his hands on the plough; he saw the forward pull of the shoulders of the heavy bays, the warm dark earth curving from the ploughshare. It was all part of the life for which he longed, for which he was made.

Then he looked back into the room. Dimly on his table he saw a pile of books, his hateful books. He was tempted to destroy them, but even stubborn Matthew had still a measure of common sense. He would have to obey his father and go away, but he would come back. He would have another month at home, then he would have to be at the University before the opening to take examinations. He had no expectation of failure and he was above deliberate effort to fail. He was determined to put himself thoroughly to whatever test the city might offer, a Daniel descending willingly into the fiery furnace.

From summer day to summer day, Ellen studied. It was with difficulty that Levis restrained himself from giving her longer lessons. When the cooler weather came, then she should have full hours. Last year's studies were reviewed and the equivalent of a half-year under Amos accomplished before September. Then, when Matthew, sullen-eyed and silent, had been taken to Philadelphia by his father, Ellen began to work in earnest.

She had by this time acquired many ideas that were new. The gods of her little girlhood, Grandfather and Amos, had been entirely displaced and there was but one creature worthy of worship. It was not Levis's positive statements, delivered as though there were no disputing them, which won Ellen; it was his hands on her shoulders and the throb of his beating heart; it was the way he had looked at Matthew when Matthew had refused to come and sit with them. Two months ago he had been like most fathers, a tall, distant, directing human being; now he was a creature not only to be obeyed, but to be made much of, even to be protected and defended. He would have been touched and amused to know what Ellen thought of him.

He left Matthew in a small room at the University and came away, still believing that he would "come out right," that is, he would see how foolish he had been. He would make friends, he would learn to be like other lads, he would forget the bigotry and narrowness to which he had committed himself. Matthew was his own son, and he, Heaven knows, had never been bigoted or narrow.

After visiting the theater and watching a few skillful operations, he went home. He might have seen, had he chosen to cross the street to the Ophthalmic Hospital, Stephen Lanfair, who was there one day in the week, but he did not choose. He still loved him, but he did not care to search him out. He was astonished to find that the confusion of the city wearied and, still worse, worried him.

He found Ellen waiting for him in the doorway and decided as he crossed the porch that she was going to be a pretty girl. Still there was no trace of her mother about her, and little of him—perhaps from his own unknown mother she had inherited her thick curls and her black eyes.

"I have learned what you gave me to learn," she boasted. "Does Matthew like Philadelphia?"

"I think he will."

"You are to go to Umbesheidens' and to Heilmans' right away."

"Has anything important happened?"

"Nothing at all."

Then Ellen felt a little uncomfortable. Something had happened, but it was too small a thing to tell. She had met Amos one afternoon in the woodland. He had been required by a new school law to give a small amount of instruction in botany and had come to find oak leaves. He was sitting on the stump which was her special seat and, glad to see him and ready to talk, she sat down at once on the fallen tree near by.

"How is school?"

Amos did not answer. His curious passion seemed suddenly entirely reasonable. Ellen's hair had gone up, her dresses down.

"It's pretty much like always," said he at last. "But you're not there." Then he added hastily, "And Matthew is not there."

"Are the boys still so dumb?"

Amos hesitated. The boys were very stupid, but it was against his code to speak in such fashion of any one.

"They do their best."

"And Millie? How does she get her lessons?"

"She is no longer there. Oh, Ellen, I wish you would come back!"

"But I'm almost through what you teach," said Ellen. "I couldn't stay long if I did come. And I couldn't come, anyway. Two years from now I'm going to college."

"Oh, Ellen, I hope you'll be a good girl!"

Ellen stirred uncomfortably at the solemnity in Amos's expression.

"I mean to!"

"Don't forget what you have learned!"

"I won't. Father says you taught me very well."

"I mean you're not to forget other things—the true Gospel and the health of your soul."

"I will remember all that," said Ellen quickly, frightened by this sudden allusion to her soul.

"And don't forget me, and that I'm praying for you!"

"I won't," promised Ellen. "Indeed, I won't." Nervously she rose from her place on the old log. It was late afternoon and the shadows suddenly deepened. She held out her hand. The heart which stirred quickly at another's need felt vaguely Amos's misery. "I must go back. I—" she was still a child until she had uttered her childish sentence—"I'll kiss you if you wish, Amos!"

Then Amos knew that the devil was after him indeed. But he bent and laid his bearded lips to the smooth cheek. He said nothing, and in a moment she was gone, flushed and frightened.

"Oh, how silly!" said she to herself. She felt again the light warm touch upon her cheek. "How dreadful to have said such a thing!"

It was of course impossible to describe this foolishness to her father.

Grandfather thought hourly of Matthew. Each day he became more painfully aware that Matthew was young and that temptations were many. He saw him at the end of the week surrounded by all the enticements of a lurid Babylon. Members of the church, astonished at the course pursued by Dr. Levis and permitted—at least they thought it was permitted—by Grandfather, poured into his ears descriptions of orgies indulged in by college students in which wine, women, and song furnished a gay entertainment. Indeed, according to the stories heard by Brother König, wine, women, and song were as necessary to college students as food and sleep. Church-going was unknown without compulsion, and then all were required to attend a single irreligious, inconsistent service where one Sunday Jews preached to Gentiles and the next Gentiles to Jews. Brother König, so keen when the trade of a horse was in question, had heard that on certain Sundays even Catholics set up their altars and tried to proselyte. Matthew, every one believed, had spiritual strength unusual in a young man, but he was, in the local idiom, not *that* strong.

It was reported also that all evil practices reached their height in the Medical School where Matthew, after an incredibly long stay elsewhere, would eventually spend four years. Brother

König could invent little beyond that which he had already imparted, but he stated plainly that there were other things, *of which he would not tell*.

From Matthew directly Grandfather heard nothing. He wrote to him, but his vaguely addressed envelope did not reach its destination. Meanwhile he came to his assistance in another way. The evenings had grown cool and he and Amos sat within doors, Grandfather in meditation, Amos studying a Latin manuscript which he had found in a room high under the eaves of Saron. It was a discourse on "The Mystic Dove," and was one of the few documents which had escaped prying antiquarians. The quality of the Latin was poor, but Amos was puzzling it out, believing that it had been written by Brother Jabez, one of the most interesting and certainly the most learned of the sect, and that it contained valuable devotional material. Sometimes he read a line to Grandfather, and they discussed it wisely. Alien and worldly historians had described the Kloster, but none had written with understanding and sympathy, and sometimes Amos dreamed of undertaking the task.

Grandfather's plan for the sustaining of Matthew consisted in the offering of prayers each evening at the hour of nine, when, for some reason, he fancied temptations to be at their height. During October the two petitioners made their candle-lit way into the dim and musty Saal and there knelt down before the old benches, and when the Saal grew tomblike in the cold November evenings, they offered their oblations both for Matthew and Ellen in the kitchen, which was filled with the sound of Grandfather's sonorous voice.

Amos also, fresh from the work of the devout and mystic Brother Jabez, prayed for Matthew's well-being, reproaching himself with the neophyte's humility for the pleasure which he took in a neatly rounded petition. He tried to pray for Ellen, but when he did so he seemed to feel her kiss.

November waned, and still each evening the two men besought the Creator of the world to watch over their lamb. Grandfather prayed more fervently and eloquently, with the desperate earnestness of a Jacob who feels the angel slipping from him.

"I have had no sign of an answer," said he despairingly. "We must pray more."

The next evening they prayed for an hour. Grandfather's heavy heart found relief, and Amos on his knees with eyes uplifted expected some visible pillar of fire or of cloud.

"We shall hear from him," said Grandfather with assurance.

The last evening of November was stormy. A late and lovely autumn had ended yesterday with a fiery sunset and a roaring wind, and to-day wind and rain and sleet made the outer world almost intolerable. The blast penetrating between the cracks of the cottage blew the fire to a furious blaze which, roaring up the chimney, gave little heat. The gale stirred the end of Grandfather's beard as he knelt by his chair, and fanned Amos's cheek. There were the dark shadows, the silvery white of Grandfather's beard, the golden light on the brass bowl of the old lamp, and all about the sound and fury of the storm, which seemed to threaten the destruction of the cottage.

Grandfather had worked himself into an ecstasy of expectation and it seemed to him certain that a divine communication was imminent. Amos opened his eyes to look at him and did not close them, so wonderful did he seem. The wind distressed him but the sight of the old man at prayer calmed him.

"O Lord, we pray Thee for some sign that we are heard. We ask Thee for Thy blessing upon one whom we love. Thou knowest the cruel snares set for the feet of the young; keep his feet from going in those paths. Forgive those who have tried to set his way therein. Bring him safely home. We wait, O Lord!"

The voice grew shrill; the key upon which it ended was high, as though the petitioner did indeed wait. There was suddenly a sound outside that was different from the wind, a sharp closing of the gate behind a visitor in haste. Before Grandfather and Amos could rise from their knees, the door opened, and, looking up, they saw not a mysterious visitor, still less Matthew, whom his grandfather thought of first of all, but Levis, pale and drenched with rain.

Levis looked away; he did not like to see men in the act of baring their souls any more than he liked to bare his own.

"I don't wish to interrupt."

"There is no interruption. Sit down, Edward."

Levis did not respond to the invitation.

"Do you know anything of Matthew?"

Amazement answered him.

"Nothing," said Grandfather at last. "I haven't seen him since long before he was sent away. What is the matter with Matthew?"

"He has left school."

Grandfather waited for further information. In his heart he said, "Thank God!"

"He hasn't simply disappeared; he has deliberately run away, after notifying the registrar that he was going. He was forbidden to go, but he went nevertheless."

"I know nothing whatever about him."

"Nor I," said Amos.

"It was three days ago."

"I've been praying that he would resist temptation," said Grandfather boldly. "Perhaps this is the answer."

"I'm not concerned about temptations," answered Levis impatiently. "Matthew is no fool. I'm concerned for his health. Where is he?"

Then Levis felt the door against which he stood move slightly and turned with tigerish swiftness and threw it open. In came the wind and sleet, and in came also Matthew, rain-soaked, bedraggled, with bent head. He pressed hard against the door until it was closed and then stood panting with bright, sullen eyes.

Levis spoke first.

"How long have you been out in this storm?"

"Only a little while. I walked yesterday and the day before, but to-day I got a long ride in a market wagon."

"Have you any clothes here that he can put on?" This in a physician's sharp tone to Amos.

Amos beckoned Matthew to the other room.

"When did you eat?" asked Levis.

"At supper time," said Matthew and shut the door.

Levis sat down by the table. "Have you any stimulant in the house?"

"God in Heaven, Edward, now that he is here and safe, would you ruin him deliberately? Aren't you satisfied?"

"Have you anything that he can take hot?"

Grandfather rose and opened a cupboard door, his hands trembling.

"I will make *durch-wax* tea."

"Make it then, or let your acolyte make it." In the midst of his rage Levis was pleased with having found exactly the right word.

"It's very bitter tea," said the old man as he poured hot water upon the dried leaves.

"The bitterer the better," said Levis grimly.

When Matthew appeared from the inner room, there came into his father's white face the expression of amazed and intolerable pain which Ellen had once seen. Matthew was unshaven; the dark shade on his cheek was not put there by the soil of travel, it was a curling beard, which, above Amos's black suit, had a significance not to be ignored. For a single second his father thought that this could not be Matthew, it was Amos. He laid his hand against his side as though his heart ached sensibly.

"Are you tired?" he asked.

"Not very."

"Then I think we'd better settle this matter at once. Since you've chosen to come here and to pass your father's gate, we'll discuss it here and for the last time. Why did you leave school?"

"I couldn't see any use in it."

"Do you expect to be a physician without going to school?"

"I don't want to be a physician. I have no interest in it. I want to farm." Matthew burst into tears.

Levis met tears without a change of expression.

"Suppose you do want to farm, there's no reason why you shouldn't go to school. There are new methods of farming which you could learn. You could at least learn how to live. Do you want to remain an ignoramus?"

"I'm not an ignoramus. And I don't want to take your money."

Levis made no answer.

"Because I'm going to be a Seventh-Day Baptist. I'm under conviction. It wouldn't make any difference how long I went to school, the result would be the same. I can't have peace unless I come out openly."

Now it was the heart of Grandfather which threatened to stop beating. Did God hear the prayers of the faithful, or did He not? He poured into a cup some of the steaming brew.

Levis folded his arms and settled himself more closely against the back of the straight pine chair.

"Drink your tea," he commanded. "Then I have something to say to you."

Matthew swallowed the scalding fluid. It warmed him, put heart in him, like a sacramental wine. The storm was almost over; the roar in the chimney had ceased, the roar outside had almost died down; it seemed as though the stage were set for Levis.

"I don't wish to be interrupted," said he. "I'm speaking to my son and you are perfectly welcome to listen. Afterwards you shall have your chance if he wishes to hear you."

Levis began in the fifteenth century.

"The Reformation was a protest against superstition, but only against the more gross superstitions, and the Protestant Church retains to-day the essential superstitions of the Roman Church. The idea of the Son of the Creator of the universe in human form is a fantastic one, now fading from the minds of the more intelligent. Matthew, are you listening to me?"

"Yes," said Matthew in a whisper.

"The idea of a blood atonement, of the sacrifice of a single innocent being for the sins of all the world, is monstrous, a development of the idea that the crimes of men could be laid upon the back of an animal, which, driven away, took them with him. To these ideas the Seventh-Day Baptists have added others as fantastic as any invented in the history of the queer mind of man. I could just as easily worship the bones of a human being as I could believe it essential to have my feet bathed at a church service. Your denial of opportunities is as ridiculous as that of the hermit who prefers to live in bodily uncleanness. You live in mental sloth and blindness! Your founder was a charlatan of the worst sort who beguiled women away from their husbands and mothers away from their children, to live in fancied holiness in this grim place. Generation by generation his followers have grown fewer in number. In Matthew's generation there will not be half a dozen.

"Now, Matthew, this is my last word. You may return to school for the year—that is one alternative. Or you may come home and live like a normal human being and farm if you wish and without further education if you insist, under the condition that you don't join the Seventh-Day Baptists or attend their meetings until you are twenty-one years old. Or, you may stay here, allied with the past, letting the world go by, alienated from your father and little sister who have a right to your society and your love.

"You must choose now, Matthew. I can't continue to hope for years to come that you'll be an honor to me and then have you fail me. You'll have to make up your mind."

It seemed to Levis that he had been talking a long time. He changed his position, driving his hands deep into his pockets and crossing one knee over the other. Seated easily, his clenched fists invisible, he had the appearance of a man too firmly grounded in his philosophy of life to be seriously affected by any chance which might befall. Matthew sat with bent head; Amos in the shadow held his hand across his lips. Once he remembered a cool, soft cheek. Grandfather seemed to have shrunk within himself; his eyes were half closed, his lips moved. It was evident that against the influence of Levis's eloquence he was opposing all his supplicatory powers. He looked at no one; he seemed to be in a trance. The wind began to blow louder, whistling round the corners. The silence within became nerve-racking.

"Well, Matthew?" said Levis, sitting suddenly upright.

Matthew answered without raising his head.

"I'm under conviction. It would be wrong for me to waste my time studying when nothing was to come of it."

Levis got to his feet quickly.

"You mean you're going to stay here?"

"Yes."

Now Grandfather folded his arms across his breast and bent his head almost upon them. Did God hear His children, or did He not?

Levis lifted his hat from the pine table.

"Matthew, look at me!"

Matthew lifted his eyes. For an instant, with torn heart, he longed to throw himself on his father's breast. But his Heavenly Father was more dear. He dropped his eyes once more.

"You've entirely made up your mind?"

"Yes," he whispered.

Levis lingered another instant, his back against the door.

"Listen to me. I have my creed. I believe that no man can behave foolishly or wrongly without having it somehow returned to him. I hope that this hour will never be visited upon you."

Then Levis went out to return no more. He stumbled as he crossed the step and then straightened up in the face of the wind which blew clear and strong from the north. He went through the gate into the graveyard, and saw the full moon, unveiled with mysterious suddenness, illuminating the white stones. The experience through which he had passed, the stormy and magnificent night, the moonlight making so purely white the tallest stone in the little graveyard—all would have moved and racked another man. But he had the power, cultivated through long years in uncongenial surroundings, of detaching himself from the present. He began to repeat a passage of description of which he was fond and which brought before his eyes a foreign landscape which he had never seen, but of which he often dreamed. When it was finished he repeated another passage and yet another, and so came at last to his own door.

The light burned dimly, but a dimmer light would have revealed to his seeking eyes that for which they looked. Under a gay pieced afghan lay Ellen, a book in her arms. Beside her her father drew up a chair and there sat down, scrutinizing each childish lineament, each crisp curl. She slept heavily, and it seemed to him that there was a shadow under her eyes and he bent still more closely over her to discover that the shadow was only that cast by her long lashes. He put

out his hand and laid it softly on the bright cover.

Sitting thus, he faced at last his extraordinary situation. Ten o'clock struck, eleven, twelve, and still he was there. His mind traveled to Matthew's babyhood, to Matthew's childhood—would things have been different if he had been different? He was still young then, and thinking not so much of his children as of his own miseries of mind and body, he had not realized that he was guilty of neglect. Even yet he did not feel like a middle-aged man, much less like an old man—but he had a son mature enough to defy him and to leave his house! His pride was deep and high, the pride of a man of intellect—he contemplated with horror the strange atavistic trick played upon him.

CHAPTER IX

A GROWING MIND

THAT Matthew had returned, that he was to live henceforth with Grandfather, that he was not even to come to the house, were facts which Ellen found difficult to comprehend, yet which she accepted with a child's willingness to accept what her father told her. The family separation caused comment, but no great astonishment in a neighborhood where differences of opinion and the separation of dissenters were frequent.

Life went on quietly, yet not without interesting events. Study under the driving spur of her father's encouragement was an absorbing occupation for Ellen. Presently catalogues were sent for and schools considered and compared. When a sample examination paper arrived, it seemed possible that she might enter college, thoroughly prepared, in two years.

Once, before Christmas, her father took her away. When they drove to the station the pale winter sun had not yet dispelled the pearly mist which lay over the landscape, nor thawed the ice on farmhouse windows. The fields were covered with snow and it was difficult to imagine them dressed in summer's richness of corn and wheat and tobacco. The farmhouses with their huge barns looked like rich manorial properties, as well they might in this deep-soiled country. Until they reached the outskirts of the larger towns nothing was to be seen that was not beautiful, the white stretches of snow, the frozen streams which showed here and there dark pools, the fine clumps of forest trees, white trunks of sycamores, dark masses of evergreens, and willows tipped with yellow beside old spring houses. Nor was there anything that was not indicative of prosperity and peace. The houses were built of brick and stone, the fences were straight and in good repair, there were no weeds; ignorance might laugh at Mennonite and Dunker, Amish and Seventh-Day Baptist, who had tilled the fields and built the houses, but their thrift and labor had founded a great commonwealth.

The ride across the country did not compare in Ellen's mind with the ride between the Susquehanna River and the miles of furnaces and mills. The sight of the towering Capitol, viewed at first from the train above a low stretch of sordid buildings, filled her with delight. When they had climbed the steps to the esplanade, her father turned her away from the Capitol so that she might look down the broad street to the river.

"Oh, Father!" said Ellen holding his hand tight.

"It isn't very long since this was only a frontier fort and the Indians came floating in canoes from far away to barter furs for flintlocks and powder, and for mirrors and baubles for their squaws. Sometime we'll go across the river and get a view of the city and the mountains."

"Shall we really come again?" asked Ellen.

When they went indoors, she had nothing whatever to say. The rotunda was at first simply bewildering, its pictured dome was so far above her, its walls were so white, the angels who held glittering lamps on high were so majestic. Led from place to place she saw interpreted for her the history of her State. William Penn stood, an austere young figure, before an angry father, waited in audience before stern magistrates, or faced westward high on the prow of a boat against a stormy sky. Her eyes dwelt with delight upon each detail; here a blue sky mirrored in a tiny pool, here bright grass, here velvets and laces, here a lean greyhound's body, here leaping flames and young scholars casting their books upon the fire.

There were other pictures; the cold, miserable, intrepid troopers of Valley Forge; William Penn and a magnificent Indian under a yellow tree; the reading of the Declaration of Independence; and last of all, a glorious tableau in which a hundred heroes figured. There was no doubt in Ellen's mind that she had seen the most magnificent edifice in the wide world.

But there were new joys to follow. At sunset the two walked hand in hand upon the long street by the river, keeping on a path close to the brink. When Ellen's eyes left the golden surface of the water, they saw old houses firmly built, stately and well kept. After a while the houses were newer and farther apart. Far across the river trains thundered.

When they retraced their steps the glow had faded and lights sparkled in interminable lines and were reflected in the dark, velvety water. Ellen was young and eager, a warm hand held hers, she could not help dancing by her father's side.

"I'm choosing a house," she said. "There was one gray stone house on a corner—I'm watching for it. It is where I should like to live. I see it now, people are going in!"

Halted by the tightening of her hand, Levis looked across at the gray house. An automobile drove away, another was drawing up to the curb. Wrapped in furs, a lady waited on the pavement for her friends from the second car. The door of the house was open and a maid stood on the upper step.

"Is that a party, Father?"

Levis did not answer. When the door closed he crossed the street. The house fronted both on the river and on the side street, and in the wing there was apparently a suite of offices. He went closer and read the gilt name on a small black sign—"Stephen Lanfair, M.D." Then he took Ellen's hand and walked on. So this was where Stephen lived when he was not traveling about the world! He smiled without bitterness, remembering Stephen's vows of friendship.

Ellen looked up at him, a vague impression growing stronger. She believed that he would like to

be here; that he belonged here, rather than with people like Grandfather and Amos.

"Would you like to live here, Father?"

"Would you, Ellen?"

"Oh, yes!"

She answered still more ardently that night. After their supper they went to a huge lighted building, where it seemed all the ladies had gathered from the fine houses. There were also many gentlemen with such an expanse of shirt-bosom as she had never seen. Here was something to tell Mrs. Sassaman—what would she say to such ironing as that?

"What is going to happen?" she asked in a whisper when they had been taken to seats in the first row of the balcony. Merely to sit there would have been entertainment enough, but it was clear that some additional joy was at hand.

"Wait!" said her father.

She watched the rising curtain; she saw standing on a platform a slender young man with a violin in his hand. Now violins were wicked—Millie's brother, who had long since vanished, was said to have brought one from the city and his father was said to have broken it over the corner of the stove.

Then she took her father's hand. The violinist moved his arm lightly and her blood raced through her veins. Her mind filled with pleasing images, detached from one another, leading nowhere, dreamlike, heavenly. She had never seen dancing, but she felt an impulse to rise and discover whether she was really light as air, whether she could really fly.

"Oh, Father!" she cried, when the dancing tune was over.

Then she said no more, had no vocabulary with which to say more. She felt both sorrow and gladness, but most of all she felt the pains of growth. There were tears in her eyes, then on her cheeks.

When on the way to the hotel her father asked whether she had liked it, she answered his question in a curious way.

"I wish Matthew would come back to us!"

The identical desire filled Levis's heart.

"I wish so, too. Perhaps you can persuade him."

"May I take him a Christmas present and speak to him then?"

"Certainly. To-morrow we'll find one for him."

The carefully chosen present was a picture which reminded Ellen of the view from Matthew's window. It was clear to Levis why she liked it, but he had small hopes that either persuasion or art would move Matthew.

"May I get a pair of gloves for Grandfather and something for Amos?"

"Yes, if you wish."

He took Ellen and her packages to the outer gate of the little cemetery on the afternoon before Christmas. The location of the cemetery suggested to him always a *memento mori*—the brevity of life was not to be forgotten by the residents of the Kloster! The whole place under the covering of snow seemed horribly dreary and forlorn. Ellen clambered out of the buggy and he held her packages out to her.

"In an hour and a half at most, I'll be here."

"May I invite them for Christmas dinner?"

"Yes."

"And Amos?" asked Ellen hesitatingly.

"Yes, and Amos."

She held her packages with care. She had tied them with red cord—such festive packages were not often carried through the cemetery. So accustomed was she to the path that she gave no thought to the white stones. When she came to the second gate she laid her bundle down and fastened the latch, as Grandfather liked to have it fastened, and went up the little walk to the cottage, already shadowed by the Saal and Saron. It had never been her habit to knock at the door, and she did not knock now, but balancing her picture carefully on one arm, she lifted the latch and entered.

It could not have been that the three men had not seen her coming—Grandfather sitting by the stove meditating, and Amos sitting by the table studying, and Matthew sitting idly by the window, all commanded a view of the gate and the graveyard. Each now had in secret a throbbing heart, each longed to let his eyes rest upon her, to devour her. But none had gone to open the door, and now none rose to welcome her.

But her smile was not to be resisted. It brought a faint motion to Grandfather's lips and a red flush to Matthew's cheek, and caused both heart and cheek of Amos to burn. All saw a change in Ellen, added height, a brighter color, a longer dress. Her dress was, moreover, gayer. Hitherto Mrs. Sassaman in selecting her clothes had remembered that she was destined to be a Seventh-Day Baptist and that therefore plainness was her portion; now her father had selected a new coat

and hat, with a very decided intention that she was not to be plain in any sense of the word. Her coloring and his own masculine taste inclined him to red, but the clerk had persuaded him to take brown, and Ellen in a brown coat and a fur cap gratified him beyond all his hopes.

Her appearance, her gayety, and above all her greeting moved, alas, every heart against her. If she had come humbly, plainly dressed, remembering the circumstances under which she had departed, her grandfather would have taken her to his arms. If she had been a little less lovely, Amos would not have been afraid of her. If she had been quieter, as suited her sex and station, Matthew would not have turned away from her.

But she cried out with singularly poor judgment, "Merry Christmas," forgetting that Grandfather believed in searching of heart rather than gayety upon such occasions. Upon her grandfather's cheek she bestowed a granddaughter kiss, and to Amos she gave her hand. Then going to Matthew, she put her arms round him. He longed to respond, to put both his arms round her and to hide his tearful eyes against her curls, but the expression which he gave to this desire was a sharp,

"You're getting too old for such foolishness, Ellen."

Ellen backed toward the table.

"I brought you Christmas presents—gloves for you, Grandfather, and handkerchiefs for Amos, and a picture for Matthew." She handed them round, one by one, then stood, a bewildered fairy-godmother, in the midst of unresponsive beneficiaries.

"I go out very little in cold weather"—this from Grandfather.

Amos did not lift the handkerchiefs from the table.

"I don't approve of pictures, Ellen," said Matthew. "We would much better be reading our Bibles than looking at pictures."

She knew suddenly that Matthew would not come home, that they would not come to dinner, but she hurried to give her invitation before she should lose her voice.

"Father and Mrs. Sassaman and I would like you all to come to dinner to-morrow. Every one. We're going to have turkey."

"We have no heart for gayety, Ellen," said Grandfather.

The two young men, with the healthy appetites of their age, had a second of inward rebellion against this decision, then they acquiesced. Perhaps it was his recollection of the Christmas dinner table with its handsomest white cloth with a red border, its smoking fowl, its hot mince pies, that made Matthew's voice still sharper, his words more cruel.

"You can wrap your picture up."

"You won't come, any of you?" whispered Ellen, her eyes seeking first one, then the other.

Leaving the picture in Matthew's hand she moved toward the door. To all she was a most precious creature about to slip away forever. Her grandfather leaned forward in his chair, pleading like an ancient prophet.

"Oh, Ellen, if you could only see the true light! There is only one thing worth while and that is peace with God. Not education, but your salvation should be your concern."

Matthew's attack was savage. A strange, fierce jealousy filled his narrow heart. Ellen had always obeyed him, she should obey him now!

"You aren't dressed properly. You should know better if Father doesn't."

Amos did not speak, but his eyes burned. If he might only talk to this poor lamb!

"You shan't speak against Father!" cried Ellen. "I don't see why we can't live at peace and love one another. It's wicked for Matthew to make Father feel badly. I would rather"—she knew that she was saying a monstrous thing, but it was true—"I would rather lose my soul than hurt any one like that. I wouldn't believe a religion that made me act like that. I wouldn't believe"—she was now too excited to know exactly what she was saying—"I wouldn't obey a God that wanted me to act like that. I—"

Her sentence unfinished, she got outside and shut the door between her and them. It was beginning to snow and it might be more than an hour before her father came, but she could not stay in the little house.

The snow thickened and twilight fell and she waited, pacing up and down, and feeling the chill of the raw night air through her whole body. She did not go beyond the turn of the road, nor would she start home, for then her father would go into the cottage to inquire for her and he might be met by reproaches and impertinence. Lights shone out from comfortable warm rooms in Ephrata; men returning from their work in the village to homes in the country and women laden with packages looked at her curiously; but she did not forsake her post, though she might have walked home easily.

When at last her father arrived she was shivering. He held his restless horse with one hand and put the other to help her. He was late—the fastening of a box to the back of the buggy had taken time.

"What in the world are you doing out here?" he asked.

"I'm waiting for you."

"But why here?"

"They wouldn't take my presents," wailed Ellen. "They didn't want them; they think I'm wicked. They won't come to dinner. They were all there. Matthew has a—a—beard, Father! I—" But she could say no more.

When she had changed her clothes, she and Mrs. Sassaman taking counsel together over the proper method of pressing the beautiful coat, and had had supper, Levis asked for an account of the afternoon.

"We'll think no more of it," said he when she had finished. "Matthew has chosen for himself. We've done everything we can and it's useless to cry or worry."

But she refused to give up hope. She thought of Matthew in the night; she thought of him the next morning, when, wakened by the strains which she had heard Kreisler play, she ran down the stairs to find the source of the miracle in a victrola at which Mrs. Sassaman and her father stood beaming; she thought of him at intervals through the snow-bound, pleasant day; she thought of him when, with Mrs. Sassaman, she went to the Lutheran celebration and listened to the children singing their carols and saw—oh, beautiful sight!—a tree all set with gleaming candles.

Mrs. Sassaman felt the Christmas spirit, and her heart warmed to those whom she served. She was a loyal soul and she often defended Dr. Levis when her friends blamed him for Matthew's departure. Her marital aspirations had grown less keen; she asked only to stay and serve. With this thought in mind she visited Levis in his office.

"I would rather be Manda," said she, as though the day of her request to be called Mrs. Sassaman were but yesterday.

"Very well," said Levis. "I like it better, it is friendlier."

She sat down uninvited. She gathered now and then from her friends descriptions of extraordinary diseases, and these she reported to Levis, believing them to be professionally useful. She told now of the fearful pain which "took" the friend of her friend, of the treatment by the medical doctor and by the pow-wow doctor and of the "awful witality" of the sufferer's constitution. When she had finished she rose quickly and went happily away.

Ellen thought of Matthew every day through the winter—in the short mornings when there seemed to be so much to learn; in the afternoons when the world moved more slowly; in the evenings when she recited her lessons. If he had stayed in school, he would be very wise indeed. But instead of studying he preferred to work in the stocking factory at Ephrata—that was what Levis's son was doing now!

One spring evening Ellen went for a walk. The frost was out of the ground; the April air was full of the odor of wet earth, and when one stood still one could hear little, pleasant sounds of running water. She had passed the time when her æsthetic sense was limited to pleasure in a glass filled with wild roses, or a gratifying arrangement of autumn leaves; she had begun to observe the delicate colors near the horizon, the soft purple of the old fences, the shapes of trees and of groups of trees. On this spring evening it was heavenly to be alive; one forgot one's haste to be older, one's regret that learning was a slow process, one's desire to see a thousand places, the cathedral of Rheims, for one, and the Doge's palace and the church of St. Sophia for others, which one would, which one must, see some day. She forgot even Matthew.

Then Matthew recalled himself. Ellen was walking slowly, but not so slowly as two persons who came toward her. At the beginning of the descent into the little hollow where the stream ran, she stopped and stood still to listen to the bubbling water and from there discerned, silhouetted against the yellow sky, two dark figures that might well have been ghosts of the early settlers of the land. The man's figure was tall, the woman's short; she wondered what couple was courting on this pleasant evening. Imagination made her flush suddenly, but before she had time to translate the incident into her own experience, the familiarity of the man's outline startled her. There was only one person who had shoulders like that and that was Matthew, who was now a Seventh-Day Baptist, having been plunged one morning in the cold waters of the creek.

The girl with Matthew was Millie König, could be no other, and the young people of the Seventh-Day Baptists did not walk with each other unless they were betrothed!

She hurried home with her miserable news.

"Father, I saw him walking in the road, and Millie was with him."

Levis knew the significance of this companionship. Under his breath, he said scornfully, "Good Lord!" and aloud, "We'll try not to think of it, Ellen."

He had thought often since his visit to Harrisburg of Stephen. He felt with increasing frequency the uneasy sensation in his heart and he knew that he ought to have a word with some one about it. Stephen was an eye specialist, but he was also acquainted with general medical practice. There was a certain disease of the heart which warned gently for a long time and then leaped with tigerish swiftness—but it could not be that!

There was another problem which he should like to lay before his friend. Life on the farm would be intolerable without Ellen and he believed himself still young enough to find another place. Stephen might be able to tell him of a practice and to help him to it. Neither favor was too large to ask if the old friendliness continued. He planned to go to Harrisburg at some convenient season, but he postponed his journey week after week, believing that there was still time enough.

CHAPTER X

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

A LARGE store of information may be put into a receptive mind in two years. Levis, watching his sturdy young Ellen to see that her bright cheeks did not grow pale or her alert step slow, proceeded to find out how much she could acquire. It was a new and interesting occupation, but his pleasure was tempered by a remorseful wonder as to how much could have been accomplished if he had not been so certain that his own blood and the spirit of the age would keep Matthew and Ellen safe.

Ellen continued her mathematics and concluded her geography. She had studied Beginner's Latin with Amos, and her father required her to translate French. Furnishing his pupil with an outline of English history, he prescribed reading and the relating of what she read. Elementary astronomy, botany, and physiology she absorbed like a sponge.

He sent for books which he had long wished to possess, but had denied himself, a many-volumed illustrated history of art, a history of music, a history of architecture in sumptuous dress. He sat late at night thinking over plans for Ellen, and even brought his accounts up to date and sent out bills, so that nothing might be denied her.

The summer and another winter passed and between the farm and the Kloster there was no communication. Ellen saw Matthew and Millie walking together, and hid by the roadside or turned back. There drifted to Levis's ears a report that Matthew wished to marry, but that Millie's father was obdurate. Millie should not marry a penniless man, the two must wait; when Matthew's prospects improved, then marriage might be discussed. He had, it was reported, spoken his mind plainly.

"You should have stayed in the nest. What if you couldn't go to meeting for a while? You are now near twenty-one and then you can do as you choose. You should have consulted with some one."

Ellen had little idea of what college would be like, and still less of what life would be like, but she knew that they must be glorious and she longed intensely for both experiences. The second summer of preparation passed slowly. She was sure that much was happening elsewhere and she knew that little was happening to her.

One Sunday afternoon she went to sit on her favorite stump in the woodland. Before starting she looked at herself in the mirror, at her curls and rosy cheeks, made redder by a reflection from her scarlet tie. She held up her hands and saw with satisfaction that they were whiter than any other hands she knew.

Her inspection had the result which usually follows the self-inspection of seventeen—she wished that there was some one at hand to admire. Perhaps in the woods she would meet a stranger! There she could at least dream of meeting one.

She had been established on the stump for an hour, now reading, now sitting idly, her chin in her hands, when, lifting her head, she observed that the farmhouse was about to receive an unusual visitation. Since the house stood near the main road, she saw daily the cars of tourists who were starting across the country, or who journeyed to Gettysburg or Pittsburgh. Once, sitting on the fence, she had talked to several elegant ladies who walked about while a tire was being repaired.

Now a car, more beautiful than any she had ever seen, was turning up the lane and approaching the farmhouse. Its passengers had come, no doubt, to ask for some small favor, and she, alas, was not there to wait upon them! A month ago she would have run, now she descended in as rapid a walk as dignity would permit.

To her astonishment she found when she reached the porch that the occupants of the car, except the driver, had gone into the house. Curious as she was, she was seized with sudden shyness and wished herself back under the trees. But in plain view as she was from the office windows there was nothing to do but to proceed.

Her father appeared at the office door, his face flushed and smiling. Stephen Lanfair, halting for a moment at his gate, had seen his name on the letter box and had come in with his wife. He had passed unknowing, he said, many times. Levis's heart throbbed so that he had to draw deep breaths of air. Stephen was the old Stephen; his renewal of their friendship seemed to make possible all he had dreamed. Mrs. Lanfair's presence suggested the solution of another problem which had troubled him. Ellen needed associations and opportunities which he did not know how to give her; Mrs. Lanfair might help him to provide them.

"Oh, Ellen, come here," he said, not without pride. "I was just going to find you!"

Ellen felt his arm across her shoulders. It was silly to be afraid of meeting strangers. She lifted her head and went in smiling.

"This is my daughter."

She felt her hand taken in a long, firm grasp, and received a general impression of height and grayness and alertness and very bright eyes. She looked up into them and smiled, feeling the blood rush to her cheeks. She was sensitive and she had as yet received few impressions which were not those of childhood. This stranger, who was younger than her father and much older than herself, was the first person like her father whom she had ever met.

"Your daughter!" said a low voice.

Then she heard another voice, and courage vanished and embarrassment returned. It was that of a woman, seated in her father's chair, and looking about with appraising eyes. She was small, and the old chair in which she sat seemed much too large for her. Ellen saw in a flash the handsome and slightly bizarre dress, through the yoke and sleeves of which her flesh showed faintly pink, the strange and pretty face with brows which almost met. It was not in the least a happy face, but Ellen was not critical. Hilda was not interested in this plain *ménage* or in Stephen's old acquaintance, recalled thus suddenly to his mind. But it pleased her for the moment to be friendly.

"Come and shake hands with me," said she, and Ellen obeyed, feeling young and awkward and ill at ease.

"Do you go to school?"

"I go to school to my father."

"Have you brothers or sisters?"

"I have—"

"One brother who is at his grandfather's," Levis answered for her. "Lanfair, it is doubtless difficult for an observer to realize that you and I were in school together."

"In school together!" Hilda looked from one to the other. "Impossible!"

Stephen halted suddenly. He had been moving about restlessly, now picking up one of Ellen's books, now reading the titles on Levis's shelves. He was at once glad and ashamed to have found Levis. But he should have come alone, he should not have brought Hilda. He stood close to Levis, his tightly closed hand thrust into the pocket of his coat.

"Levis was an instructor and a Senior at once, and I was a Sophomore," he explained. "He left school and married and I continued to study. I didn't begin to practice till he was well settled in life." He turned his head and looked at Levis, and from eye to eye a message flashed. In Stephen's there was regret and a childlike desire to be restored to the good graces of an older person.

Levis returned the glance steadily and with the same expression with which he looked at Ellen, as though Stephen needed, as Ellen needed, love and care. She saw the exchange and curiosity and admiration quickened. She glanced at Hilda who was taking in from under half-lowered eyelids the old sofa, the little table, and the doctor's medicine cupboards. Her stare made Ellen determine to examine carefully all these articles of furniture. Had the never-failing broom of Mrs. Sassaman left lint, or had her own dust-cloth touched them too lightly?

A restless step brought Stephen to her little table.

"Are these your books?"

Ellen explained her course of study. His bright eyes were kind; she looked frankly into them and smiled while she talked.

"I'm going to college in the fall. I can hardly wait."

Levis, after a second's reflection about the present temper of Mrs. Sassaman, spoke to Hilda.

"Won't you stay and have supper with us? Now that we have you here, we'd like to keep you."

Hilda uttered effusive regrets and Levis looked at her curiously. Her expression had changed; it was no longer that of slightly bored curiosity, but of anger, sharp and unpleasant. Her eyes darted to her husband, then back to Levis, and then back again to the little table where Stephen and Ellen stood together.

"Oh, thank you. It's really very good of you, but it's impossible, really. We have guests ourselves this evening. We should be going now. We sail for Europe on Tuesday."

"Medical convention at Vienna?" asked Levis, his keen, curious eye fixed upon her.

"Yes; that is, my husband is going there. I'm going to Paris for clothes. I don't like conventions. Nor medicine," said Hilda as she rose. She laid one hand in the other and kneaded them together in a strange gesture.

"It's time to go!" said she.

Hearing the sharpened voice, Ellen turned swiftly. How fairylike this stranger was, now that she was standing! She determined in a flash to live on bread and water, to take some sort of medicine, to do anything to resemble her. She saw the small, arched foot, set in absurd, high-heeled shoes—how did she manage to stand, and how to walk? But she did both gracefully. Ellen had heard the invitation; she hastened to second it.

"I do wish you'd stay!"

Stephen looked down at her. There was a quality in Ellen which was hard to describe unless one said that she gave herself with every smile. He had dismissed the thought of children as he had dismissed his father's creed, but from his deeper consciousness an instinctive longing rose. "I wish I had her or one like her!" said he to himself with sudden startled hunger.

"Won't you stay?" said Ellen to him.

Then Ellen was conscious that something unpleasant had been said or done. She could not tell what it was, but she felt that she had given offense. Hilda went out quickly into the hall and stood

waiting. She did not speak to Levis or to Ellen; she only said once more, "I said that it's time to go!"

"You're not really going this minute!" protested Levis, his sharp disappointment quickening his throbbing heart.

"Yes," said Stephen. His voice was louder than it had been and even a little more pleasant. "We really must be off." He held out his hand. "I haven't forgotten anything, not anything!"

Hilda followed across the grass to the car and stepped in. From the car Stephen waved his hand and Levis and Ellen waved theirs. Hilda did not look back. The car started noiselessly; they sat like king and queen in a state chariot, a silent retainer conducting them.

"I think she behaved in a very queer way," said Ellen.

"I agree with you," said Levis. He went into his office and stood looking at the books in his case, and Ellen followed closely.

"Who are they?"

"He was a friend in college. I haven't seen him for years." Frowning, Levis took down one of a set of volumes and went to his desk. "He was a nice boy."

"Was he married when you knew him?"

"No; I remember hearing that he had married a rich wife."

"She must be very rich. Did you know they were coming?"

"No, indeed."

"Where do they live?"

Levis had opened his book at the letter "D," and did not answer. The uneasy sensation in his heart had sharpened once or twice in the last hour to an acute though fleeting pain, gone as soon as it was felt. He had seen Stephen, but the visit seemed to make impossible all that he had hoped for.

For a moment, in curiosity about Hilda's behavior, he forgot his own problems. He had found the article which he wished to consult under the letter "D," but he could not fix his mind on what he read. It was in reality something within his own breast which disturbed him, but it seemed to him that it was Ellen hanging over his shoulder and cutting off the air which he needed.

"I wish you'd run away, Ellen, for a little while. I'll talk to you later about these people."

"All right," said Ellen cheerfully, remembering her own unwillingness to be interrupted. She read over his shoulder—"Dementia"—Father, who has that?"

"No one that I know of, Missy."

"I expect you think I have it. Well, read away, I won't bother."

Levis smiled at the tone of maternal indulgence, then he returned to his book. Again he put his hand over his heart uneasily. The sensation was now of weak fingers moving gently. He coughed, then he looked at Ellen who had sat down at her table. What a strange woman Lanfair's wife was! What had annoyed her? Most wives who brought fortunes proved to be impeditive in some fashion—there was unquestionably an impediment here! He turned a page and read for a moment. There was a mental disorder difficult to distinguish in early stages from sheer devilishness of disposition; and patients had peculiar traits and nervous ways like this woman. Poor Lanfair! Perhaps he would return and confide in his old friend. He had looked as though he needed a refuge.

Presently Ellen returned to her place on the stump and there sat for half an hour.

"I think she was very disagreeable," she said, beginning to speculate about married life. She, Ellen, would never make her husband uncomfortable!

"If I get one!" said Ellen. "And he was splendid!"

They must live in a very grand house—perhaps she and her father might some day visit them. She realized that she didn't even know their name—how strange the whole incident was!

At the end of half an hour curiosity sent her back to the house. Her father had now had time to read all he wanted, she was sure. She remembered that to-morrow a dressmaker was coming to get her ready for school and she sang for joy as she walked.

But in the half-hour that she spent in the woodland, life had taken a long stride. Levis sat with his treatise open at "Dementia," his eyes still bent upon the page. He had not moved since she went away.

"Father!" she cried gayly.

He answered without lifting his head.

"I've been taken suddenly with a bad stitch in my side, Ellen, and I don't wish to move until I've had medicine. You'll find it in the right-hand cupboard in a blue bottle. Bring me a pellet."

Ellen obeyed quickly, growing pale. Levis broke the pellet in his hand and held it close to his nostril, then he straightened his shoulders. It was exactly like a tiger that the thing leaped upon one!

"I'm going over to the couch. Don't be frightened if I go slowly. Lend me your shoulder."

Ellen made her shoulder like iron.

"Telephone Dr. Wescoe."

Ellen flew. It seemed when she returned that her father's face was less terribly gray and drawn.

"What shall I do now?"

Levis managed a wry smile.

"You'll make a capital doctor. Bring paper from your desk and sit here, beside me. You must be brave and steady."

Ellen obeyed swiftly.

"I've known for some time that my heart was a bit out of order. I'm likely to have another attack, but probably not before the doctor gets here. I want you to write something down."

Ellen looked steadily at Levis. If she held his eyes with hers, they could not become blank, unseeing, as they were a moment ago! There was in his face now a dreadful eagerness. In spite of the last hour he turned in desperate need to the memory of Stephen's old affection. Stephen had forgotten for a while, but he meant to remember and he would help him now. He felt the same fearful despair which he had felt as a boy when he needed food and did not know where to get it. He had heard the Creator called upon at too many death-beds to ignore entirely that refuge, but he was not one to turn even in such a moment to a help which he had denied. The "sum and term" of education had not been his, the loss by death of one whom he had deeply loved. If his wife had died in their earliest married life, or if Ellen had died, his spiritual history might have been different.

But what was it he had meant to do? Ah, yes! Ellen was waiting, pencil in hand.

"I give to my daughter Ellen all my property and make my friend—"

"Make my friend," repeated Ellen after a pause.

"Can you remember his name, Ellen?"

"I don't think I heard it!"

"It'll come to me! Listen! You and Matthew inherit this farm from your mother. What I have besides you must take. Don't let them shame you out of it! Remember it's my will. If you wish, you can live economically and share with Matthew after you've had your education. I feel better, darling." He took suddenly a long, relieving breath. After all he was not to be cut off now from life, from Ellen. He looked deeply into her frightened eyes. It was now that she would need him! He had, he felt suddenly with amazement, not yet really lived; he could not *die*! Tears rolled down upon his cheeks. "I'll be able to eat supper with you, I'm sure. We needn't worry to complete the paper. The doctor will write it for me. Don't look so horrified. I think—"

His smile stiffened suddenly and drops of perspiration appeared upon his forehead. Was everything then over? He put out his hands and took Ellen's face between them.

"Don't let them keep you here! Remember!"

"I'll remember," promised Ellen.

Her head dropped to his breast, pressed by his hands close to his heart. She could see nothing, but she could hear a strange beating sound like a wooden hammer upon flesh. Her body was cramped; it seemed to her that she could not breathe; then her father's embrace relaxed and she rose quickly.

Her wild glance sought the window. Mrs. Sassaman drove slowly up the lane, Dr. Wescoe's car turned in from the highway, but their coming now made no difference.

CHAPTER XI

CHANGE

WITHIN a few minutes the farmhouse took on the air of almost hysterical activity which follows upon a sudden death. Mrs. Sassaman, after sinking upon a chair and giving a few tearful gasps, went to her room to change her dress, so that she might set to work. The tenant farmer drove away to carry the startling news to Grandfather and Matthew, and his wife panted up the hill and sat waiting in the kitchen until Mrs. Sassaman should be ready to give her the detailed information for which her soul longed. But Mrs. Sassaman had too exalted a sense of her own importance to gossip. There were, moreover, many things to be done at once, the house to be put in perfect order, funeral meats to be baked, the bees to be told of their master's death, and all the jars of preserves in the cellar to be turned.

Matthew returned with Calvin bringing word that Grandfather would follow with Amos. Having had no active exercise, Matthew had grown stout and looked nearer thirty than twenty. He kissed Ellen and they sat silently until Grandfather arrived.

"The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." It was Grandfather's accustomed salutation on entering a house of mourning. He spoke with a long sigh which expressed his apprehension about the fate of his son-in-law.

In spite of his misgivings he planned to bury Levis's body in the little cemetery beside his wife. Wednesday afternoon would be a suitable time and he would preach the sermon himself. For a half-hour the three men and Ellen sat together in the parlor. Frequently Matthew glanced at Ellen, then away. God had strangely given him his heart's desire, but he could not help pitying Ellen. He felt very solemn and important.

"I don't think that bright tie looks well under the circumstances, Ellen," he said gently.

Ellen rose and went upstairs. As she reached the upper step she heard the door of her father's office open and the undertaker come into the hall. At once the three black figures crossed to the office. She heard whispers and the door was closed.

She did not know whether an hour had passed or only a few minutes when she heard her name called solemnly. Grandfather stood by the parlor table, a tablet in his hand. His black eyes gleamed, his old hand shook. Matthew's eyes were bent upon the floor and Amos looked at Ellen in a frightened way.

Grandfather stepped between Ellen and the door and closed it. It seemed to her that she was shut into prison with three jailers.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"That is what we have to ask you, Ellen," said Grandfather. "What is this paper?"

Ellen recognized the writing which she had begun at her father's command.

"That is mine, Grandfather. Please give it to me."

Grandfather held out the paper so that she might read, but he did not relinquish it.

"Did you write those words?"

"Yes."

"Who is this friend?"

"He is a friend of Father's who was here this afternoon."

"What is his name?"

"I don't know."

"Where does he live?"

"I don't know."

"Does he know anything of this?"

"No."

"You didn't write this after your father died, Ellen?"

The words at first merely paralyzed. When their import was clear, she could say nothing. Her silence was to Grandfather condemning—alas, for the human soul which is unsupported by Christian principles!

"Why, no!" she cried at last. "Of course not! He started to dictate it to me, but before he had finished he felt better and thought it might be postponed."

"You knew you were writing words which would take your brother's property away?"

"No," said Ellen. "It was my father's property."

She saw a glance pass from Matthew to Grandfather. Both sincerely believed that God had prevented Levis from doing a deed of injustice.

"It wasn't sisterly to write such words!"

"I didn't mean to be unsisterly," protested Ellen. "Father wanted me to be educated. He said that Matthew could get along well."

Grandfather tore the upper sheet from the tablet and put it into his pocket.

"We should have very little respect in the community if such a thing were known."

Now Amos found his tongue. He leaned forward, his cheeks crimson.

"Ellen could not be dishonest," he said.

Grandfather looked at him in amazement.

"The women make serious mistakes, and Ellen has made one. They act before they think. Now I will take the first watch to-night."

Ellen crept slowly up the back stairway and closed her door. Tears came in a flood, hot, blinding, choking, drowning all thought, preventing realization of the seriousness of her bereavement. After a long time she fell asleep.

In the two days preceding the funeral she made plans. Only thus could she keep her composure and continue to feel a connection with her father. It was now June. She would stay until September, then she would go to college, as he had intended. Matthew would doubtless come here to live and would bring, alas! Millie with him. But she must reconcile herself; since she was going to have her way, Matthew should have his.

She lived through the funeral service with few tears. The house was thronged, and the line of carriages and automobiles extended far down the road. Levis had lived differently from his neighbors and there was much curiosity about his house. He had used it all, treating the parlor as though it were no more precious than the kitchen, and drawing no shades to keep carpets from fading. There were a few strangers present, members of the county medical society to whom Levis's connections by marriage were vaguely interesting.

Grandfather preached upon the certainty of death and the necessity for preparation, and made no allusion to Levis's heresies. When they returned to the house Ellen expected that he and Amos and Matthew would return to the Kloster. But instead all went into the office.

"Ellen!" called Grandfather.

Ellen went unwillingly and sat down on a chair near the door. She dreaded argument, it could only cause ill-feeling. Her plans were made.

"Ellen, death brings changes with it. It will bring change to you." There was a gloating affection in Grandfather's voice. He believed that God was bringing Ellen back to him.

"Yes," said Ellen quickly, determined not to cry.

"When the father goes, we must consider the property. Now your mother had this farm, inherited from her aunt for whom she was named, and she left it to your father to go after his death to you and Matthew, share and share alike."

"Yes," said Ellen.

"It is only natural that Matthew should want to move on his property now."

"Yes," said Ellen. "Of course."

"It is Matthew's intention to be married."

"Yes," said Ellen faintly.

"He has chosen a modest and pious young woman of his own faith who will doubtless be a blessing to him. He wishes to be married soon."

"I'm glad if Matthew is happy." Ellen's eyes sought Matthew's timidly.

"Then he will come here."

"When will that be?"

"I had thought not till spring," said Matthew for himself. "But now it will be sooner, perhaps in a few weeks." That portion of his cheeks which remained uncovered glowed brightly. He had waited long to possess Millie and the delay was disturbing his regular and calm mental processes.

"Not so soon as that!" cried Ellen, in amazement.

"Yes," said Matthew firmly. "Father is gone and things are changed and the sooner we get used to the new ways the better."

"But Calvin will be here till April!"

"I shall continue to employ him. I have talked with him already."

Ellen's face paled.

"I thought I'd stay here with Mrs. Sassaman till September. Then we could have the house ready for you before I go."

Matthew changed his position, settling himself more firmly in his chair. Ellen would have to do as he said; God was blessing her by giving her no choice.

"Now, Ellen, let us talk this out. The farm belongs to you and me—isn't it sensible that we stay here and work it? Millie isn't such a strong person as some and she may be from time to time laid up, and then there would have to be hired help. Isn't it foolish to hire a woman when you are well and strong?"

"Oh, but, Matthew, I'm going to college! It's all settled! You know that I'm to go to college!"

Silence was Matthew's answer. It was a pity that Ellen was still stubborn. Grandfather took off his spectacles.

"Ellen," he began patiently, "you don't understand business matters. The farm is much run down and Matthew means to build it up. If he gives it the attention it should have, and makes new fences, and gets the implements and lime and everything needed, there won't be any extra income for five years anyhow."

"Then I shall be too old to go to college!"

"You know already far more than is necessary."

"But if I'm not willing to stay here, if I think it's wrong, if I *refuse*?" Ellen's voice was still steady.

"I don't wish to be hard on you, Ellen. My heart yearns over you. But I'm your natural guardian and I have control over your property. I think that Matthew's plan is correct, and that it should be carried out. You can't expect him in these first years to run a farm and raise a family and pay an income besides!"

"But there was Father's will that he wished me to write," said Ellen, still steadily. "His last thought was that I should be educated."

"It is this way, Ellen. Your father left no real will. He had about five thousand dollars saved. Now half of five thousand is two thousand five hundred, and the income on that is only a little over a hundred dollars a year. That would not take you far."

"But he thought it was enough!"

"He meant to let you spend the principal, Ellen. That cannot be now."

Ellen knitted her brows.

"I'll sell Matthew my part of the farm."

Grandfather shook his head.

"We couldn't let you do that. The farm will be worth much more in five years than now. If we did such a thing our neighbors would reproach us because we hadn't dealt fairly with you."

"Let me have my two thousand five hundred dollars," begged Ellen. Here was light in darkness! "That is all I need; that will see me through."

Grandfather shook his head.

"I can't consent to that, either, Ellen. That must be held against a rainy day and meanwhile its income must go into the farm. My child, try to accept your lot! You have a home, comfort, everything you need, and if you stand by Matthew you will have more than you need."

"I think families should be alone!" Ellen cried desperately. "If I were Millie I wouldn't want any one to help run my house."

"You don't know Millie," said Matthew earnestly. "She has no proud ideas and she's very willing to have you help her. I have laid the matter before her."

Grandfather went to speak to Calvin and Amos followed him. Matthew would have followed also, but Ellen called him back. She stood by her father's desk, facing his unwilling gaze.

"Is it possible, Matthew, that you won't help me go to school? Couldn't you lend me money? You have the farm as security."

"You're not of age. You'd have to have Grandfather's consent, and that he wouldn't give. Besides, to be frank with you, I've had experience with advanced schooling and I couldn't help you to it under any circumstances. It begets pride of intellect, it leads young people away from God, it is a curse."

Suddenly Ellen looked at her brother with a detached curiosity, as her father had looked at him. When he had gone she went up to her room. Its loneliness was intolerable, and still more difficult to bear was the sound of the evensong of birds, the sight of the young moon rising over the woodland, and the echo of a laugh from the road. She went down to the kitchen. Mrs. Sassaman was on the porch, her handkerchief pressed to her eyes, swaying back and forth in her rocking-chair: Ellen determined to go and sit on the step and lay her head against her knee.

Instead she turned and went back to her room and sat down at the window. She would not give way to mourning with Mrs. Sassaman, kind though she was. This was no time to mourn; she must think, must find some avenue of escape. Wisdom and peace of mind came from learning—her father had had both—learning she must have to lift her from despair.

Suddenly her heart leaped. The mysterious visitor to whom her father meant to entrust her—who and where was he? He had said that he lived not far away. Lancaster, Harrisburg, Reading, York were not far away—even Philadelphia was not much more than fifty miles. But she did not know his name, she had not observed which way his car had turned at the foot of the lane. And he was sailing at once for Europe! But he might read of her father's death in the newspaper before he sailed or later in one of the medical journals which published obituaries. Here was a gleam of hope! Her immaturity resented grief, repudiated it, would not harbor it. She paced up and down the room, now making wild plans, now crying. She had not yet realized what had happened and she still had high hopes of life.

CHAPTER XII

A QUICKENING TERROR

MRS. FETZER, the housekeeper, received Hilda's dinner guests on the evening of the visit to Levis. It was not a convenient season for guests, it being Sunday and the larger part of the staff of servants having been dismissed yesterday, but Hilda had extended her invitation with her usual indifference to the comfort of others. Her trunks were not yet packed nor had she indicated what articles were to go into them. Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane, who had expected to receive that afternoon directions about a rearrangement of Stephen's records and the preparation of data for a series of articles, had come at five o'clock and waited until seven.

Fetzer was annoyed, but not in the least dismayed, having been prepared for this event by many similar experiences. She put on her best black silk dress and welcomed the two women and two men who, undisturbed, settled themselves in the library for a game of cards; then she changed to less elegant attire, since in the absence of the waitress she would serve their dinner. Neither the black patch over her eye, nor the quick motions by which she compelled one eye to serve as two, made her repulsive or grotesque.

Waiting upon the table she saw that something more serious had occurred than the puncturing of a tire which had delayed the Lanfairs after leaving Levis's house. Hilda hailed her friends carelessly and asked that dinner be served at once. She ate little, watched impatiently Fetzer's deliberate ways, and announced as she rose from the table that her packing was still to be done. The guests departed amiably with loud good wishes for the journey.

Fetzer, going into the hall to tell Stephen that Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane waited, approached the library door slowly. Observing him furtively during dinner, she had been shocked by his expression; he looked to her like a beaten child who appealed from earth to heaven, and she sent up several fervent petitions in his behalf. She longed desperately to help him, but she was wholly powerless.

To Fetzer Hilda was a wicked woman; no other explanation for her mistress's behavior had ever occurred to her. Even Stephen's patience suggested no different explanation.

She did not advance far into the hall. Hilda had restrained herself in the presence of Fickes, the chauffeur, and with greater difficulty before her guests, and the postponement of the expression of her wrath had not in the least softened her heart. It had, on the contrary, exaggerated the grievance and sharpened the tongue which was to utter her wrongs.

"But she was a child!" Fetzer heard Stephen protest. His voice was like his eyes, childlike in its earnestness. It was bitter, indeed, that this old friendship which had been without exception the happiest in his life was now finally spoiled. What would Levis think of him? He regretted with sickening self-reproach his call. He might have known better; now he could never see him again, he hoped that it might never be necessary to see him—a hope, indeed, which was already granted.

Hilda accepted no apology.

"Child!" she repeated. "That was a pose to attract. How ridiculous to show you her books! She didn't look at you like a child, nor you at her."

For a moment silence prevailed. Fetzer meditated advancing. But Hilda had not finished; she found Stephen's silence far more irritating than his speech. She turned fiercely upon him with a remark which, while it was not new, was uttered with truly original ferocity.

"You'd like me to be dead; then you could live as you pleased on my money!"

Fetzer withdrew. She went through a passageway to the office where again Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane waited.

"I guess Doctor'll be out soon."

Neither of the women answered—sometimes she believed that they observed nothing, sometimes she believed that they knew everything.

After loitering for about ten minutes in the passage she again approached the library. Now Stephen was alone, sitting with his back to the door.

"Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane are here, Doctor." She spoke as though they had arrived at this moment.

"Thank you," said Stephen, without turning. Fetzer saw that though his head was bent there was no book on his knee. For the thousandth time she breathed a silent petition in his behalf. The ways of the Creator were, indeed, past all finding out.

Stephen sat for a long time looking down at his clasped hands. He believed that his life was at times in danger, but he did not believe that a committee of inquiry could find proof of the madness whose outbursts were reserved for him alone. It was a pleasant prospect for a European journey!

CHAPTER XIII

MATTHEW COMES HOME

To Millie König the last few weeks of single life were a period of intense satisfaction. Her waiting for Matthew and matrimony had seemed long, but now, at last happiness and prosperity were at hand. It was very unlikely that any of her seven sisters would marry so well.

For the home which she was leaving she had no deep affection. She believed herself to be the only quiet soul in a noisy brood, and the incessant chattering and laughing which accompanied all the daily tasks, the crowded kitchen, the shared bedrooms, the full knowledge of one another's affairs, offended her. She disliked to be teased, and the chief form of wit in the König household was teasing. She had loved to go to meeting because it was quiet and she could sit and think about her own affairs, and she liked Matthew because he was quiet.

She was ambitious and her future offered as large a field for advancement as she could conceive. The Levis farm was in poor condition, but the land was fertile and the buildings were solid. On the other side of the wood-crowned ridge ran a vein of limestone which could be made a source of profit—Matthew had told her long ago of his desire to develop it, together with many other secret wishes.

"Five years of careful economy," said Matthew now. "Then we shall not need to travel with horses"—this with actual as well as figurative meaning.

On the evening of his father's funeral he laid before Millie his completed plans. He came to the door of the farmhouse and asked her to walk with him to the gate.

"It's all over, Millie."

"Yes," said Millie with a becoming sigh. "I was there this afternoon. I thought your Gran'pop laid things out right to those of us that are left."

Matthew had no desire to discuss his grandfather's sermon which had decently omitted many things that might have been said. He had no sense of triumph; he accepted God's will when it profited him as he accepted it when it sent him to work in the Ephrata stocking factory. His mind was upon Millie; in the twilight he put his arm round her and drew her close to him. Her cheek was like a rose petal and her whole body breathed freshness and health.

"How soon could you get married, Millie?"

It was not in Millie's nature to be coy.

"I'm ready now," she answered promptly. "I have all my things this long time, and it's not like going into a house where there is nothing."

"In a month, then?"

Millie saw no reason for even a week's delay. An intense impatience filled her soul.

"Yes. How is Ellen?"

Matthew shook his head. A heavenly providence had delivered Ellen into improving hands.

"She can't accept this. It's so with people who are not religious."

Millie determined to show herself kind.

"She needn't think that she will have it too hard. Everything can be pretty much like always. I think we should even put away the bedding and things like that for her. I shouldn't like her to say that I used what should be for her *Aussteir*."

Matthew tightened his arm round this thoughtful creature. He had come a long, hard way to his happiness, but it promised to be worth the journey.

The next day Millie counted her sheets and blankets and table-cloths and her many pieced quilts, made in long winter afternoons to an accompaniment of steady sisterly chatter. No bride of the neighborhood had ever had so fine an assortment.

Matthew lived at the farmhouse. He slept in his old room and ate his meals with a quiet Ellen and a tearful and monosyllabic Mrs. Sassaman. At other times he was at his work. His eyes shone with eagerness, his brow was furrowed with pleasant thinking. He could have embraced the trees and thrown himself upon the soil which he loved.

Already, though the farm was run down and needed all that he could put into it, he looked with longing eyes upon a small adjoining property, across which he could reach the highroad directly from the quarry he meant to open. He looked down upon it from the woodland one August afternoon. The undertaking would be inexpensive and the profit would be out of all proportion to the small outlay. If he only had enough money to begin! Perhaps Grandfather would lend it to him. He did not like to go to Millie's father, would not, indeed, though success was certain. That was no way for a self-respecting son-in-law to begin married life!

Then, as though his question had been borne aloft by the wind, the wind returned an answer. He looked at the nearest tree, a fine oak from which the soft whisper came; he looked at the next tree which was equally fine. In reality the plan for their own destruction was not breathed by the trees, but originated in a suggestion of Millie's, made long ago when possession of them seemed only a dream. The price of the adjoining fields was in his hand!

Ellen and Mrs. Sassaman cleaned the house and Ellen packed away her father's belongings,

realization of the finality of death being now complete. Once she asked a question.

"Shall we leave the office as it is, Matthew?"

Matthew blinked; he was calculating at that moment the price which the trees would bring.

"I'll ask Millie what she wants," said he at last, bringing himself to consider Ellen's question. "And I'll ask Dr. Wescoe whether he would like to buy the medicines and the books."

"Not the books!" Ellen began to twist her hands together in the most excited way.

"Very well!" he answered impatiently. "As you like."

Mrs. Sassaman also approached with a question.

"When, then, am I to go?" Her large face was pale and her hands drooped from the wrist joints, like the front paws of a rabbit sitting upon its haunches. She might have been asking for the date of her execution.

"I'm going to be married on Saturday at meeting," said Matthew.

"Well, I guess I'll go then Saturday morning."

"You're going to your sister?" asked Matthew kindly, putting his hand into his pocket. "I'll pay you now—for the whole week, though it isn't due till Monday."

Mrs. Sassaman did not hold out her hand and Matthew laid the money in her lap, the last full salary he would have to pay for domestic service. Suddenly he was amazed. Mrs. Sassaman rose and the money dropped to the floor.

"You're doing wrong, Matthew," said she slowly. "You were always such a headstrong boy, but I never thought you would be such a cruel boy. Religion is right, so far, but not farther."

Matthew said nothing, but went out the door and down the road to pay a last visit to Millie. Mrs. Sassaman did not make him uncomfortable even for a moment—such is the sustaining power of a good conscience. He supposed that she was alluding to Ellen, but what she said was unimportant.

On Saturday morning he told Ellen the hour of his wedding.

"It will be in the afternoon in the Saal. I suppose you will hardly come."

"I can't, Matthew."

"You take things too hard, Ellen. We've got to live, no matter what happens!"

"But not rejoice!" said Ellen tragically to herself. Then she said aloud, "You'll come here for supper before you go away?"

"We'll go to her folks for supper. You are invited also, but I said I didn't think you would go. We'll come here later."

"You're going away for a trip?" asked Ellen, suddenly alarmed. "I don't mean for a long trip, but for a little journey?"

"Of course not. I don't approve of such celebrations; they're expensive and they accomplish nothing but the spending of money. We shall come home."

"Home!" repeated Ellen when he had gone. "Oh, I wish they would not come home!"

She flung herself into the arms of a bonneted Mrs. Sassaman.

"They're coming here to-night!"

Mrs. Sassaman wept also.

"Don't cry, Ellen! You're young yet. You don't have it as bad as I who have lost two husbands. The thing for you is to marry and spite them. Marry some one who will stand up for you and tell Matthew the meaning. That's the thing for you to do."

She climbed into the spring wagon beside Calvin and was gone.

The day had promised to be fine, but at nine o'clock a soft rain began to fall. At ten o'clock Matthew came downstairs dressed in his best clothes and drove away. The pleasant courtesies once natural were forgotten or ignored in their mutual embarrassment and he did not bid his sister good-bye. It was not altogether pleasant that one's wedding day should be rainy, but the fields needed rain and he was not disturbed.

Through the long morning Ellen sat idle. She could not bear to be in the house, but sat on the porch, a lonely and mournful figure. A score of vague plans came into her mind only to be rejected. Could Matthew be won over?—she did not think so. Could her grandfather be persuaded?—she doubted it. Could they be compelled by law to give her what was right?—she had no friends to advise her. The mysterious visitor to whom her father had meant to entrust her—she thought of him with despair.

By turns grief and resentment overwhelmed her, but finally apathy succeeded both. The blow which she had received seemed to have injured her beyond recovery; plans were useless when all earthly hopes could be so quickly dissolved.

"I may die!" said she and found in that a dreary consolation.

At dark Matthew brought Millie home and the three sat for a while together on the porch. Ellen had been afraid that she might cry, but the event seemed too unreal to draw tears from a fountain so nearly exhausted. Millie rocked rapidly back and forth, for once as loquacious as her

sisters. She stood a little in awe of Ellen's mind, but she believed that she was making a favorable impression upon her. She was nervous and excited and her short sentences were not always completed.

"I haven't yet been in your house except last month when your father—" Millie feared that she had made a mistake.

"Would you like to go through it now?" asked Ellen, unmoved by Millie's allusion.

"To-morrow will do for sight-seeing," said Matthew with heavy facetiousness unlike him.

"I guess it will!" laughed Millie. "It seems as though I'm to be here a long time, from what the preacher said!"

When the clock struck nine, Matthew rose. Calvin had attended to the stock, Matthew had given himself a whole holiday, the only holiday he was to give himself deliberately in all his life. Millie also rose abruptly.

"Are you going to bed, Ellen?" asked Matthew.

"Not yet."

"You'll lock the doors?"

"Yes."

"Then good-night."

"Good-night," answered Ellen.

Ten o'clock struck and eleven and Ellen sat still. Then she went in and advanced slowly toward the stairway. With her foot on the lowest step, she heard Millie laugh. Grossly offended, she turned and went into her father's office and closed the door. Millie had asked for no changes, and here was the old sofa with its worn cushions, a desk, a chair, and a little table, upon it a few books, a pad of paper, two lead-pencils, and some withered flowers in a glass. Ellen lay down upon the sofa as though it were her bier.

It was part of Millie's religion to have kindly feelings toward all mankind. Finding breakfast on the table in the morning, she praised Ellen and thanked her and assured her that she would be lazy no more.

"We can plan everything so that neither will have more to do than the other."

It was now Ellen who was nervous.

"Thank you," said she in a tone which seemed to Millie to express a becoming gratitude.

Millie was sincerely commiserative; she pitied every one in the world who was not Millie Levis—except Matthew to whom she belonged.

"I never had a chance to tell you how sorry I am for you, Ellen," said she, looking pleasantly into Ellen's heavy eyes. "But we must remember that God doeth all things well."

CHAPTER XIV

AMOS VENTURES INTO THE WORLD

IN the autumn evenings Grandfather sat beside his stove in meditation. It was against his principles to permit himself too high a degree of physical comfort, but as the current of his blood ran less swiftly he drew unconsciously closer to the stove. As he had often sat here and ordered his life, so he was ordering now his departure from life. He dreamed sometimes of a burial such as the fathers had had, at midnight under the light of torches, with antiphonal singing and solemn tolling of bells, and with a procession of the Brotherhood of Zion and the Sisterhood of Spiritual Virgins.

Amos was at the pine table, now correcting the papers of the children in his school, now bent over his Latin manuscript. It seemed to him that his mind became less active and that the devil tempted him to dream when he ought to be at work.

To Grandfather there had been in the universe two stable realities, the existence of a wise and all-powerful Creator and the correctness of the Seventh-Day Baptist interpretation of the Creator's mind and works. Now in his old age he dwelt with increasing satisfaction upon a third reality, the divine appointment and fitness of Amos, on account of his faith and piety, to interpret both Creator and theology. He thought, as the weeks passed, less anxiously about Ellen, ascribing her placability to his own advice and to her better mind, rather than to the stern necessities of her case. She would, he believed, now that the dangerous influence of her father was removed, "come round."

One day he summoned a carpenter and went with him over the old buildings, measuring and inspecting. Here a wall needed strengthening, here a chimney rebuilding, here fresh plaster should replace the broken mortar of clay and grass. The sum required to put all in order was not large.

Sitting drowsily by the stove Grandfather peopled the quiet night with figures. He saw Saron filled; he saw men going after prayer to work in the fields and women in white filing in solemn procession to worship at midnight. They went joyfully, as he and Amos went sometimes to pray in the Saal. He heard above his little cottage heavenly songs issuing from the high matin room of Saron.

But the figures in his dreams were not those of departed saints. The face of the speaker in the pulpit who held an audience enthralled, not alone by his eloquence, but by the power of truth, was not that of Father Friedsam, but of Amos; the cowed and robed figure which was followed by adoring converts was that of Amos; the religious who knelt alone in the Saal at midnight praying for his people was Amos. It was mediæval and strange, but it was real to the dreamer. It had all happened once, less than two hundred years ago—it might, if it pleased God, happen again.

But Amos, alas! had come to doubt his own strength, had come indeed to fear his own thoughts. As he bent over "The Mystic Dove" on this winter evening his face was drawn, the fingers with which he held his pen were icy. He was trying to translate a sentence which he believed praised the holy mystery of the sacraments, but his mind was not upon his work, and, spoken to suddenly, he started as guiltily as though Grandfather had looked into his heart and detected his disquiet.

"Our little girl is learning to submit herself," said Grandfather contentedly. "Matthew tells me so. That's the first lesson learned—quiet. She is like the noble Sister Anastasia whose pride was softened. Have you seen Ellen at any time?"

"Once," answered Amos without lifting his head. He spoke indifferently and bent more closely over his work, as though he had reached an important paragraph. It was the acting of a lie, for he thought of Ellen in school and at home and especially in the long evenings when it was supposed that his sacred task occupied his mind. He had been thinking of her when Grandfather spoke; for her benefit he was making a strange plan.

Last Sunday afternoon he had gone for a walk. Even then he had not been quite honest with himself, for he had pretended that his object was exercise, when deep in his heart he hugged a hope of seeing Ellen. An intense natural shyness and a consciousness of guilt forbade him Matthew's door. It was unthinkable that he should "go to see" Ellen!

Making a long détour he had arrived at last in the woodland back of the Levis house and there waited for darkness to become complete, when he intended to go to the edge of the woods and look down upon the lighted windows and perhaps see Ellen's shadow moving back and forth.

The November evening was still and he had taken only a few steps into the woodland when he heard the sound of crying. Ellen herself was no more tender-hearted and he at once moved forward rapidly, then stood still, trying to decide upon the direction from which the sound came. He could now hear nothing; perhaps his footsteps on the dry leaves had betrayed his approach. Then he heard the sound again nearer at hand. It was not the whimper of a trapped animal, it was the smothered sobbing of a human being. He went forward swiftly. Then again he paused. The low western sun cast a single level beam through the clouds; the light fell upon Ellen, a mournful figure in a black shawl upon a stump, Ellen alone in the twilight, Ellen unreconciled to her bereavement, Ellen changed and forlorn.

"It is I. Can I help you, Ellen?" he asked breathlessly.

Ellen sprang to her feet, her black shawl trailing.

"Oh, is it you?" She drew a long breath of relief. Amos was negligible—she had thought that it was Matthew! It made little difference whether Amos observed her woes.

"You can persuade them to let me go away," she said despairingly. "I haven't anything to live for, I'm all alone." Then she recovered herself. "Please forget this. No one can do anything." She rubbed her eyes furiously with a wet handkerchief and pulled her shawl round her. "I hadn't any business to talk about it."

At once she walked rapidly out of the gloom of the woods into the brighter light and made her way, somber and forlorn, across the fields.

Amos took her place upon the broad stump. He saw her reach the kitchen door, he saw the light gleam. It was possible that Matthew and Millie were away—was she then alone, poor, poor Ellen? He would go down and speak to her further; he should not have let her go uncomforted, he who meditated upon religious matters, who translated holy books! But suppose that Matthew and Millie should return, Millie with her sharp, cunning eyes! Besides, he knew that he could not help Ellen, she would not listen.

Then, the devil tempted him. Grandfather's plan for her was a mistaken one, she would never bind herself to conventual life. In the Normal School whither he had gone to learn elementary Latin there had been many lady teachers, confirmed in singleness, faithful to their duties and to their various denominations, and useful to the world—it was not wrong to think of Ellen bound to education! He rose and went home, meaning to speak in her behalf.

But between the time of that bold intention and this evening, misgivings troubled him. If he were listened to he would be helping to send Ellen into the world. She wished to go farther away than the Normal School, farther away than Lancaster or Harrisburg, and about the safety of the world beyond he had grave doubts. She might even go to New York where, every one said, wickedness was rampant. There was no telling where she might not go!

Presently a solution presented itself. It was possible to learn much from books; he had gained all his information from that source, and from books he would learn about the present condition of the world. Before speaking to his uncle he would acquaint himself with contemporary writings and be governed by their character. In Harrisburg there was a State library from which he occasionally secured books by mail, and he had sometime ago announced to Grandfather his intention to apply there in person for a new volume. At Christmas, when school closed for a week, he would be his own master. When he had come to this determination his mind was easier and he was able to proceed with his translation.

His preparations for departure consisted of earnest prayer and the packing of a frugal lunch. When he found that he could conscientiously ask the blessing of God upon his undertaking his spirits rose. As for the material preparations, prices in city restaurants were high and wastefulness was wicked.

The day which he had selected dawned bitter cold; the fire in the cottage did not burn well and the pinched and blue countenance of Grandfather distressed him. But Grandfather would listen to no sympathy.

"My trials are small beside those suffered on this spot."

The landscape showed bleak and gray in the dawn; the lighted windows suggested not the cheerfulness of evening and of family gatherings, but unwilling rising in cold rooms, the breaking of ice in pitcher and bowl, the torturing operation of milking with stiff hands. Wheels creaked over the frozen snow, and horses puffed like chimneys. Amos was not warmly dressed; he had never, in fact, been dressed warmly enough to meet winter storms. Having climbed into the trolley car, he tried to restrain his tears while circulation returned to his frost-bitten fingers. He looked fully the part of a shivering Saint Francis. A traveling man, wrapped in a fur-lined coat, and cursing inwardly the luck which had kept him overnight in the village, stared.

"Who is he?" he asked the conductor; but the conductor, being busy with his fares, made no reply.

His was the first but not the last comment upon Amos that day. Entering the train at Lancaster he walked the length of the car to find a seat, and after him heads turned. Even persons who were familiar with Lancaster County's strange types looked startled; one or two impressionable women shivered.

"Do you suppose he's very wise or very stupid?" asked one woman of another.

"He's very handsome."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, he's too handsome."

"I'll warrant he's the kind of a crank after whom women would travel in droves. Perhaps we'll have a new sect."

Amos heard no comments. He sat down and looked at the smooth farmlands, then at the river filled with floating ice, then upon the tall stacks and chimneys and into the heart of glowing furnaces. It was a bewildering world to which he was an alien. He was trained to be interested not in mechanical operations or in the achievements of science, but in the operations of the human soul. A famous saint had put into words, centuries before, Grandfather Milhausen's teaching. "Suppose that you had subtilty and learning enough to know all things, that you were acquainted with all languages, the courses of the stars, and all the rest—what is there in that to

be proud of? The glory of man is to be faithful to God."

Catching a glimpse of the dome of the Capitol soon after he had left the station, he walked up a narrow street to the rising ground. Now that he was here he would not confine himself to the library, but would look about—this, too, might be a part of Ellen's world! It was nine o'clock and the sun gave a small measure of warmth. Squirrels ran up and down the tree-trunks and pigeons wheeled above his head. Their friendliness with the passers-by pleased him.

Then, abruptly, pleasure ended. He looked not down at the parked street, as Ellen had looked at first, but up at two groups of statuary newly placed on each side of the main entrance. Here, in broad daylight, fixed eternally and shamefully in marble, were human beings without clothes! He did not blush; his astonishment and incredulity were too deep. After a long stare he withdrew his gaze embarrassed. It was to escape the glaring nudities that he entered the bronze doors, on which were represented various worthies of the Commonwealth. He did not smile at the neatly collared gentlemen whose heads protruded like the heads of turtles; he found them vaguely an assurance of the stability of the world.

Once inside, he felt a measure of confidence. Upon his childlike mind the soaring dome, the painted walls made the same impression which they had made upon the mind of Ellen. He looked longest at the lunettes in a corridor which pictured the early sects and found at last his own. How beautiful was this quiet place and how intolerable the group without! Here, in Moravian, sounding his trombone from the tower, in pious Quakeress preaching to the savage, in Wissahickon mystic at prayer on the hillside, was nothing to hurt Ellen.

For an hour he wandered about, walking on marble stairways and thick rugs and letting his astonished vision rest on masses of color, the green of Penn's rich coat, the Admiral's scarlet robe, the blue sky. He had not known that such colors existed. Suddenly he apprehended dimly the beauty of the world, of trees and streams and the bodies of human beings. But they were all an obstacle between man and God!

He felt with sudden depression his own insignificance. He had seen in all his years no crowds of human beings, had been part of no large body of men, had had a share in no concerted movement. He knew in a general way the history of his State, but he was not of it; he taught the history of his country, but felt no thrill at sight of its flag. He read no daily paper, and in his religious weekly all the news of the world was censored and emasculated.

In the library he stood most astonished and confused. Shelves upon shelves of books, hundreds and thousands of books! He was confounded by their number and by the vastness of the world which they represented; he was embarrassed by the studious silence; he was frightened by the cool black eyes of a young woman behind the desk. To gain a moment's time, he stepped aside to look at an old map and at a framed and valuable proclamation offering ten thousand dollars for the arrest of the assassin of Abraham Lincoln.

At last he summoned sufficient courage to ask for "The Early Sects," and was told that it was at present out of the library.

"I wanted it for study," he explained. "I have sent for books from here."

"If you will leave your name and address we'll send it to you."

As he wrote his name on a card, his eye fell upon a row of books at the end of the desk whose bright bindings marked them as the modern works for which he sought. He thought it best to buy copies of his own; he was not a rapid reader and he wished to study them carefully.

"May I copy their names?"

"Surely!"

He looked at the titles in an uncritical spirit and took them as they came. The volumes belonged to the "Thinker's Library," a somewhat poorly bound, carelessly edited series of English novels and translations of other European novels and tales. It was a curious list which he transcribed—"Bertha Garlan," "Russian Stories," "Esther Waters."

He found at last in a store, where he had to thread his way among women buying laces and handkerchiefs and table linen, a corner where books were sold. The first two volumes on his list were on hand, "Esther Waters" was not to be had, but "Evelyn Innes" was suggested by the clerk as a substitute. Then, his bundle under his arm, he walked out. Now that his business was attended to, he would satisfy his still undulled curiosity. It seemed to him that the gaze of every passer-by sought his, and he was uneasy until he realized that his glance sought the eye of every passer-by. This fact discovered, he walked on looking straight ahead and holding his shoulders stiffly.

He came at last to the street with the park in the center running from the Capitol to the river. There stood large churches, and seeing a few women enter the most imposing, he entered also. He made no excuse for himself, though he knew that his uncle would not approve; an inspection of churches seemed a legitimate part of his expedition.

When with a single astonished glance he saw that the few worshipers were kneeling, he knelt also. He had not dreamed that anywhere but in the Saal men went to pray alone. He prayed now for the Kloster and for his uncle and for Ellen—poor little Ellen whose sobs he would never forget. It seemed to him that God spoke to him and told him that it would be right to help her to her heart's desire, and he sighed happily.

Then—it may have been the tinkle of beads slipping from finger to finger, it may have been a

subtle ecclesiastical odor different from the odor of the Saal—he felt a sudden misgiving. He opened his eyes slowly and looked at the woman kneeling near by, who was not so absorbed in her devotions that she did not have a startled eye for her neighbor whom she believed to be some sort of very holy man. Next he saw the stations of the cross along the wall, and then the marble altar with its tiny, gleaming lamp. Whither, oh, whither had he come?

At once terrible words rushed into his startled mind—"popish images," "idolatry," "confessional." He rose and clutched his package and went out. In the vestibule he saw a woman performing what he took to be a slight ablution in a sort of basin—it removed his last lingering doubt. He fled, and the door closed noisily behind him, disturbing those within.

As he walked weakly toward the river, he realized that it was not altogether emotion which had exhausted him, but partly hunger. To one who was accustomed to the damp coldness of the Saal a meal out of doors, even on such a day as this, was tolerable and he sat down on a bench near the spot where Ellen and her father had paused hand in hand to look across toward Stephen's gray house. He, too, looked at it, but the lives lived there did not come within his experience and were not to be imagined.

When his lunch was eaten, he returned to the station to wait for his train and sat holding his package of books, and watching the ever-changing throng. All he saw had a bearing upon his errand, and he tried to picture Ellen among the travelers—not Ellen in her black shawl, but Ellen in her brown coat and tight-fitting cap, her Christmas gifts in her hands, all smiles and happiness. His day in the world had brought him to no final decision; Ellen's future still waited upon his reading.

For some reason unknown to him, the train waited for a long time upon a siding outside the city, and he could look directly through an opening in a high fence into the yard of an iron mill. Opposite the opening stood a lofty shed, apparently a vast store-house for finished products, in which cranes moved like gigantic men, lifting and laying down masses of iron and loading long girders upon cars. He watched, as he sometimes watched the farmers intent upon their work, the men who manipulated the enormous machines, and the men who came and went in the yard. Simply to live and work and not to think, what happiness in such a lot! But he reproached himself sharply for desiring the glory of the moon rather than the glory of the sun which was his. He had chosen the better part, or to speak exactly, it had been chosen for him. Let him be grateful.

He entered the gate of the Kloster after dark. Grandfather had lighted the brass lamp and sat by the stove asleep. On the stove were several pots with a fragrant steam escaping from under their lids. As Amos laid down his books on the sill outside, his conscience reproached him. But his motive was, he reminded himself, excellent.

Grandfather went early to bed on his hard cot in the next room, leaving Amos bending over the manuscript from which he had been separated for a day, and charging him not to work too late. When the old man's light breathing could be heard, Amos opened the door, brought in his precious parcel and with shaking, thrifty hands untied the hard knot with which it was fastened. He selected the book which was uppermost and laid the others in the drawer of his table. In the silence of the night he began to study the world into which he was to launch Ellen. Surely none of these authors had hitherto been read in a stranger spot! Close to the little cottage on one side crowded the graves of the dead, above it on the other rose the grim old buildings. All spoke, not of love, either good or evil, nor of the present, nor of life, but of the past and of the peace of death.

The book he had selected was the volume of Russian stories. He read an introductory paragraph which stated that the author gave a description of his impressions of the Russian-Japanese War, an event as dim to Amos as though it had taken place in 1904 B.C. instead of 1904 A.D. He was disappointed—he was not interested in war! But having begun he kept on. He had thought himself a slow reader, but he had read hitherto only the subtle abstractions of mystic writers, pondering as he went; he had never had before him such texts as these.

"Horror and madness!" The opening words were not reassuring. But he read on.

"I felt it for the first time as we were marching along the road—marching incessantly for ten hours without stopping, never diminishing our step, never waiting to pick up those who had fallen, but leaving them to the enemy that was moving behind us in a compact mass."

He blinked as though to clear his vision; then his pupils moved back and forth, back and forth.

"An hour passed, but the multitude still moved on, and the air and the distant, phantom-like ranks trembled as before. Again the burning heat pierced my body ... I was surrounded by a group of gray people; some lying motionless, perhaps dead; others sitting up and staring vacantly. Some had guns and resembled soldiers; others were stripped almost naked, and the skin on their bodies was so livid that one did not care to look at it. Not far from me some one was lying with his bared back upturned. One could see by the unconcerned manner in which he had buried his face in the sharp, burning sand, by the whiteness of the palm of his upturned hand, that he was dead, but his back was as red as if he were alive. And I saw—"

"What is this?" whispered Amos. But he read on and on until headless men surrounded him and a sea of blood seemed rising to engulf him.

He finished with a dying light and a body aching cruelly with cold. The fire had gone out; there echoed about him the mysterious crackling sounds of a bitter night. He rose and stood in the darkness, appalled by the things he had read. Was this the world into which he had thought to send pure and lovely Ellen?

After a long time he heard his uncle sigh in his sleep, and the tears began to run down his cheeks. It must be almost morning; he would wrap himself in his coat and await the striking of the hour, then, if it was not too early to disturb his uncle, he would make up the fire. Moreover, he would make it up with these hideous writings for which he had spent good money.

But deliberation brought better counsel—Ellen would have no encounter with war! Besides, it was a Russian story and Ellen did not mean to go to Russia. He would read the other books.

The next evening he did not wait until Grandfather had gone to bed; but laid his book inside the manuscript of "The Mystic Dove" and began. A great deal of "Evelyn Innes" he did not understand, but he understood enough. He read like a child for the story, all else escaping his immature attention. The technique of music was an uncharted sea; the ambitions of Mr. Innes he did not comprehend; he had never seen an opera, nor was he able to picture one. But he saw clearly what had happened to Evelyn. A cold perspiration broke out upon him. It was well for Ellen that he had set out to discover the world!

Then he was guilty of a curious and natural inconsistency. He concluded that it was his duty to acquaint himself further with wickedness, so that he might the better resist it. When he had finished "Evelyn," he returned to the book of Russian stories, laying it, too, between the pages of "The Mystic Dove." He saw a dark river which carried on its strong current a raft, and understood that a young man, a pious Christian, worked at the stern and watched his wife made much of in a shameful way by his own father in the bow.

But still he read on. "The Raft" was short; midnight was still far away; he opened the third book. Again the accident of his choice was unfortunate. The story was simply and plainly told. Bertha Garlan, widowed and with a little child, sought out, under pressure of irresistible desire for affection, an old sweetheart who had attained fame and who lived grossly, and had with him a brief liaison. Her passion and her shame were pictured with equal skill—it was a moving tale, and it pointed as bitter a lesson as the pen of moralist could present.

It was not strange that when he tried to work at his "Mystic Dove," the language proved dull and meaningless. He ceased to translate and began to walk about, traveling over the frozen roads at night like one condemned to wander for his sins. The world was a whirlpool of crime in which each hour betrayed and murdered thousands were sucked down to destruction. His uncle had been right.

At last he began to think of another way to help Ellen. His uncle believed and had taught him that a man's first concern should be the eternal safety of his own soul. Might there not be a higher duty? Speculating, he felt his cheeks burn, his heart throb quickly.

CHAPTER XV

ELLEN IS OFFERED A WAY OUT

LIFE in the Levis house, tolerable during the remaining weeks of the summer and early fall when there was much to be done out of doors, assumed a more complex character when it was confined entirely to the kitchen. Millie had believed that she desired escape from home partly for the sake of freedom from continual chattering; apparently, however, it was merely the silence of others which she desired. She now became loquacious; Ellen, she discovered with amusement, knew nothing; that is, she knew nothing of the private affairs of her neighbors, of strange old scandals, of recent deeds of foolishness and sin. Millie knew stories about all the people on the surrounding farms, about all the people along the road to the Kloster; indeed, about the ancient inhabitants of the Kloster itself, those holy souls who had given up all the pleasures of the world for the sake of salvation. She described in detail the misdeeds of Brother Reith, who in the absence of his wife in the asylum was a rake of the first order. She had even a story about Mrs. Sassaman—did not Ellen know that! Millie laughed. Such proud aloofness as that of the Levises must have made life very dull.

"I don't believe that about Mrs. Sassaman," answered Ellen soberly. "My father would not have had her here to take care of us if she was not a good woman."

"I don't want to say anything against your father, but he had very free ideas."

"Not so free as that."

"Don't you believe that I tell you the truth?" demanded Millie.

"You must be mistaken." Ellen was pale and offended, but she was determined to give no offense.

On her first free afternoon she went to her room and opened her books. She remembered all that she had learned and it was still not too late to be educated. In the evening she heard Millie complain to Matthew of loneliness, and the next afternoon she took her books into the kitchen where the sight of them proved irritating. Millie stood no longer in awe of her superior education; she hated it; it seemed, in some dim, ominous, and inexplicable fashion, to threaten her.

"Matthew thinks learning is unnecessary beyond what we need for our every-day lives."

Ellen made no answer. Presently Millie came to believe that her growing annoyance with Ellen and her ways sprang from anxiety about her soul.

"I can't be here with you all the time without reminding you to make your peace with God."

"Thank you," said Ellen shortly.

To Matthew life was intensely satisfactory. Along with love for the land he had been endowed with a farmer's good judgment. The early Pennsylvania Germans had selected with unerring instinct the thickly wooded limestone country, leaving to their Scotch-Irish neighbors the poorer and more easily cultivated soil. To Matthew it seemed that his deep fields had qualities which were almost human; they looked to him for proper cultivation and nourishment as they looked to God for rain.

His labors were interrupted only by the time necessary for meals and sleep. When winter came, the rebuilding of the fences occupied him whenever it was possible to be out of doors. On snowy and rainy days he worked in the barn, repairing partitions, mending harness, and planning for the future. He wrote down in a notebook all his plans; he drew a map of the farm and hung it on the wall; he dreamed and meditated about springing corn and golden wheat. Mind and body were at rest, and all was as it should be in a world which had hitherto been trying.

When Ellen appeared one afternoon in December in the barn chamber to make once more her foolish request about school, he answered her by commending her for her good behavior. He seemed to himself to be at least twenty years older than Ellen in experience and wisdom.

"Millie and I were saying yesterday how well you accommodated yourself to life as it is. It will soon be even better."

But Ellen had not come to hear compliments or to interpret cryptic remarks.

"Do you mean I can't go?"

"Soon you won't want to go."

"I shall always want to go," insisted unreasonable Ellen.

She did not return to the house. A week of clear weather had ended; there was a lowering sky and a cold damp wind which gave warning that bad weather was at hand. She walked a long distance on the soft country road, and then struck across the fields, meaning to return through the woods which seemed to promise temporary peace of mind. She was aware as she approached her favorite seat that it was occupied and she was irritated when she recognized the occupant. Amos was young and strong, yet he was content to live in the past, to earn a pittance, never to see the world or to advance.

But before the ravaged face which he lifted, no one could long be angry. He seemed to have lost many pounds which he could ill spare; his clothes were too large, his hair was much too long, and he wore to Ellen's startled gaze a look so unworldly as to be almost imbecile. Her heart pitied him, while her mind was filled with a sharp repulsion.

Poor Amos's horror of the world as he found it in "Bertha Garlan" and "Evelyn Innes" had changed to an unspeakably shocking desire to know still more about it. The temptation was of the devil—that he well knew—and he was resisting it with all the strength that was in him. He was tempted, not to go into the world, but to take more of it into the Kloster in the form of books, to read and read and thus lose himself and forget his self-reproach, his despair, and a new and wild desire.

When Ellen spoke he stared like a man in hiding come upon by the enemy. Her brisk walk had made her cheeks glow, and her commiseration for Amos gave a deeper color to her eyes. Like Millie she breathed youth and freshness, but she had in place of Millie's empty beauty an eager vitality of mind and body. You could be with Millie and forget her—you could never forget Ellen. Her spirit had been for a while in eclipse, but it could not continue thus. Amos could not analyze her charm, but he felt its least emanation.

"I haven't seen you for a long time. Aren't you well?"

"Yes," he answered faintly.

"And Grandfather?"

Amos seemed not to have heard. He rose abruptly and approached Ellen, his hands clasped before him, his body trembling. His cheek-bones seemed to press against the skin, his gray eyes to have turned black. He saw not a helpless creature who needed his succor, but a gleaming light in darkness, a refuge in deep trouble, a rock to which he could cling.

"I've been thinking so much about you, Ellen, and I've been trying to help you. I thought once I would ask Uncle to let you go away. But I can't make my conscience agree to such a plan. I can't for a good reason." He laid his hand across his eyes. At this moment the world had become wholly unattractive; it offered no invitation to further acquaintance; he saw headless figures, heard men offering illicit love. "But I could take you away from where you are, Ellen."

"How?" asked Ellen stupidly.

"You could come to me."

"To you," she repeated, more mystified than before.

Then a bright, tingling flush mounted to her cheek. She saw the expression in his eyes, and recognized its tenderness.

He made his meaning clearer.

"If you were married you would be freer."

She took a step backward and rested her shoulder against the trunk of a tree. The act indicated not fear, but a desire for support. The keenest of all her startled sensations was curiosity. What was the motive for this amazing offer? Surely not love as she understood love! Did he mean to sacrifice himself and all his plans to make her comfortable? He didn't seem ridiculous; he seemed incredible.

"But you weren't to marry!"

"I'm my own master," said he with dignity. "I must decide what is best. I'm the only one who can decide." His trembling became more violent. "I sometimes sit here in the evening and look down and think how happy you and I could be in such a house together. I think of it day and night; there isn't any rest for me."

A succession of images passed rapidly through Ellen's mind, herself in Amos's arms as Millie stood in Matthew's embrace—shameless Millie!—her father's keen face, the face of his friend who had somewhat resembled him, the dim Saal with its heavy air, its pale light, its stolid worshipers.

"Oh, it couldn't be!"

Silence answered like the silence which follows an execution.

"I'm not worthy of such an offer," said Ellen, suddenly wretched. "I'm nothing; I know nothing. I'm hasty and bitter and hateful."

"You are worthy!" protested Amos. The language of the stories he had been reading, much as he loathed them, helped him to find words. He pleaded with her, not for her sake but for his own, that she would save him from despair. "There isn't any one like you. You grow more beautiful each day. I was in Harrisburg, and there I sat in the station and watched the people come and go, especially the young girls, and there was no one who carried her head so high and who had such deep, deep eyes, like a dark night, Ellen, when the sky is very clear and soft. There's no one round here with a mind like yours. I'm not old-fashioned; I understand that it is the day of greater liberty. I'll let you judge and decide in everything. Don't say you aren't worthy; that isn't true!"

Ellen looked down at the ground. Praise like this was new and not unwelcome, even though it came from the lips of so strange a lover.

"If you would come to me, I believe the peace of God would come to you."

Now Ellen pressed her whole body against the tree, so as to get farther away. The peace of God! That was not what she longed for.

"You're mistaken in me," said she. "There's only one thing I want and that is to learn. I'm grateful to you, and I shall always think kindly of you; you are my best friend, but I don't wish to marry

any one."

"It is God's holy ordinance," said Amos thickly. "It saves from gross sin. Outside its bonds men and women burn with sinful passion. Have I made you afraid of me, Ellen? I have loved you since you came a little child into my school, and indeed, before that."

Into the minds of both came the scene enacted on this spot, the childish arms flung out, the kiss given and taken.

"Oh, I can't!" cried Ellen. "I'm sorry for you. Do put this out of your mind."

"I don't wish to put it out of my mind. But I'll not trouble you by speaking again. If you need help that I can give, you have only to ask. Promise me you will remember that!"

"I'll promise." She looked suddenly over her shoulder. Millie's eyes were keen and cruel; her mind was suspicious; she had related to Ellen a score of clandestine meetings, spied upon and reported to the confusion of lovers. "I must go home!" said she, moving away. "Don't come this way too often!"

"I'll do whatever you wish," promised Amos. "You don't have any ill-feeling toward me, Ellen, I hope?"

"No!" said Ellen. She flung back a crumb of comfort. "I told you you were the only friend I had in this world!"

It was four o'clock when she opened the kitchen door. Matthew and Millie stood by the table together, his arm across her shoulders. They had driven together to the store in the village and their cheeks glowed.

"Well, Sister?" said Matthew.

Ellen heard with wonder the unusual salutation. What had come over Matthew? Her own cheeks still burned. Subconsciously Millie noted her color and her excited eyes. But Millie was occupied with her own emotions. She laughed in her sharp, detached way and pushed Matthew from her. He went smiling, and when the door was shut, she laughed again.

"See what I've bought!" she cried, her hands slipping the cords from her parcels. "He said this was the time to spend." There appeared white, delicate muslins and yards of lace and ribbons and tiny patterns. "See! Aren't they beautiful? He thinks you are every day a little less self-centered, Ellen, and it is a good thing, for you will soon be certainly needed. Aren't you glad you didn't go to school?"

CHAPTER XVI

ELLEN SOLVES HER PROBLEM

THE spectacle of complete happiness is so rare that it is valuable as a phenomenon, even when its causes are not wholly commendable. A queen upon her throne who knows no threatening usurper and has never trembled at the voice of reforming democracy could have been no more confident of herself and her position than Millie. She was beautiful—indeed, she had long since decided correctly that none of her acquaintances was so pretty. She was prosperous, she was a good Christian, she was fulfilling the most honorable function of her sex.

As a prima donna who has sung gloriously gathers the roses of her admirers, she gathered to her bosom as her due the affectionate care of Matthew, the interest of her mother and sisters, and the approval of Grandfather Milhausen. She gathered also the services of Ellen, given willingly and with a virginal awe. She laughed at Ellen's innocence and extended her knowledge in new directions.

Ellen did not consider her work drudgery, though she did all that she and Mrs. Sassaman had done together and all that she and Millie had done together. It was right that Millie should be taken care of, and Ellen was too inexperienced to know that no young woman in that hard-working and healthy community had ever expected such tender indulgence.

Late in February occurred a regrettable incident in a peaceful life. Matthew's correspondence had increased, and Ellen, who fetched the mail from the box at the end of the lane, found many pamphlets with the words "State College" on the corner of the envelope. Matthew, she thought, would not care for them; the senders were wasting paper and postage and pains.

But Matthew did care for them. At the end of a day which Ellen had found unusually hard, he mentioned that he was going away for two weeks. She looked at him astonished; Millie, she saw, was aware of his intention. "Where are you going?"

"State College is to give a special course in the treatment of soils. Many farmers will attend. I don't know whether they have anything really valuable to teach, but I'm going to see."

Ellen laid down her spoon, which fell, not upon the saucer as she intended, but into the cup, splashing the clean cloth.

"Well, Ellen!" cried Millie.

"You're going to school, then, Matthew! Surely you'll let me go in the fall. You've changed your mind about education!"

Matthew frowned. It seemed to him that Ellen thought she had him in a trap. "This is different."

"No, it isn't different!"

"This has to do with soils and the production of food for the human race. It's not idle learning."

"Mine would not be idle learning. You're not fair. You're cheating me out of what should be mine and taking it yourself!"

On the other side of the table Millie lifted a reproving face. If she had been a little more sophisticated, she would have contrived to faint or to have hysterics.

"It isn't safe for me to hear such discussions, Ellen. You should know better than to try to quarrel now!"

Matthew looked at Millie in alarm. There was some ground for Ellen's resentment, but her heart was wrong, her demands were wrong, her carelessness of Millie's health was most wrong of all. He silenced her roughly and effectively. "Can't you cut it out, Ellen? Especially under these circumstances?"

Millie's convalescence after the birth of her baby was, as was to be expected, a slow and luxurious process. Her mother, an inmate of the Levis house for a month, scolded, the doctor admonished, but she lay at ease, her young prince on her arm. When her mother departed, protesting that only pity for Ellen had kept her so long, Millie took jealous care of the baby. She sat day after day in the kitchen with him asleep in her arms, being unwilling to trust the pleasant June air. She had been slow to forgive what she chose to consider a wanton indifference to her health, on Ellen's part, but that seemed now to be forgotten.

"Next time I'll be up sooner," she promised sweetly.

Ellen made no answer, having learned at last to hold her tongue. Her body ached and her soul quivered. If Millie had been at all clever, she would have assigned to her some of the care of little Matthew even in addition to her own work, but Millie was not clever.

Late in September Grandfather Milhausen came one Sunday evening to see his great-grandchild. He and a nervous and unwilling Amos walked pilgrimwise along the road and at the entrance to the lane separated, Amos going to the next farmhouse to attend to an errand. Poor Amos was no happier, and the few hours of rest which he took in one of the cells in Saron had made him no stouter. His ability to concentrate his mind upon abstractions seemed to be destroyed, and outside of school hours he had no occupation. Grandfather found Millie in the kitchen with her baby. He laid his hand in blessing upon the little head and his eyes gleamed. Here was an earnest for the future; this child might live to complete the restoration of the Kloster which his elders were to begin.

"And where is Ellen?" he asked with a sigh. Ellen had not yet "come round"; it was now more than three years since she had run away so incontinently from the Saal and she had never returned.

"She went for a walk," explained Millie. "She's a great one to go off alone, and I don't like it. It doesn't look well."

Matthew moved uneasily in his chair. It was natural for Millie to express to him disapproval of Ellen's ways, but he did not like her to complain to others.

"I'm sure that Ellen does no harm."

"I'm sure of that also. But it looks as though she wanted to be away from us. She—"

The opening of the door interrupted Millie's sentence. It was plain to Ellen entering that they had been discussing her—why, otherwise, should they all look so self-conscious? Hearing a sound behind her, she glanced nervously over her shoulder, to find that Amos had come round the other corner of the house and was close at her heels. It had been a day of heavy depression of spirit and of sharp irritability when she had kept silence with difficulty. Her eyes met first of all Millie's, in which she saw a startled and amused curiosity. Amos had with all the brethren a reputation for immaculate behavior, but to Millie no one was immaculate.

"Where have you two been?" she asked gayly. "Walking together?"

In her intense desire to turn attention from herself, Ellen uttered she knew not what.

"We have a nice baby here, haven't we, Grandfather?"

Millie was not to be turned aside even by the praise of her offspring.

"You should have one just like him, Ellen," said she with her sharp little laugh. "Then you wouldn't be so discontented."

"It isn't a subject to be jested about, Millie," said Grandfather gravely. But he looked at the two young people with startled eyes. He remembered that Amos had once defended Ellen; he remembered that he had seemed to have for some time a burden on his mind. Alas, for the restored Kloster with its monastic orders, its brethren and its holy spiritual virgins, if Amos should go the way of all the world! Silence followed Grandfather's reproof, and silence spread. Like graven images Grandfather and Millie and Matthew sat in their chairs, and like graven images Ellen and Amos stood by the door.

"I shall put corn in the east field next summer," said Matthew after a long pause.

"So!" said Grandfather and returned to his alarmed speculation.

Millie's mischievous eyes went round and round the circle. They signaled a laughing message to Matthew, they gazed with intense amusement at Amos and Ellen. Ellen's blood raced through her veins and angry thoughts through her mind. It seemed to her that she was on fire. Amos stood with his eyes upon the floor, all the machinery of thought paralyzed. Millie saw guilt written upon them both.

"Grandfather," she began again mischievously; but before she could go on Matthew stopped her with the first remark which came into his mind. Even Ellen's comment upon the baby had not been so unfortunately chosen.

"I have engaged Umbesheiden to cut the trees."

Ellen turned upon him swiftly, her eyes flashing.

"What trees?"

"I'm going to cut the woodland."

"My trees!"

"They are no more yours than mine. I have Grandfather's permission, and it's only what any far-sighted person would do. It will in the end be very profitable to you, as well as to me."

Ellen took a step forward. Here was the last of heaped-up injuries! Considering the turmoil of anger and grief within, she spoke quietly.

"I've decided that unless you and Grandfather are willing for me to go to college at once, I'm going to leave home altogether."

"Where are you going, Ellen?" Matthew asked gently. He knew that he had postponed too long telling his plans, but Ellen made everything hard.

"I'm going to live with Mrs. Sassaman at her sister's and earn my living."

"What for?"

"I promised Father I'd go to college."

"It was a foolish promise involving matters over which you had no control."

"I promised him, too, that I'd go away. He didn't wish me to stay here, so far from the world."

"The world!" repeated Amos to his despairing soul. He had read "Evelyn Innes" again and still again; he understood even more clearly what had happened to Evelyn.

"The world will ruin you!" warned Grandfather.

Millie meant to be exonerated. She was frightened—would she be left without Ellen's help? "No

sister-in-law was ever kinder than I to Ellen. She has all the say about the house, about planning the work and everything."

"I'm not complaining about you, Millie. Matthew, will you give me a part of my money?"

"It would be against my conscience."

"Grandfather?"

Grandfather shook his head.

"What is your plan?" asked a placating Millie.

"I shall get work and save my money. I'm strong and well; it would be very strange if I couldn't get along. At any rate, I'm going to try."

Matthew rose. Beside him Ellen looked pale and worn and young. He was disturbed. It was not possible that she was serious! "You've been a great help to us—I don't deny that. It all proves that you could always be a good, earnest Christian girl if you would only be sensible."

He laid his hand on Ellen's shoulder. The house seconded Matthew and pleaded with her; her affection for him pleaded. She was conscious also of Amos near by, and suddenly certain instincts, hitherto unrecognized, took advantage of her excitement. All pointed to the easiest way, to acquiescence. It seemed for a moment that her father was a stranger who had wandered across the path laid down for her by many generations. Then suddenly she lifted her head and went swiftly from the room.

"I believe she'll be all right," said Grandfather in a trembling voice. "She has an inheritance to fight against her, but one also to fight for her."

Matthew looked out the window into the darkness and after a moment he wiped his eyes. Ellen's spirit, he believed, was broken, and there is something terrible in the breaking of a spirit even to those who have brought it about. He saw her in imagination lying upon her bed, crying pitifully. Millie looked down at her baby. It would be dreadful to have to give up her brooding hours! But Ellen would stay, of course, and she hoped that now she was cured of her foolishness. Amos stood trembling by the door. He wished to speak to them all, to reprove them, to attack them, to insult them, even Grandfather, but most of all Millie. But it would only make matters worse. He saw with relief that Grandfather was rising and he stepped out and waited for him on the doorstep.

Matthew was mistaken about Ellen. She was not crying; she was standing upright, listening at last like the prodigal in a far country to a call. She went quietly about the house, bringing from the attic two satchels and putting into them the few things which she owned. Each motion had the deliberation of an act long planned. When she had finished she undressed and lay down.

It was quite in character for Ellen next morning to wash the breakfast dishes. Afterwards she changed her dress and appeared in the kitchen, the smaller satchel in her hand.

"Good-bye, Millie."

Millie, sitting at ease, stared. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going away; I told you so last evening. I've written Mrs. Sassaman's address on this piece of paper so that you'll know just where I am. When I'm settled I'll write and Matthew will send my other satchel. It's packed in my room."

"He didn't think you were going!" Millie grew pale. Matthew was, she believed, offended with her. "He's in the field."

"Tell him good-bye for me."

"Are you going to walk to the station?"

"Yes."

Like a paralyzed person Millie submitted to Ellen's kiss; then she looked at the closing door and round the kitchen. The washing was to be done, and the ironing and baking and cooking and sweeping. In her dismay she forgot even her sleeping baby; rising, she sped out past the barn and across the fields to Matthew.

Ellen walked rapidly. She did not analyze her feeling and she did not know whether she was excited or calm, glad or sorry; she knew only that she was free. At the end of the second mile she paused. Before her the road sloped steeply to the creek; beyond the creek the town climbed the hill. To the right in the hollow, stood the steep-roofed buildings and Grandfather's cottage and Amos's schoolhouse. She could hear the droning voices of the children; not in fact, because it was too early in the morning for school, but in memory. She saw the old trees and the lambs at play and the little cemetery so close to the road. Ah, she must hurry! Invisible arms seemed to reach out for her; she felt her heart softening, her eyes filling with tears. Should she run in and say good-bye to Grandfather? He was a very old man and she might not see him again. But, no, she hastened down the hill, across the bridge and up the broad street to the station, scarcely able to see through tears.

There, startled, she beheld Amos whose beauty was spectral.

"I had a feeling you would go, but none of them believed it," he said, looking back over his shoulder as though he feared detection.

"Yes, I'm going." Ellen was frightened. Would he try to keep her?

"Can't you change your mind?"

Ellen shook her head. She heard with relief the whistle of the train.

"I shall pray for you!"

"Thank you, Amos."

"I needn't say to you, 'Be good!'"

"No," said Ellen soberly. "I'll be good without that."

From a receding platform she waved her hand.

CHAPTER XVII

GOLDSTEIN'S JEWELRY STORE

THERE was this time for Ellen no interested inspection of the landscape. Her gaze, directed to the back of the next seat, did not lift to the hat of its occupant, but remained fixed upon the dusty red plush. In the fields men and women were cutting corn, their blue jeans suits the color of the river which reflected in a darker tone the clear sky. Here and there showed a red or yellow branch and there were masses of weeds which were already brown.

During her journey, which seemed like the day of Matthew's wedding, both long and short, Ellen made futile efforts to assemble and arrange her thoughts. The act which she was now executing she had dreamed of innumerable times, but her rage with Matthew and Millie had driven her to it before she was wholly prepared for independence. Her thoughts recurred bitterly to the scene of the evening before. Millie was evil-minded, hateful; she had bewitched Matthew into marrying her by pretending to be better than she was; she persuaded him now to claim everything for himself, to prevent Ellen from going to school in order that she herself might have more.

She suspected that it was Millie who had suggested felling the trees. But of that sacrilege she could not think and keep her composure. She heard the rasping sound of the wood saw; she watched the mighty trunks crash down, emitting almost human sounds of pain. Matthew should be punished; he should be made to suffer an equivalent for all that he had made her suffer.

She understood, however, that one could not safely allow one's mind to be forever occupied with one's wrongs. She now had her future in her own hands, and she did not doubt that work would be easily secured. In the hundreds of stores there would be a place for her; where so many persons were gathered all kinds of workers would be needed. She did not doubt her ability to sell goods of any sort. She might find it necessary to take a humble position at first, but she would rise rapidly.

When she reached the dark train-shed in Harrisburg, hands and knees were trembling. The waiting-room was crowded with passengers for an excursion train, and she felt the country-dweller's discomfort and irritation at being jostled. There had been no time to notify Mrs. Sassaman, but she was like the sun, she did not move from place to place. Ellen inquired the way to Hill Street and signaled the proper car.

But the car did not stop. A second also sailed by, but the third was driven by a motorman of friendlier spirit who motioned to the opposite corner, and she climbed aboard, conscious of eyes upon her. She became immediately aware that she did not look like the other women, that her dress and coat were a size too small, and that the style of her hat bore no relation to the present fashion.

When she found at last the house of Mrs. Sassaman's sister, Mrs. Lebber, she stood still in dismay. One of a sordid row hanging on the edge of a hillside above the railroad yards, even the bright September sunshine could not make it seem a possible abode. There must be a mistake! But a little marker on the house itself said "Hill Street," and this was Number 34.

Doubts were soon put to flight by the appearance of Mrs. Sassaman, a stouter, paler creature, but Mrs. Sassaman without question, who gazed at Ellen speechlessly while she held fast to the door.

"*Oh, thou dear peace!*" she said at last. "Ellen, is it you?"

Ellen could not speak. Mrs. Sassaman cooed like a mourning dove.

"Did you come to see me once then, Ellen?"

Ellen nodded, and Mrs. Sassaman opened the door wider upon an atmosphere saturated with the steam of washing and scented with the odor of boiling sauerkraut, and led her into a little parlor where she sat down and put her satchel on the floor. Mrs. Sassaman's tears had begun to flow and it was not until several moments had passed that she could proceed.

"Well, Ellen!" said she again.

"I have come to the city to work," explained Ellen, trying to express in her voice the courage which she believed she felt in her soul.

Mrs. Sassaman was not encouraging.

"Oh, Ellen, the city is an awful place! People, people, people, and dirt, dirt, dirt!"

"I'm not afraid of it. I'm not going to stay here always. I mean to get a place in a store, and I shall study in the evenings, until I've saved enough to go to college."

"Are you then still trying to be learned, Ellen?"

"I'm going to college," said Ellen stubbornly. "I thought perhaps I could get a room where you lived."

"Here?" said Mrs. Sassaman. Alas, by her desire to live on Hill Street Ellen descended from the pedestal upon which the Levises should have remained exalted! "I could ask my sister."

Mrs. Sassaman retired into a quarter nearer the source of the steam and the odor, and returning brought with her a mournful replica of herself. Mrs. Lebber had been the wife of a railroad conductor and had remained after his sudden death in the house to which he had brought her as a bride. She had insurance and death benefits sufficient to support her body and she had a

grievance against the railroad company upon which she fed her soul. Life had cruelly disappointed her. Like Mrs. Sassaman she had expected to get married and to remain married and to be a clinging vine. She looked at Ellen with curiosity and disappointment.

"Is this then Ellen!" The sentence was not interrogatory but exclamatory. It said, "This the beautiful scion of a prosperous and famous family of whom I have had to hear so much!"

She sat down heavily.

"She would like if she could get a room here," exclaimed Mrs. Sassaman.

Mrs. Lebber stared in astonishment at Ellen. Mrs. Sassaman had shown no sisterly frankness in her recent accounts of the Levis family, but now their fallen state was plain. Mrs. Lebber had a harmless but inordinate curiosity.

"Why does she leave her nice home?" The question implied a doubt about the niceness of the home.

"I wanted to come to the city to work."

"Her brother is married now."

"I'm afraid you've made a mistake." Mrs. Lebber contemplated the faded picture of the railroad conductor above the mantelpiece. "I never would 'a' thought I would have to take any one in to live with me for money. I thought always that I would have it better than I do have it."

"And I too," mourned Mrs. Sassaman.

Ellen bent her head. This was a doleful beginning. But in her "David Copperfield" there was a picture of the hero sitting with his satchel beside him, as she was sitting now. The recollection heartened her.

"I guess you could have the little room," said Mrs. Lebber; "that is, if it is you good enough."

Ellen carried her satchel up the stairs. The room indicated contained a bed, a bureau, and a chair; the remaining space measured about six feet by four. The lifted shade revealed the railroad yards and the sky.

"Just look once!" cried Mrs. Lebber, pointing tragically to a drift of black particles on the window-sill. "Do all you can and it don't help."

Having agreed to Mrs. Lebber's modest price, Ellen partook of the sauerkraut and descended once more to the business section. Food had restored her and she felt in herself a sense of adventure. She must expect unpleasant experiences, she reminded herself, and when they came she must remember her goal. She was in no immediate need of money, for pinned inside her dress were five ten dollar bills for which she had exchanged the nickels and dimes and quarters saved through her childhood, and the spending money which Matthew had given her.

She acquired between the hours of one and five a good deal of experience of store-keepers and their ways. She went first to the department store near the station where Amos bought his books and questioned the clerk nearest the door. The clerk looked at her curiously and directed her to an office on the second floor.

"I'd like to fix that country pippin up."

"She'll fix herself up," was the short reply from her nearest neighbor. "Give her time!"

In the office Ellen's name and age and address were recorded by a young woman who spoke to her through a brass grill. Had she had experience in clerking? No. Training in business college? No. How much education—High School? Ellen thought she had had at least an equivalent. The clerk blotted her book with an air of finality.

"Have you a place for me?"

"Not now, of course. We take on extras when the holiday trade begins. We'll let you hear from us."

In a few other establishments Ellen's name and history were recorded, but in most places she was answered merely by a shake of the head. Every one, she realized, looked at her last summer's gingham.

Finally in a little jewelry store near the entrance to the subway through which the street descended under the railroad, she was successful. The articles in the crowded window looked very valuable, though they were paste and plated ware. The customers were chiefly men, passengers from the trains who stopped to have their watches regulated and to spend a few minutes of spare time. The proprietor listened to Ellen with interest and engaged her promptly, promising her six dollars a week and an advance if she did well. He looked at her even more sharply than he listened to her, and when she had gone he nodded his satisfaction.

Mrs. Lebber did not view this engagement with approval.

"Is he a married man, this Mr. Goldstein?"

"I don't know."

"Are you there alone with him in his store?"

"No; men repair watches in a little room at the back."

Mrs. Lebber shook her head.

"There are very bad people in the city. Most are bad."

Ellen recalled Millie's account of the experiences of her acquaintances who went to the city to find work and who were set upon as though they were lambs venturing into the lairs of wolves. She scorned both Millie's tales and Mrs. Lebbber's fears.

She went to her room and unpacked her belongings; then by the dim light she wrote to Matthew asking him to forward her larger satchel. Having wiped away a few angry tears, she opened her algebra and fixed her mind upon it.

When she laid her head on her pillow she felt under her cheek the sharp points of the black dust she had seen on her window-sill and had felt under her hand as she touched the furniture. Sometimes a light shower fell upon her cheek. The trains had thundered in the abyss all the evening, but she had a vague notion that they would now go to bed. Instead their activity increased; they seemed to come in the window and go out the door, to threaten the foundations of the house.

Finding sleep impossible she considered the weapons with which she was to fight her battles. The education which was so superior to that of her country neighbors was, it seemed, unfortunately not correlated with the requirements of department stores. But she had a mind and she would learn. In the second place, she had physical strength. She did not count in the least upon her curly hair, her clear skin, her dark eyes, and her round figure, nor realize that it was these possessions which had won her her first situation.

Having exhausted herself as a subject for study, she thought of Mrs. Sassaman, who had changed. In the light of the old days she decided that Mrs. Sassaman, by turns silent and communicative and frequently on the verge of tears, had "something on her mind."

She went to work the next morning, having made up for sleep by a cup of strong coffee. Her employer had opened his shop and was now finishing the sweeping of his floor, a task which was to be hers from now on.

"I guess it won't hurt your dress," he said pleasantly.

Ellen did not catch the inner meaning of his remark.

"You might get a little something new once," suggested Mr. Goldstein. "Just a new waist, perhaps; it would improve you."

He showed Ellen where she was to stand.

"There by the window. I'll look after the back of the shop. The women have sure always the easy time, ain't it so?"

Ellen perched upon a high stool behind the counter and looked out at the passing throng of men and women from neighboring villages. She caught a man's wandering glance; he entered and offered a watch which needed attention. Having directed him to Mr. Goldstein, who carried his watch to the workroom at the rear, Ellen looked again toward the street. A second passer-by met her eye and came in, requesting a chain from the case before her. The chains were plainly labeled, a sale was soon consummated and Mr. Goldstein took the burden of making change. The first customer stopped to speak to her on his way out, but was interrupted by the arrival of a third.

"I'll be back when you're not so busy," he promised with reference—at least so she thought—to the purchase of a chain for his repaired watch.

There are a good many empty-minded men who turn aside at the glance of a pair of dark and straightforward eyes, but the supply is not inexhaustible. The middle of the morning brought a period of comparative idleness, when Mr. Goldstein joined the corps of workmen and Ellen sat with folded hands; at noon there was another season of activity followed by another period of idleness. During this period her heart suddenly jumped. What could she not accomplish in these hours! She brought with her the next morning her General History.

The morning stream of pedestrians interested her, though she never got a long look at it, so rapid was the entrance of customers. When trade slackened and Mr. Goldstein had gone to his watchmending, she opened her book. She was entirely innocent of any intention to steal his time, and he was for a while ignorant of the theft, since he made the opening of the shop-door which was her signal for laying down her book, his signal for a return. She studied a large and never-to-be-forgotten portion of General History. Her book served a minor purpose; she no longer caught the eyes of passers-by.

Fate was not so partial that she kept Mr. Goldstein forever in ignorance of this offense against all the laws of contract between employer and employee. He found before the end of the week Ellen's book under the counter; he heard with irritation the amused comments of his friends. If he had caught her in the beginning of her duplicity he would merely have admonished her, but he realized that she had got the better of him for almost a week—not an easy matter, he proudly boasted. He dismissed her with eloquence.

"Did you think I couldn't get no other girls that you could try to make such a fool of me, say? Did you think I run a university? The men on the street say to me, 'Say, is it true that you employ a reader to sit in your window all the time and read a book?' They ask me do you read to me while I work and if it is the Scripture. You can go, and there is your pay."

A pale Ellen stared at him.

"I waited on everybody who came in!"

"Did you think waiting on everybody who came in was what I had you for?" inquired Mr. Goldstein with scorn. "I do the waiting."

"What did you engage me for?" she asked, bewildered.

Mr. Goldstein believed that she was as innocent as she seemed.

"Nobody will come in here to see an old man, will they? I engaged you because you had black eyes."

Ellen's black eyes were for a moment not visible. Then she put on her hat and took the docked wages held out to her. She was not at first insulted, she was only humiliated. But on the way up the dreary hill her sense of outrage grew. Her eyes filled with tears; she longed for her room and for a chance to cry. She felt homeless, and forlorn. She had been driven from her own home and she had no other.

Then in Mrs. Leubber's dismal little hall she stood still. In the parlor sat the last person whom she wished to see at this moment—Matthew, with her satchel beside him.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CLOCK RUNS DOWN

MATTHEW had undertaken a large stint of ploughing on the Monday when Ellen went away. The field in which he worked lay on the same ridge as the woodland and commanded a wide stretch of fertile land and commodious barns and houses and beautiful groups of trees. The soil was rich and soft and turned easily, and the two horses knew their business so well and needed so little attention that there was time for many pleasant thoughts.

But his thoughts were not pleasant. Millie's remark to Ellen had offended him; she had behaved like her rude sisters whom he detested. He would admonish her gently and persuade her to apologize; she would be glad, he was sure, to put herself in the right.

Presently he began to meditate upon his experience at State College, to reconstruct the lectures of which he remembered every principle if not every word, to follow again the laboratory experiments. He had not yet recalled his father's reminder that even if one became a farmer science might be useful. He liked to think of the young men whom he had met from various parts of the State, all at work to improve the soil, though it was probable that he would have taken no such pleasure in similar aspirations on the part of his immediate neighbors.

As he turned his horses in the lee of the wood he remembered uneasily how Ellen had always come to him in the troubles of her childhood. Sometimes she had cried noisily so that he was ashamed of her—she had never gone silently away as she did last night.

Amos, as well as Ellen, Matthew thought, had a ground of offense against Millie. He believed that Amos liked to be thought immune to love and did not wish to have even friendly relations with any woman. He thought with faint contempt of a man so young who chose a life of school-teaching and preaching when he might grasp the handles of a plough on a cool and pleasant morning. He would have no sympathy with Grandfather's desire for a return to the ancient conventual establishment. His own plans for the future included a very different improvement of the church property; he foresaw the ultimate collapse or the enforced removal of the old buildings and the erection of a small bright meeting-house with Amos as preacher. But no matter what the future might bring, there could be nothing between Amos and Ellen. The idea was odious.

He had ploughed across and back several times when he saw Millie advancing along the edge of the field. Hoping she had come to say that she was sorry she had teased Ellen, he left the horses standing with their noses against the fence and went to meet her. She was flushed and out of breath.

"She has gone!" she called. "She took a satchel!"

Matthew asked stupidly, "Who has gone?"

"Why, Ellen! Leaving me with all the work and on Monday yet!"

"Where has she gone?"

"To Harrisburg to Mrs. Sassaman, as she said she would. She left the number and you are to send the big satchel."

Matthew's first coherent thought was that the neighbors would say that he had driven Ellen away. Nothing could so entirely and permanently disgrace him. He laid the blame for this unfortunate happening where it belonged.

"It's all your fault!"

Millie stood still, flushing, like Matthew, a deep red, and then growing pale. The moment marked the end of one era in her life and the beginning of another.

"My fault! When you wouldn't leave her go to school and wouldn't leave her have her money! I guess you couldn't get any one to agree with you in that! She has nothing against me whatever; she was as pleasant as could be and she kissed me good-bye. Did she even walk out here to say good-bye to you? No, she didn't. She told me to say good-bye." Millie's voice grew shriller and shriller. She forgot that hitherto she had never "had words" with Matthew and that she had proudly contrasted herself in this respect with her father and mother.

"You had no right to speak to her the way you did."

"Ach, I was only teasing!"

"We never alluded to such matters in our family. Ellen never teased me about you. My father wouldn't have allowed it."

A scornful "Your father!" was upon the tip of Millie's tongue and crowding upon it even more disagreeable and pointed retorts. But her need of help was uppermost.

"I have all the heavy work!"

Here was a new and inconvenient aspect of Ellen's departure!

"Couldn't you get along, taking it slowly?"

Millie burst into tears. She had expected Matthew to start at once to bring Ellen back.

"Of course I couldn't! If you can't get Ellen to come back you'll have to go for Esther."

Matthew's heart sank.

"I can't go till this evening."

"You could if you only thought so," said Millie. Then she ran back to the house.

Matthew's dinner was poor and the final touches were put upon it by himself. He asked Millie to describe Ellen's going and she did so sullenly. He looked at the address which Ellen had left and felt more at ease. He would write to her and tell her that he was sorry she was offended, and he was sure that she would return. He remembered with some small remorse but with a deeper pleasure her distress at separation from him.

In the evening he drove to the Königs and brought back his sister-in-law, who accepted his invitation with alacrity. Esther was a short, broad young woman who divided her time between periods of cyclonic activity and equally intensive idleness. She had had a busy summer and had long desired to visit Millie. Her mother had described Ellen's housekeeping admiringly and Esther anticipated a season of refreshing leisure. Of course she would help when it was necessary, but there would be no dreary and compulsory round of cooking and dish-washing. Matthew's invitation indicated that he had got over the haughty feelings of superiority which she had ascribed to him. In short, Esther was in capital good humor.

She had not been in the Levis kitchen a minute when she observed that Ellen's housekeeping was not of the character which she had expected. The dinner dishes waited in the sink and the soiled clothes which should have been washed and dried and folded down for ironing were still untouched in a basket under the table.

"Why, where's your maid?" she asked jokingly.

"She's gone away," answered Millie excitedly. "She—"

"She's visiting Mrs. Sassaman, at 34 Hill Street in Harrisburg," explained Matthew carefully. "There Mrs. Sassaman lives with a sister."

"So!" Esther discovered the ulterior motive in Matthew's invitation and Matthew, recognizing her smartness, hated her the more. Millie gave her a glance which promised that she should know what was to be known.

For two days Matthew continued his ploughing, then a driving rain made outdoor work impossible. In such weather he busied himself in the barn or, when he had figuring to do, in the kitchen. It had been a pleasure to him to lift his eyes and see Millie sitting by the window or Ellen moving quietly about. He often called Ellen to look over a sum which he could check in no other way and she sometimes discovered mistakes.

Now he found it impossible to sit in the house which was filled with incessant clamor of tongues. Millie's laugh rang as loud as Esther's. Esther had brought an accumulation of neighborhood gossip gathered during the many months when Millie had been deprived of this form of entertainment, and the stories lost nothing by her telling. When Matthew and Millie were in their room at night, Millie repeated others which Esther had told in his absence. It was pleasant, she thought, to be married and to have in consequence no reserves whatever.

"But I don't like to hear such things," Matthew interrupted her gravely. "I've never been used to anything like this. My father—"

Millie turned on her side with a contemptuous "Ach, you!"

Matthew lay very still. The cloudy night was soundless; no cock crowed or distant dog barked and even the oak trees did not whisper. He pretended to be asleep, but he was kept awake by a vague, apprehensive unhappiness. Suddenly he heard a strange, uncanny sound, a queer sort of metallic death-rattle. He sat up. Millie had heard nothing; her breathing was the soft, even breathing of sleep. He slipped from bed and went out into the hall. Everything was perfectly still and the warm air was scented with the comfortable odor of bread sponge. Nothing stirred. Yet the strange noise had been unmistakable.

Then he was aware of something out of the common. The house did not seem natural, something was amiss. Suddenly the intense silence offered an explanation. The old clock whose loud tick had not failed as long as he could remember had run down! Since his father's death Ellen had wound it each morning, but he had forgotten it.

He felt himself shaken with a chill. He was not superstitious, but there was something ominous about the ceasing of motion which had been continuous for so many years. He returned to his bed but could not sleep. The wind was rising; he could hear its whisper among the dead and dying leaves. Sometimes in her little girlhood Ellen had been frightened by the noise in the oak trees and had crept into his bed for comfort. He had not known when she came, but he found her there, sweet and drowsy, when he woke.

Then the voice of the wind became more importunate than the thought of Ellen. It was, like the ticking of the clock, a part of his childhood. Shivering though he was, he rose and looked out at the dark wall of trees. If they were gone there would be a silence at night like the silence in the house at this moment. He saw the bare ground with its ugly stumps. His intention to fell the grove became suddenly incredible. The tears began to run down his cheeks. Before he returned to bed he knelt and prayed, but his prayer did not ease his discomfort. Like Millie he had come to the end of an era.

To his eyes the abode of Mrs. Lebber looked more forbidding than it had to Ellen, who tolerated it as a merely temporary abode. Having been received with cold surprise by Mrs. Sassaman, he sat

down to wait.

"You'll think I haven't bettered myself!" said she as though Matthew was to blame for her present situation. She could hardly resist picturing to him in plain language the unpleasantness and actual danger of Ellen's life in a store with a lot of rascals—what could a Seventh-Dayer know about life in the city?—but it seemed disloyal to mention Ellen's affairs, and she withdrew, leaving him alone. He could hear a continual whispering from the kitchen and when Ellen arrived he closed the door of the little room which with its drawn shades seemed like a prison cell.

"Why, Matthew!" said Ellen. She sat down quickly, her heart filled with murderous thoughts of Mr. Goldstein. She felt a crazy temptation to ask Matthew to go to his store and beat him.

Matthew came to the point at once. He sat squarely in his chair, his strong, brown hands clasped between his knees, a handsome figure.

"Millie was wrong to speak as she did, Ellen. We know there is nothing between you and Amos, either on his part or yours. Won't you come back?"

Ellen's eyes filled.

"I didn't mind that so much. I'm not here on that account."

He saw dark circles round her eyes. She had grown thinner. He had never before looked critically at Ellen.

"You aren't well!"

"Yes, I am."

He looked still more intently; seeing for the first time the fine proportions of her body and the shape of her beautiful head. The city-dwellers would make of her, he thought fearfully, an object of desire!

"Ellen, I'll try again to make my position plain. You want to be a doctor; Father gave you that idea. I don't know how it was when he was a young man, but I know how it is now. I've been away to school and I know what is the attitude of the students to God and the Christian religion. They are scoffers and blasphemers; immersion and Foot-washing and all our beliefs and customs are subjects for amusement to them." His cheeks burned; he had believed for a while that he was an apostle sent to a wicked and perverse university. "I'd as soon cut off my right hand as help you to such an education. I know, too, what most churches are like. The preachers are so educated that they can't preach the pure gospel. When people are educated they think they have found ways of getting round God!"

Ellen listened curiously. It seemed to her that he was speaking as though to convince himself.

"Why do you blame those things on education? Think how different Father was from Brother Reith and Brother Miller!"

"But Father was unbelieving!"

Ellen lifted heavy eyes and looked at Matthew.

"I'm unbelieving, too, then. I think it's selfish to think so much about saving your soul as though that were all!"

Matthew might have answered, "or about educating your mind," but he was not quick like Ellen. He had determined to be patient and he answered gently, "It *is* all."

"I brought your satchel," he went on, "but I hoped I could take it back."

Ellen shook her head. She thought again of Mr. Goldstein and with difficulty restrained her tears.

"What kind of a place have you?"

"I haven't any," she confessed.

"You said you were in a store."

"I have been dismissed."

"Why?"

"Because I studied a little when there were no customers. The man didn't like it."

"What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to find another place."

Matthew took her hands in his.

"Ellen," said he in a low tone, "come home."

Ellen bent her head upon her breast.

"I won't cut the trees, Ellen. I was mad to think of it. I don't know what got into me. I've sent word to Umbesheiden."

She made no answer.

"And Millie shall never speak to you that way again."

She seemed to be struggling in a rising sea. Matthew was fond of her; she guessed by some obscure instinct that he had altered and developed, that he was fonder of her than of Millie. She was tired, the journey before her seemed interminable and beyond her strength. But she shook

her head.

"No," she said, "I'm not going to give up."

When Matthew reached Ephrata he went to the livery stable and got his horse and drove slowly to the farm. Tired and depressed, he longed to sit quietly and hold his son in his arms.

But his kitchen seemed to be filled with Esther, rocking at the end of a busy day while Millie prepared supper. She held little Matthew and sang to him a coarse English song. In the change from one civilization to another she, like many other young persons, had seized upon that which was least worthy. Matthew was about to reprove her when he recollected that little Matthew was still too young to be harmed. Before he could be hurt, Millie would have to arrange some other way of running her house.

After supper he walked to the Kloster where his eye fell upon a scene grown familiar to him during long evenings. The light from the brass lamp shone upon Grandfather's white beard and upon the golden hair of Amos bent above "The Mystic Dove." Sometimes Grandfather cast an approving look upon Amos and sometimes Amos cast a stealthy glance at Grandfather.

Matthew sat down where his father had once sat. He crossed one knee over the other and thrust his hands deep into his pockets. There was in his heart a new and irritating undercurrent of astonishment—how could human beings live like this?

"I've seen Ellen," said he.

Grandfather looked at him without understanding.

"You've seen Ellen? Why not?"

"She went to Harrisburg as she said she would. There she's living with Mrs. Sassaman and she declares she won't come back."

Grandfather clasped and unclasped his hands.

"We must pray."

Matthew caught Amos's burning gaze and believed it to be one of anger at this mention of Ellen.

"She's living in a miserable neighborhood in a house hanging over the railroad. She had a place in a store, but she's been dismissed. Now she's going to hunt for another place. She looks sick." He delivered his short sentences as though they were so many missiles hurled at Grandfather. It seemed to Grandfather that they were missiles hurled at Ellen. The right to judge Ellen belonged, he believed, to him.

"Matthew," he said, white and trembling, "you mustn't be too hard on the little one."

Now Matthew trembled. Nerves were on edge, peace had gone from his house and heart with Ellen. It was not only that he missed her, but that there had appeared, as though revealed by her departure, characteristics in Millie to which he had hitherto been blind. It was not that Millie had degenerated; it was merely that he saw her suddenly as she was. Her habits of life were those of the König family. His table was no longer neatly set; bread was softened by being dipped into coffee; his house was untidy; the necessities of little Matthew were attended to unblushingly before every one. He had discovered with amazement that a man's mind is not at rest even when he is converted and is a husband and father. He had in the last week had moments of sick regret when he stood for many minutes with his hands on the handles of his plough, preoccupied with wicked desires for freedom. He had, as Ellen surmised, changed radically. A late-born activity of mind tortured him—it was as though his Milhausen inheritance had had its way with him, had led him into a trap and there had abandoned him.

"I was perhaps hard on Ellen," he said hotly. "But where did I learn to be hard on her?"

"Not from me," protested Grandfather. "She is the object of my constant prayers."

Matthew felt his skin tingle. He drew a deep breath as though he would inhale more air than the little cottage could furnish. He seemed to shake his shoulders free of some burden, and he began to talk like a madman.

"You frightened her! You threatened her with hell! She was afraid. You frightened me. You didn't let me think for myself. I wish I too had run away!"

Then like a petulant boy he departed, slamming the door. The quiver which shook the cottage seemed to transmit itself to the outer air and thence to the Saal and Saron. Leaning heavily on his chair Grandfather lowered himself to his knees.

Matthew strode through the gate into the graveyard, catching his breath once more. He knew that he had acted the fool, but he didn't care, he was so desperately unhappy and confused. As he drew near the farm he heard the wind in the trees. He stood still; the sound seemed to carry some message, but he could not interpret it.

When he opened the door he saw at first only the faint glow of the fire in the stove, a pleasant sight on a cool evening. But he heard smothered laughter and saw that on the old settle Esther sat with a beau. She hailed him with gay and hateful familiarity.

CHAPTER XIX

FETZER ENGAGES A NEW MAID

ELLEN spent a dreary Sunday within doors and from time to time shed tears. She had not minded rain in the country, but this day was intolerable. All the afternoon Mrs. Lebber and Mrs. Sassaman sat at the parlor windows looking out into the dingy street and alternating sigh with sigh. She went with them to evening service in a little church, where the singing was wretched and the sermon grim. The scanty and spiritless congregation dispersed silently and she bit her lips to keep from crying.

The following morning she started out once more to find a position. In the sordid district behind the Capitol she saw, next to a Jewish synagogue with strange lettering above its door, a laundry whose sign announced "Girl Wanted," and there applied. The second of her assets, physical strength, was to serve her now. In a few minutes she found herself engaged and being instructed in the art of running wet towels through a hot mangle. She put into her work a fierce, triumphant repudiation of Mr. Goldstein.

Steam laundries are run like jewelry stores for the benefit of their owners, and steady work is required. At the end of the second day Ellen, aching from head to foot, walked home in a cold wind. The third evening she cried with pain, but she went back, believing that if she failed now she would fail altogether.

Mrs. Sassaman wept over her, brought her hot herb tea, and finally in an excess of emotion told what was on her mind.

"That one toward Lancaster, he has been here."

Ellen was puzzled.

"You knew there was a man there, Ellen." Mrs. Sassaman blushed as she tried to explain the extent of her suitor's devotion. "I used to know him, he is a lame man, but kind. He will have me, it seems."

"You mean a lover?" said Ellen.

"Something like that."

"Are you going to take him?" A humorous glance made Ellen's eyes look like her father's.

"I don't know." Mrs. Sassaman now wept outright.

"Of course you are!"

"He isn't like your father."

Ellen did not understand the implication—no one was like her father. At the thought of him she was overcome. She had been here for two months and had learned nothing; the exhausting work at the laundry took all one's time, and even Sundays had been profitless, spent as they were in weariness and idleness. Her life was narrower than it had been at home and Mrs. Sassaman and Mrs. Lebber were even less congenial than the companions she had left behind. The amount of her savings was growing, but very slowly.

She wished Mrs. Sassaman well, bought her a wedding present which she could ill afford, and on Thanksgiving Day accompanied her and her father to the preacher's. Mrs. Lebber provided a heavy and bountiful dinner which she felt to be a waste.

"She will be back," she prophesied. "I don't mean that anything will go wrong between them; that is not what I mean at all. I mean that she and I do not have good luck with husbands. Between us we have already lost three. I think this one is so yellow. It is not that I cannot marry that I sit here."

On the Sunday afternoon following Thanksgiving Ellen went to walk. The air was mild, and the holiday on Thursday had saved her from Sunday's usual exhaustion. She walked down to the railroad station, intending, none too cheerfully, to go over the course which she and her father had followed on a happy day. In the Capitol she walked from room to room reconsecrating herself to the divinity which she worshiped.

Then she sought the river street. It was not yet twilight and she walked slowly as she and her father had walked. She crossed a bridge and looked back at the domes and spires. The city, nestling against a background of blue hills, took on in the afternoon sunshine the rich colors of a much older settlement. She returned slowly, conscious of the beauty and of her own misery and went northward as she and her father had gone.

Here in the park, opposite the gray house which she had admired, they had stood. The house remained exactly as it was. She sat down, no suspicion of its ownership, no premonition of a strange future stirring her, and looked now out across the quiet river and now at the house. Only a few of the shades were raised—had the occupants died also? Presently she believed that she saw at a window in the third story a face with a black mark upon it, but she did not regard it curiously or wonder whether it was in some way disfigured, or whether a shadow fell upon it; it was a face dull to her and her miseries. She dried her eyes at first gently and then with an angry pressure, fearing that she was going to cry hysterically as she had done several times after her father's death.

The gathering twilight made her the more conspicuous and a man presently took a place on the

other end of the bench and asked her her trouble. His motive was simple friendliness, but he reminded her of the creatures who had come at the stupid beckoning of her eyes into the jewelry store, and rising quickly she crossed the street, blind to a rapidly approaching automobile. She escaped all but a glancing blow of the fender, but that threw her against the curb.

Picking herself up, bruised and angry and tremulous, she found herself surrounded by the driver of the automobile, the stranger from whom she had flown, and Fetzer, the owner of the shadowy face which she had seen at the upper window. Fetzer was alone and lonely and she had been watching Ellen. She had a passion to which all else was subservient, the finding of persons as trustworthy as herself to serve Stephen, and she had been looking at Ellen critically from across the street as she often looked at strong, plainly dressed young women. Ellen assured them that she was not hurt.

"It was my own fault. I was in a hurry and I didn't watch."

The stranger came forward.

"I saw you were in some trouble and I thought I might help you. I didn't mean to frighten you."

"Oh, I understand," said Ellen earnestly.

The chauffeur protested his innocence to Fetzer.

"You saw her run across, didn't you?"

"Yes." Fetzer laid her hand on Ellen's arm and spoke in an idiom familiar to her. "Come in here once a little where I live."

The chauffeur was still disturbed.

"I don't want to put the blame on any one else and run off."

Fetzer saw three boys approaching rapidly.

"I saw how it happened—it'll be all right. Now you come with me."

With authority she led Ellen through a little door at the back of the house, and there in a small room Ellen saw a sofa and sank down upon it.

When she opened her eyes again it seemed to her that she was at home and that Mrs. Sassaman was attending to some childish injury. Gradually the articles of furniture appeared, and presently she realized that the woman bending over her was not Mrs. Sassaman, but a stranger.

"You just lay still," Fetzer insisted with authority. "I watched you and I said to myself, 'There's one in trouble'; and I know what trouble is. I was coming to speak to you when you ran across the street. Did you eat already?"

Ellen shook her head.

"I'll bet that's what ails you. Is any one expecting you?"

Again Ellen shook her head.

"Then stay where you are."

Fetzer moved about a small adjoining dining-room. Presently she appeared in Ellen's field of vision wearing a white apron.

"Can you walk into the other room?"

With the help of a firm arm Ellen made the journey. Now she saw Fetzer plainly, her neat little figure, her dreadfully scarred cheek, the black patch across her eye, and the quick, queer motions of her little head.

She ate slowly and with appetite. Tears threatened to interfere with the process of swallowing, but she choked down food and tears together. The little room with its white cloth and a few pictures and blooming geraniums was, after Mrs. Lebber's grimy dining-room, like paradise. She had heard from Millie enough stories about the luring of girls into magnificent and evil resorts to have been very uneasy, but she was not uneasy in the least.

After a while she ventured a pleasantry.

"My father used to tell about a man who said there were three things he would never give up, the Democratic party, his hope of salvation, and his good cup of coffee."

"That's me," said Fetzer, swallowing a long draught, "except I'm no Democrat."

When the dishes were disposed of, she sat down by Ellen, an invitation to confidence in her one-sided glance. She believed in special dispensations of Providence, and she was sure that Providence had brought Ellen here.

"Do you live in Harrisburg?" she asked.

"I do now," answered Ellen after a tearful pause. "I was born near Ephrata. My parents are dead. I lived with Mrs. Sassaman and Mrs. Lebber, but now Mrs. Sassaman is married. I worked in a store at first, but now I work in a laundry."

"What is your name?"

"Ellen Levis."

There was a brightening sparkle in Fetzer's eye. She liked Ellen and she leaned forward and gazed at her more earnestly.

"Would you consider other work, perhaps?"

"If I could better myself."

Fetzer's eye gleamed still more brightly.

"I'm housekeeper here. The family is away now, but they will soon be back. The cook and the downstairs girl are colored and they live outside. We need an upstairs girl who will live here. The pay is eight dollars a week and you would have a good deal of time to yourself, especially since you come from Lancaster County and know how to work. I saw you sitting out there and you looked like a reliable girl."

Eight dollars a week! Mrs. Sassaman had received three. And she could save it all! Other considerations were forgotten.

"Do you think I could fill the place?"

"You can try. When can you come?"

"I could come to-morrow."

"Could you walk upstairs to see your room?"

Ellen believed the journey was possible, and Fetzer led the way into the narrow hall through which they had entered and up two flights of stairs. There she pointed to a large bedroom.

"That is mine, and yours is here."

Ellen saw a small room with a narrow bed, a white bureau and a chair. She saw also the river with its reflected lights.

"Oh, I believe I should like it!" she said earnestly.

As they went downstairs Fetzer announced her intention of calling for an automobile and accompanying her guest home. Ellen was not able to go alone—that was one reason. In the second place now that Ellen stood erect and lifted her head Fetzer felt her contract to be a little precipitate.

But Fetzer found nothing amiss—indeed, she discovered that she had known Mrs. Lebbber's husband. From a place so dreary she was glad to escape. She trusted Mrs. Lebbber because of the dinginess of her house and Mrs. Lebbber trusted her because of her homeliness. She told Mrs. Lebbber the name of her employer, but neither to her nor to Ellen did "Lanfair" carry any significance.

Ellen lay uncomfortably on her hard bed. She was bruised and sore, but she was excited and happy. No one else would have contemplated the change in her fortunes with satisfaction. From being the center of the world, she had become merely an unmarried sister-in-law, then a clerk in a store, then a mangler in a laundry, and now a housemaid, written down in Mrs. Fetzer's housekeeping book as "Ellen Lewis."

But she believed that the tide of fortune had turned. She counted on her fingers the black and white employees whom Fetzer had mentioned. Fetzer had also said that extra women came to do the hardest cleaning. Surely there would be time to study!

Kept awake by her aching bones she saw a smoothly flowing river and a little table with books and tablets and neatly sharpened pencils.

CHAPTER XX

MASTER AND MISTRESS

FETZER, though small of stature and retiring of mien, had no misgivings about her ability to manage the Lanfair house. Her instructions to Ellen were given with as much positiveness and intimacy of detail as though human destinies waited upon the tying of an apron string.

She stood with Ellen at the head of the broad main stairway leading from the lower hall to the second floor, on every hand closed mysterious doors, and there admonished her. The early morning was bright and the river sparkled in the sun. Ellen's body was sore, but her spirit marched bravely.

"Now, what you don't need of this you don't have to take to yourself." Fetzer cocked her smooth head upon one side and looked at Ellen, her eye expressing increasing satisfaction with her acolyte. "I give always this instruction; some don't like it, but they do it; others don't like it and they leave, and I'm glad they're gone—what *lumps* I had already—oh, my! Well, a bath every day, morning, afternoon, or night, it makes no difference, but a bath." Mrs. Fetzer liked to say "bath"; the *th* was an achievement, *v* she had not conquered. "In the morning a blue dress and white apron—every day a clean one, you don't have to do the washing nor yet the ironing. In the afternoon a black dress and a little apron and cap. I have some you can borrow. Rubber heels on your shoes and always a low voice. It should be our object in such a position to be as little seen and heard as possible with faithfulness to our duty." The last sentence had been memorized from "The Expert Maid and How to Train Her." "We speak when we are spoken to and we hear nothing that is not meant for us to hear. The mistress in a well-conducted home respects the independence of her maid and the maid respects the independence of her mistress. The two spheres are on the same plane, but they do not commingle.

"Now we go through the house." She spoke more briskly, glad that the theoretical portion of her address was safely delivered. "This is her sitting-room."

Ellen looked with awe at the large bay-windowed room with its shrouded furniture.

"This is her bedroom and bath. Further back are guest-rooms and baths. Now on this other side are his bedroom and dressing-room, and from there a stairway goes down to his office. Now the other rooms on that side are guest-rooms, too, except this small one which is for sewing and this one where brushes and brooms and such things are kept." She pointed with pride to the shelves. "Soap, towels, ammonia, cloths.

"Upstairs, beside our bedrooms are other rooms for company and storage-rooms. These two floors are your care, and sometimes she may ask you to button a dress or something. Mostly she don't like people round her."

This comment upon her future mistress confirmed Ellen in a vague suspicion that Mrs. Lanfair was an old woman. It was like an old woman to need help and at the same time to resent it. She had the kindest of intentions toward her.

Taken downstairs she was presented to the cook; then she and Mrs. Fetzer had their breakfast together in the little dining-room.

"They" were coming home, Fetzer said, in three weeks, and after breakfast preparations to receive them were begun. Windows were washed, curtains were unpacked and hung, and rugs were unrolled from moth-proof wrappings. After the first few days Fetzer left Ellen to proceed alone while she directed other operations in distant parts of the house. So pleased was she with her silent, capable assistant that, as she walked about, even her gait a little sidewise, she sang her favorite revival songs.

Harrisburg seen from the river front was a different place from Harrisburg seen from above the railroad yards. One found refreshment for one's eye at every glance, in fine old trees, beautiful against the winter sky, in the broad river and in the distant movement of trains on the other bank which suggested, not showers of grime, but romantic journeys. Heard at this distance their roar did not disturb sleep, but induced pleasant dreams.

One had at hand food for one's soul. Fetzer exhibited with pride the long parlors and the library with its many cases of books, its deep chairs, its blackened fireplace, and its shaded lamps. She saw the hunger in Ellen's eyes.

"You dare read them," she offered. "I take the responsibility."

Ellen went with Fetzer to a Methodist church and there was presented as "Miss Lewis." She felt for the first time the anomalous character of her position which was uncomfortable even though it was only temporary.

Fetzer corrected her but once. At her suggestion Ellen bought a winter dress and hat and coat, and when the new dress came home, she put it on and inspected herself in the glass. The view did not satisfy her. She studied her profile, then she unbraided her thick hair and coiled it loosely on the top of her head. Ringlets escaped and curled back on her neck and over her forehead, low and broad and white, without wrinkle, like the favorite forehead of mediæval romance. She put on her dress again and smiled and flushed as she did long ago when she studied the effect of her red necktie.

Fetzer flushed, but she did not smile. She laced and interlaced her fingers and exhibited an uneasiness apparently inappropriate to the occasion. Like Stephen, she misunderstood entirely

the vagaries of Hilda's mind.

"I hardly knew you! It's all right for you and me when we're by ourselves, but not for about your work. It's too fancy."

Ellen smiled and braided her hair in the old fashion at the back of her head.

In mid-January Fetzer received the cablegram for which she had been watching, and immediately the machinery of the establishment, so carefully oiled and inspected, began to revolve. She remained cool, though great matters waited upon her word.

The doors were opened into the beautiful rooms and were left open, shades were lifted, sunshine streamed in where it had been long excluded, potted plants were set in jardinières, magazines were arranged in orderly rows on the library table, fires were laid and bells were tested. Even the odor of the house changed; the faint mustiness vanished, and a sensitive Ellen sniffed with delight the fragrance of flowers and the scents of fine soaps placed by her in tiled bathrooms.

Through a door under the stairway drifted a new odor, the faint, pleasant smell of drugs. Sent to the offices she trembled with a sad and reminiscent delight. There were three large rooms in line—a waiting-room with comfortable chairs and books and plants and a canary in a sunny window, an office with three desks and tall filing-cabinets, and beyond an examining-room from which opened a little laboratory. In the second room a short, middle-aged woman in a blue serge dress stood before a filing-cabinet; in the third a tall nurse in a white uniform was in the act of mounting a stepladder before one of many cupboards.

"Are you Ellen?" the nurse called from the ladder. "I'm Miss Knowlton and that is Miss MacVane. Fetzer says you work quietly and you don't drop things. Those are fine compliments from her."

Ellen smiled. Miss MacVane lifted her head and glanced in her direction, then bent closer to her work. Ellen went into the inner room and held out her hands for the bottles.

"Put them on the table, each shelf together."

When the bottles were placed, she washed the shelves while Miss Knowlton examined the drugs, pouring some away and making frequent notes on a tablet.

The next afternoon Ellen helped to complete the task. At five o'clock everything was in order, even to a little stand on Miss Knowlton's desk which held flasks of dilating fluids and droppers. Miss MacVane was frequently called to the telephone.

"To-morrow, yes." The telephone rang again. "To-morrow, yes. Nine o'clock. I'll give you the first appointment. I'm sorry to hear that."

Many persons, it seemed, awaited the return of Dr. Lanfair.

Fetzer went to the little side door, through which Ellen had learned all the employees went and came, to speak to silent Fickes, who brought round in succession three cars of different styles and who said that doubtless the car which the boss brought home would be fit only for the junk-heap.

Ellen felt a growing excitement and a fear that she would not know her part. She depended upon Fetzer to support her, and Fetzer, as though she understood her anxiety, patted her arm encouragingly.

At ten o'clock Fickes brought his master and mistress home. Ellen, bidden to open the door, saw Fetzer stand with one arm upon the other like a feudal retainer while there entered a short, slender woman and a tall man.

It was the relation of one to the other in height which first startled her—she had seen those figures before! For a moment she was incredulous, then dumfounded; a moment more and she realized her stupidity. No wonder that her father had stared at this house! No wonder that he had come close to read the doctor's name! Her knees trembled and excited thrills ran up and down her body.

Both the newcomers shook hands with Fetzer.

"I'm glad to see you back!"

There was a light, slightly scornful laugh.

"Glad to see me too, Fetzer?"

"I mean you too, Mrs. Lanfair."

Ellen trembled. They had not looked at her, but what would they say when they did? Would not Mrs. Fetzer be astounded? How were explanations to be begun? Should she take a step forward or wait for their eyes to find her? She hoped that she would not cry!

But her anxiety was wasted. Neither Stephen nor Hilda greeted her, unless Hilda's careless "A new housemaid, Fetzer?" could be called a greeting. She spoke as though the matter of a new housemaid was one which concerned her only slightly.

"Yes, Mrs. Lanfair. Ellen Lewis is her name."

At last Stephen nodded absently in her direction. He wore a gray suit like the one he had worn at Ephrata. He moved and spoke more quickly and nervously, and his lower lip twitched occasionally.

"Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane here?"

"Yes, and everything is in order." Fetzter looked at Ellen, thinking sympathetically that she seemed afraid. The ways of the Lanfairs had once paralyzed her, too.

Hilda paused on the second step. She was more slender and there was a queer change in her aspect; her dress was tawdry and ill-fitting. Dr. Good would have detected from her appearance and from her moroseness and indifference a marked advance in her malady.

"You can't wait till morning!" she said lightly.

Fetzter lifted one of the bags.

"Take this, Ellen."

Ellen followed Fetzter who followed Hilda to her bedroom. Ellen did not look back; there would be no immediate and dramatic presentation of herself. In the bedroom she set down the bag where she was told.

"You may go, Ellen."

Obeying with relief she heard a question.

"A little stupid is she, Fetzter? She looks stupid."

Ellen went out into the hall and back to the door which led to the service stairs. In her room she opened her books and finished her evening's task. She had power of concentration equal to her strength of purpose; besides, the event was too startling and complex to be approached at once.

An hour later, sitting up in bed with her hands clasped round her knees, she heard the door open.

"Are you awake yet?"

"Yes."

Fetzter sat down on the foot of the bed. The pale moonlight was not bright enough to show the flush on her cheek, but the trembling of her body shook the bed.

"Why, Mrs. Fetzter, what ails you?" Asking the question Ellen believed that she understood. Mrs. Lanfair had spoken unkindly.

But Fetzter's thoughts were not upon Hilda.

"I'd do anything in the world for him!" she declared.

"For Dr. Lanfair?"

"There are some that are just like beasts and some that are all the while angels," wept Fetzter.

Ellen waited. Neither description seemed to fit Lanfair.

"If it weren't for him I'd be blind. I was shot once. My husband shot me when he was drunk. He was good-for-nothing. They gave up my eyes in the hospital, doctors and doctors examined me and gave me up, both my eyes, but he wouldn't have it. He watched me day after day, sitting sometimes for hours by me. They told me, when they took the bandage off, to look at the beautiful river." There was scorn in Fetzter's voice. "I looked at him. He was more to me than any river."

The multitude of her emotions kept Ellen silent.

"Jim's in jail for another year. He got a long term. I've often prayed that God would convert him and take him home. That's the only thing for him."

Ellen knew no consolatory word which seemed adequate.

"She thought I was stupid!" said she at last.

Fetzter answered coldly.

"I hope you won't be spited at that!"

"I'm not spited. Perhaps I am stupid."

Fetzter rose from the bed.

"I'm so tired I could drop. And nervous! Lay down and go to sleep, Ellen."

But sleep was not to be so easily commanded. Ellen sat long with her hands clasped round her knees. The strange impressions of that July afternoon came back to her; then in a wave of grief wiped out all recollection of Hilda's behavior. She had never ceased to hope that she would find her father's friend, that he would in some fashion help her; but now she had seen him and he had not known her, had not even looked at her. She had no eyes for his disquiet. She felt alone in the great house. Presently her cheeks burned. She made no allowance for the transforming years which had changed her into a woman. She resented their failure to recognize her. When she was learned and famous and not until then she would tell them who she was! Now she hated them.

CHAPTER XXI

A LOST SHEEP

GRANDFATHER MILHAUSEN, having heard the echoes of the slamming door die away and the gate close with a loud click after angry Matthew, began to pray. The traditional language of petition was on his lips a powerful vehicle; noble periods poured forth eloquently. He prayed as though the safety of the universe depended upon his entreaties. He asked for the blessing of God upon them all, and especially upon Matthew and Ellen, and he asked specifically that Ellen be led to return with an inclination to take up the great work which might be hers.

He did not observe that he failed to lift his companion's spirit with his own, and that along the treasured and brittle pages of "The Mystic Dove" a desecrating pencil made angry strokes. Matthew's account of Ellen's situation appalled Amos; the evil influences of the world must already have been at work upon her.

Through a sleepless night Grandfather's anxiety deepened. He reproached himself because since Levis's death he had trusted too much to the softening influence of grief upon Ellen's heart. He should have importuned her, he should have laid her responsibility before her. The deep regret for his marriage and his own consequent forfeiting of power returned. God had given him another chance in his grandchildren—had he also forfeited that? The consciousness of the immanence of God was strong within him, but it was the immanence of a reproachful God. He had slept when he should have watched and idled when he should have toiled.

Toward morning he began to pray, and at last, when he had made a promise to God, he fell asleep. He would go to find Ellen and would bring her back.

The inertia of seventy-five was not overcome by a mere intention. Emotion had exhausted him and in the morning he could not rise. As he looked out day after day from his bed upon the towering walls of the old buildings, he had blessed dreams which he did not deserve. He saw again the white-robed processions, heard the matin songs, and sometimes he lifted his hand and tolled an imaginary bell.

When at last he was able to go, he declined the offer of Amos's company. Amos had waited upon him with devotion; he was his only anchor to windward; upon him alone he could wholly depend; and therefore, as is natural to human nature, he valued him a little the less.

He did not begin his journey in the trolley car as did younger, braver spirits—steam was sufficiently dangerous as a motive power. Before he reached the railroad station he was the object of interested observation by the villagers, who did not often see him. It was one of the clear, bright mornings of Ellen's early life at the Lanfairs', and the invigorating winter air acted as a tonic to the old man. He looked about him with pleasure. In his youth he had dreamed of adventure, of journeying to the ocean which was not far away, but which he had never seen, and of visiting the West toward which many Pennsylvania Germans were then setting their faces.

But his light-heartedness did not long continue. The sky showed signs of change; fleecy clouds gathered, and the brightness of the river was soon dimmed. With the shadow there fell a cloud upon his spirit; he could not long hold any mood of youth.

The miles of furnaces and mills astonished and troubled him, signifying a great force which he felt was not of God, and when he arrived in Harrisburg he was bewildered by the crowd. The continual motion seemed to him to be in a circle, though in reality the only circular motion was that about himself as he stood, though bent, yet towering, prophet-like, gathering his faculties together for the plunge into the street.

He walked up the steep hill, pausing often to rest and passing each moment into a deeper bewilderment. There were moments when he could not recall, try as he might, the object of his journey. Then he stood quite still looking about him with dim, puzzled eyes.

At the end of an hour, when he had at last reached Hill Street, there had settled upon the city a thick mist in which black particles were suspended. He found Number 34 without difficulty and stood waiting until the rapid beating of his heart should subside. Ellen's face and figure were before him; he longed for their reality as a lover longs for a sight of his mistress. She was young and strong and she was a woman. Old as he was Grandfather missed that complementary association of which he had long been deprived. But he would not have accepted this analysis of his feelings; he was a shepherd and Ellen was his lost sheep; it was in that spirit that he sought her.

Mrs. Leubber's house still hung over the hill, it still sheltered a sad spirit, and it still exuded when its door was opened the same heavy odor. Mrs. Leubber appearing, blinked at Grandfather as though she were not sure whether he was real or whether he was a thickening of the mist into a human shape. But the shape gave forth human speech.

"Is my granddaughter, Ellen Levis, here?" he asked in his thin old voice.

Mrs. Leubber looked blankly upon the patriarchal figure. Nothing would ever happen to her; she was as stationary as her house and as gray as the mist, and the stories of other lives furnished her only entertainment. She now scented mystery.

"You'd better come in, then we can talk," she invited.

Grandfather peered at her uncertainly.

"You are Manda Sassaman's sister?"

"Yes, her younger sister."

Thus assured, Grandfather walked into the small parlor and sat down upon the first chair. He did not perceive the dreariness of the room; he perceived only the pleasant odor of food.

"What time does my granddaughter come from her work?"

"She's not here, she's gone this long time," announced Mrs. Lebber. "First Manda went to get married. She is trying it for the third time, but I don't believe she will have luck. She—"

"Where is Ellen?"

"Well"—Mrs. Lebber folded her hands and began to rock slowly. "One Sunday Ellen she said she would go for a walk, and she didn't come and didn't come, and after dark she came driving in an automobile, and I didn't know what to make of it. She was down along the river where the rich ones live and she got in front of an automobile, another automobile, that is. It's very dangerous down there. Then I know a woman that lives down there and she got a place for Ellen." Mrs. Lebber gave the impression that she had been the chief agency in Ellen's finding a place and thus unintentionally counteracted the mysterious insinuations of the first part of her speech. "It's on Front Street, a very grand place."

A grand place was to Grandfather an unsafe place.

"I was married and my husband was killed through an open switch which wasn't his fault and I never got enough for it. Then Manda, she came to live with me, but it wasn't long till she must go away and get married. I still say to her, 'Manda, why did you come if you were not going to stay?' Then Ellen came and now she is gone. There is no peace but in the grave." Mrs. Lebber wiped away her tears.

Grandfather did not dispute this opinion; he rose feebly, animated by alarm. He must find Ellen quickly.

"You needn't go," said Mrs. Lebber as though he too might as well have stayed away as go so soon. "I have sauerkraut for dinner." She quoted sadly a proverb meant to be cheerful, "Sauerkraut und Speck treibt alle Sorge weg."

A powerful temptation assailed Grandfather, but he resisted it bravely. He must see his lamb.

He found that descending the hill was more difficult than ascending. His knees seemed to have grown too weak to bear him up, and when he reached the station he could go no farther. Snow had begun to fall, and he had no umbrella. He must get home; he prayed God that he might succeed in getting home. He saw the little cottage under the shelter of the old buildings—oh, to be there, to lay his head upon his pillow!

Amos met him at the train, his face full of hungry desire. He knew that it was mad to hope that Grandfather would succeed in persuading Ellen to live at the Kloster, but perhaps she would bring him home. He had had a day of unusual freedom, but he had read none of his books, making of his abstinence a sort of petitionary offering. In the intervals of his teaching he had put the cottage into thorough order. He saw, as he worked, Ellen sitting under the lamplight, Ellen moving about. Perhaps she would help to get the supper as she did in her childhood.

When Grandfather got feebly down from the train, Amos saw for the first time that this was an old, old man. Ellen did not follow, and he guessed as he took his uncle's arm that there was no good news. Grandfather did not speak, and even when they had reached the cottage he sat for a while silently as though waiting for his strength to return.

"I couldn't find her," he said at last.

"Why not? Isn't she with Manda Sassaman's sister?"

"No. She's living with rich people on the main street. I couldn't understand the woman exactly, but I have the name and the number of the house. It's a very worldly place. I've heard how such people occupy their time."

Amos looked at Grandfather curiously. Grandfather knew nothing of the world!

"What do they do?" he asked.

"They play cards," said Grandfather in a frightened tone. "And read idle books, and their days are spent in pleasure-seeking. They never think of God. They drink spirituous liquors. There is no health of soul with such."

Amos smiled a bitter smile. Grandfather did not know the worst of them! What sort of pleasures did they seek?—ah, Amos knew! He longed to be of them—he acknowledged it to himself shamelessly.

"What are you going to do next?" he asked.

"I'm going to send a messenger to Ellen. You are to be my messenger, Amos. It will not be pleasant to you, but you will do your duty."

Then Grandfather retired to his bed.

CHAPTER XXII

A CRISIS AT HAND

DURING the winter Ellen's attitude toward the house in which she lived and toward all the occupants save one was that of an observant pupil. She liked the house not alone for its slight association with her father, but for its size, brightness, and beauty and its ordered and elaborate life. She heard for a long time no word or sound to make her suspect that the relation of its master and mistress was not exactly as it appeared on the smooth surface. She learned from Fetzter, an expert housekeeper; she admired from afar Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane.

She soon ceased to feel resentment toward Stephen—it was after all not to be expected that so brilliant and important a man should recall a young girl seen but once! She was not tempted to disclose to him her identity. She put his room in order; she heard the slamming door of his car; and sometimes she caught a glimpse of his tall figure or received his "Good-morning." She was glad that she had not called upon him for help, but that she had made her own way. As the weeks passed her position seemed less and less comfortable, and she longed to be gone.

She was conscious of the contrast between Hilda's butterfly existence and the sober industry of all others in the house, but she felt toward Hilda as Stephen had once felt, that she was by nature different. She was astonished at her scant and diaphanous clothing, at her lying in bed a large part of the day and at her habit of smoking cigarettes, but her association with her was limited. Her lowly position saved her from observation, and in any case Hilda had no fear of youth or bodily attraction for Stephen.

Hilda's jealousy grew daily stronger. She heard one day for a long time the sound of Stephen's voice, and at last she stole into the passageway leading to his office. She could see him as he sat on the end of Miss MacVane's desk, his arms folded, holding forth steadily and earnestly and sometimes gayly. Miss Knowlton sat in her informal fashion on the edge of her desk, her attitude much like Stephen's.

Hilda could not understand Stephen's medical discourse and her inability maddened her and quickened her suspicions, which, though they were insane, were yet terribly real. Why did these women stay on year after year? Why did Stephen prefer to work incessantly, to be with them, rather than with her? Why had he given up friends and recreation? Why was he unwilling to go away?

She turned at this moment a new corner; she determined somehow to punish these women, to get rid of them. Toward Miss MacVane especially she developed suddenly a clearly defined intention, unalterable, though not yet developed in its cunning perfection.

In the spring Ellen made a friend. Seeing in the paper the announcement of an evening lecture on astronomy at the High School, she went, recalling the rides with her father when he had taught her the names of the constellations. Next to her sat a familiar figure, Miss MacVane, who turned her thick glasses upon her. For the first time in her acquaintance she really saw Ellen.

"Why, Ellen! Is it Ellen?"

"Yes, Miss MacVane."

"Are you interested in astronomy?"

"I like to learn all I can."

"How much schooling have you had?"

"I'm ready for college."

Miss MacVane turned all the way round in her chair.

"Are you going to college?" she demanded. Her voice expressed not so much surprise as defiance; she seemed to dare Ellen to go to college.

"I hope to."

"When?"

"In the fall."

"Well, of all things!" The weak eyes sparkled. "Now if you want any advice, you come to me. I know all the ropes. No registrar can tell me what course I want or don't want, nor can any boarding-house creature charge me three prices."

Ellen described the extent of her preparation and Miss MacVane grew excited.

"How foolish to think of staying for four years! Get it in three! You can. You're no chicken—I mean you're old enough to use your time and not to run after the men and dramatics. Where are you going?"

"I thought I'd go to a girls' college."

"Oh, why don't you go to Cornell?" Miss MacVane spoke with missionary zeal. "Don't shut yourself up with a lot of little girls—you'll never stand it. Go where you may have some independence. Cornell is—"

But what Cornell was its admirer was prevented, by the arrival of the lecturer, from explaining.

"We'll continue this," she whispered, pressing Ellen's responsive hand.

When the lecture was over they walked together to the corner and there let a half-dozen cars pass. Miss MacVane proved to be an ardent advocate of education.

"I was a cash girl—I didn't know any other name than C-a-a-sh"—a passer-by turned a startled head—"I hadn't any money. Have you money? Because if you haven't there's a fund."

"If I could borrow just a little, then I could be sure of going in the fall," said Ellen excitedly.

"Of course you can borrow! To-morrow Doctor'll be away and you bring your catalogues into the office. I'll help you."

"You won't tell!"

"Not a word," promised Miss MacVane.

Ellen went home and sat by her window. It was late, but she was wide awake. A gentle breeze fanned her cheek; trains rolled far away to distant cities and mountains; a thousand lights gleamed and happy voices rose from the park. She saw almost within her grasp that for which she sighed. She was intensely happy with almost her last unclouded happiness. One could mould one's life if one had only determination enough, if one would only sacrifice that which was not essential for that which was. She thought with affectionate pity of Grandfather, of Matthew, of Amos, even of Millie to whom she owed gratitude because Millie had driven her away. She pitied every one who was not Ellen Levis.

The next afternoon she took her books into the office, where Miss MacVane sat with her back to the light and with a dark shade over her eyes.

"Ellen, I have to have drops in my eyes, and I told Miss Knowlton that I believed you'd put them in after her hours so that she won't have to stay. You will, won't you?"

"Of course."

Miss Knowlton brought a bottle of eye-wash.

"It always stands right there in the corner and it's marked 'MacVane.' You can't miss it. The other bottle in the stand is distilled water."

Ellen watched the operation attentively. Miss MacVane's blinking eyes were red-rimmed and her face was pale. When Miss Knowlton had closed the door she burst out:

"He actually keeps me seeing, Ellen. If he didn't watch, I'd be blind—think of it! I'd do anything in the world for him—anything!" She touched her eyes with her handkerchief and winced. "I sewed my way through college—that's the trouble. You'll have to read your catalogues to me; I can't see."

Both women heard suddenly a light, clear laugh. Hilda was coming in, accompanied by a gay companion. In the heart of Miss MacVane burned a bitter resentment; she thought of the millions of stitches she had taken with dim and aching eyes, and of the price of one of Hilda's dresses which would have saved her sight.

A faint odor of cigarette smoke drifted along the hall and through the door. Hilda was doubtless sitting in her favorite corner of the library sofa, smoking. Miss MacVane's lips curved downward. Sounds more distressing than the thin laugh had penetrated through doors and traveled along passageways to her ears, but she said nothing even to Miss Knowlton, though she was aware that the ears of Miss Knowlton were as keen as her own. Both women knew, as Fetzer sometimes suspected, all that was to be known, at least all that Fetzer knew.

For a few days Miss MacVane's eyes improved slowly. Each afternoon Ellen escorted her to her car, and one day as she walked back she saw standing and gazing at the river a tall figure. She noted with amusement its immobility in contrast with the ludicrous excitement of a flock of blackbirds that inflated their bodies and hopped about near by; then, recognizing the tall figure, she ran across the street.

"Why, Amos!"

Amos looked down at her. Grandfather had been ill, and this was his first opportunity to execute the commission with which he had been charged. He had meant to ring the bell, and to enter the great and beautiful house, but his courage had failed and he stood wondering what he should do. He was startled by the change in Ellen.

"Were you looking for me?"

"Yes," he answered, trembling.

"Would you like to walk?"

"Yes."

"How is Grandfather?"

"He was sick, but he's better."

"And Matthew?"

"I don't often see him."

"And how are you?"

Amos shifted his eyes uneasily. Nothing was well with him. He had become a prey to melancholy and he was losing his faith in God. His terror became at times physical as well as mental; he feared that the Saal and Saron might fall upon him and crush him; the whole universe was

sinister, existence was torturing.

"Everything is with me as it was," he said. "Uncle is greatly worried about you. He's afraid you have come to a place where there is worldliness."

"What does he think I do?"

"He thinks in such places they play cards and perhaps drink, and are light-minded."

"I dust and sweep and make beds, Amos, and when I'm through I study. There are good women in the house and the office and when I have spare time I spend it with them." She accounted in detail for her presence here. "I wrote Matthew all about it. I'm only here to earn money and in the fall I'm going to college. There's nothing wrong with these people."

Then Ellen flushed—remembering Hilda's bare shoulders, the turn of her wrist as she flicked the ash of her cigarette—what would Amos say to that?

Amos saw the flush and felt his torturing suspicions return. Were there any young men in the house? Did the doctor have a son? Did they look upon Ellen with desire?

"Oh, Ellen!" he said wildly. "I haven't anything in the world but you!"

Ellen saw the hungry eyes; hitherto they had roused only pity—now they repelled.

"What you want can't be, Amos."

Amos plunged into fear that he had frightened her.

"I'll never say anything more, Ellen!"

They walked a few squares silently; then Amos said sadly, "I won't go any farther; I'll go down the other street." He was certain that he could trust her. There was no reason to be jealous of ambition.

When Ellen reached home she went upstairs and opening the door at the back of the second story went to the linen closet. The hall was bright with the light of the level sun and sweet with the odors of spring flowers. She believed herself to be quite alone and, Amos forgotten, stood still in intense enjoyment.

But she was not alone; a shrill voice from Hilda's room announced her presence.

"I'm going to Aiken, I tell you!"

Stephen's voice in answer expressed an eager desire to placate.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't."

"Are you going with me?"

"I can't."

"You can!" Uncontradicted Hilda went on more loudly, "It's on account of the woman in your office!"

"That's one of the reasons. I certainly can't let her go blind."

"You are shameless—shameless!"

Ellen closed the door softly. When her knees would carry her, she went slowly to the third story. Fetzer sat behind her closed door; she kept Stephen's worst troubles a secret from herself when that was possible. She surmised with distress that they had recently grown more acute. Now she opened the door quickly.

"Did you just come in, Ellen?"

"Yes," answered Ellen, her face in shadow.

"Well, you needn't do anything more downstairs."

Ellen closed the door of her own room and stood against it.

"How dreadful!" she said to herself. "It is she who is shameless."

When she had had her supper she walked a little distance along the river-bank to a favorite bench. She looked back at the gray house and saw the moon shining on its irregular roof. There were trees between it and her and it seemed to stand isolated, a grim and solemn habitation.

So Mrs. Lanfair was like that! How troubled Dr. Lanfair must be! Resentment had now faded wholly, she was filled with pity. Then suddenly in her dark eyes appeared the emotion expressed by Fetzer's single eye, by Miss Knowlton's pale blue orbs and by Miss MacVane's dim vision, the tenderness with which most women regard a man who for some reason is reduced from the superior position which should be his. She longed, as they did, with her whole heart, to be of some supreme service to him. Her wish was soon to be granted.

When she went into the office the next afternoon to put drops into Miss MacVane's eyes, she looked at her with curiosity. She had not the remotest claim to beauty; she was short of speech and sometimes irritable, and her thick glasses, without which she could see nothing, disfigured her. It was not possible that Mrs. Lanfair feared good Miss MacVane!

Miss MacVane removed her green shade and her thick glasses, and Ellen lifted the little rack and took from the bottle the attached medicine-dropper. A penetrating odor frightened her.

"I'm ready," said Miss MacVane patiently. "I'm better, thank God!" The expletive was heartfelt—

she did thank God.

Ellen's hand poised motionless above the little vials.

"What's the matter, Ellen?"

"Why—" began Ellen.

"What is it?" Miss MacVane blinked unseeing.

Still Ellen made no motion. There was something wrong. Ammonia was not a medicament for the eye, but the lotion seemed to be pure ammonia!

"What is it, Ellen?"

Ellen believed suddenly that she understood what had happened—Dr. Lanfair had made a mistake. Her next act, quickly conceived and executed, was like a protecting gesture. Into her eyes came again the expression with which Fetzer and Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane regarded their master. No wonder that he had made a mistake! She put deliberately into Miss MacVane's eyes two drops of distilled water.

When Miss MacVane had gone, Ellen stood holding the bottle and looking at it. What should she do now? Had she behaved with unwarrantable officiousness? She stood in the same spot holding the bottle in her hand when Stephen entered and stared at her in surprise and then in amazement. For an instant they regarded each other, for the first time straightforwardly. A vaguely disturbing recollection troubled Stephen's mind and then was immediately lost in a sharper emotion.

"What's the matter?"

Ellen grew pale and her knees weakened. But it was better to have been unwarrantably officious than to have used the wrong medicine!

"I've been putting drops into Miss MacVane's eyes in the afternoon, so that Miss Knowlton wouldn't have to stay, and to-day there's something wrong with it."

Stephen took the flask roughly.

"It's different from yesterday," said Ellen, "there's a great deal more of it, and there's an odor."

Stephen held the little bottle with both hands.

"If I did wrong, I'm sorry. I can go to Miss MacVane's house if you want me to."

At last Stephen looked up.

"Couldn't you smell this stuff?" he demanded. "Couldn't she? Where is she?"

"I didn't use it!" cried Ellen.

"Oh, you didn't!"

"I used distilled water. I didn't say anything to her."

Stephen looked at his housemaid, bewildered.

"Why didn't you?"

"I thought it was your mistake and that I'd better tell you."

"You say the solution was all right yesterday?"

"I think so."

"It didn't burn?"

"No; I'm sure it didn't."

His gaze held Ellen's eyes helplessly. He tried vainly to remember her name, but at any rate her name didn't matter.

"Was this bottle in its usual place?"

"Yes."

Stephen grew white; his hand trembled and he set the rack with the little vials down quickly.

"Tell Fetzer to come here, please."

Ellen climbed to the third story and found Fetzer in her room. Hilda had gone motoring and the house was soundless.

"What ails you, Ellen?" asked Fetzer. "You look so queer."

"Dr. Lanfair wants you to come to the office."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know," answered Ellen honestly.

She went into her room and stood looking out the window. He had not even thanked her! Could the mistake have been Miss Knowlton's? What had Fetzer to do with it? Perhaps he had called for Fetzer on other business. Five minutes passed, ten minutes, and she stood looking down upon the river.

When her bell rang she went to the office, and was there bidden to close the door, whether by Stephen or Fetzer she did not know. She saw only two white faces. Fetzer had sat down because

she could not stand. Ammonia in eye-wash—she knew how that would madden and perhaps destroy! Her hand covered her scarred cheek. Vividly recollected sensations paralyzed her mind; she sought as yet no solution of this strange event, but dwelt only on the imagined agony.

"Fetzer tells me that you use ammonia for household purposes," said Stephen. "Where do you keep it?"

Ellen's eyes sought Fetzer's for confirmation.

"In the cupboard in the hall."

"Have you ever missed any?"

"Why, no!"

"Does any one but yourself go to the cupboard?"

"No"—then Ellen corrected herself. She still spoke straightforwardly and innocently. "Mrs. Lanfair got some there yesterday; she filled one of the engraved bottles from her bathroom; at least I think so."

"What makes you think so?"

Ellen flushed.

"Because I saw that a new bottle had been opened, and when I cleaned Mrs. Lanfair's bathroom I saw there was ammonia in her violet water bottle. I think she probably wanted to clean a chain or something."

"Thank you," said Stephen.

When Ellen had gone he looked down at the floor and Fetzer looked at him. Her lips had parted; she pressed her hand against them as though to close them. She had always known that Hilda was a wicked woman, but not that she was as wicked as this!

Ellen climbed the steps slowly. She heard presently Hilda's motor stop at the door, and Hilda come upstairs. Then quiet fell once more. After an hour the door of the motor slammed again—Stephen and Hilda had gone out to dinner. She heard late at night the sound of their return. She had remembered now suddenly and clearly a forgotten detail of their visit to the farmhouse.

"Dementia, Father!" she heard herself say. "Who has dementia?"

She looked at her open door. Did she hear the sound of a creeping approach? She sat upright. If she closed and locked her door she would leave Fetzer to the mercy of she knew not what. But she would lock the door at the head of the stairs; then they would both be safe. But she might shut out a call for help! Did she hear now a half-smothered voice? She rose and slipped barefooted into the passage. There she saw a small dark figure.

"Is that you, Ellen?" asked a sharp voice.

"I thought I heard a noise."

"You were dreaming. It was nothing. Go back to bed and shut your door."

Ellen obeyed, and Fetzer sat down on the upper step from which she had risen, and suddenly the clock struck two. The sound of voices was not imaginary.

"Can't you sleep, Hilda?"

"No, I can't sleep."

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"You can attend to your own affairs."

Fetzer's eyes sought longingly the window at the end of the hall. If morning would only come! She guessed now what ailed her mistress, and her kind heart ached with remorse and terror. Madness—she knew what madness was!

CHAPTER XXIII

A STRANGE JOURNEY

MAYNE answered Stephen's telephone call with his usual abounding cordiality. He was glad to hear Stephen's voice and he had been thinking about running up to spend the night. Yes he could come very soon—and bring Dr. Good?

"And bring Dr. Good," he repeated. "Did I understand you correctly?"

"Yes."

"You wish Good to come professionally?"

"Yes, as soon as possible."

Mayne understood the significance of the invitation. He was not prepared to meet this emergency, forewarned though he had always been. He mopped his brow. His hair was now entirely gray, but he was still ruddy of complexion and possessed a boy's vigor of body. A chill fear passed over him, not only for Hilda, but for himself.

"Lanfair has requested me to bring you to Harrisburg," he explained to Dr. Good. "I anticipate some serious development. I had begun to believe my fears to be groundless." He mopped his forehead again. "It is distressing. I judge there has been some acute crisis, but when I called her to announce our prospective visit—I suggested to Lanfair that I do that—her voice sounded natural."

He had a moment with Stephen upon their arrival and reported the result of his interview to Dr. Good—whispered it, though they were alone in Good's bedroom with the door closed. His alarm grew hourly stronger. One of his aunts had become violent, had lived for several years in an asylum, and had at last put an end to her life.

"It seems that Hilda has taken an intense dislike to a half-blind, middle-aged woman in Lanfair's office and resented the fact that he felt it professionally necessary to remain here to watch this woman's eyes when she wished him to accompany her away. She is known to have taken ammonia from the household supplies the day before ammonia was put into this Miss MacVane's eye-wash. The woman is a harmless lonely soul whom Lanfair saved from blindness."

Dr. Good shook his head. He was a small man remarkable for his bright eyes, his large steel-rimmed spectacles, and a strong Pennsylvania German accent which he would never lose.

"If a homicidal mania is developing, as frequently happens in such cases," he said, "she should be confined at once. Lanfair should be persuaded of the necessity for it. She should be got quietly to the King Sanatorium."

Dr. Good was secretly glad that the problem of transportation was not his. He remembered that Lanfair had been comparatively a poor man—he had paid dearly for his riches!

The problem of transportation proved to be, however, quite simple. Hilda greeted her guests at dinner. It was a season when dress patterns were scant and she wore little, but her slender body appeared to be inadequate to sustain even her bright, filmy dress and her string of pearls. She seemed to be becoming as ethereal as the smoke of the cigarettes which she so constantly used. Dr. Good was quick to observe that she was suspicious and uneasy, that she seemed to be under great tension. It was by no means improbable that a crisis was at hand.

Poor Hilda welcomed her uncle. She was miserably conscious of the turmoil within, and she felt that his presence would steady her. Several times she put out her hand toward him across the corner of the table and he covered it with his own.

"But your hand is cold!" cried Hilda. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter," answered Mayne with a nervous cough. He felt that they surrounded her, three great men, like enemies, a fluttering, helpless creature in her own house. She should not be confined unless there were no other way. She was, as far as he could see, wholly normal. While Good talked to Stephen about a problem with which both ophthalmists and psychiatrists were concerned, he clasped Hilda's hand a little more closely.

It may have been that his ill-concealed anxiety and alarm roused her suspicions, or that the cunning plan which she believed that she was carrying out excited her beyond the point of safety; it may have been merely that her disease advanced rapidly to a climax. Suddenly she felt that he—that they all—were against her. It was no longer possible for her to restrain herself. She began to stammer and to point her forefinger at Stephen. Hers was the dreadful gaze of a bird at a snake or a prisoner at a hated jailer.

"Uncle," she said earnestly in her clear, high voice, "he's not true to me." The three men heard; so did Ellen, impressed into service by the absence of the waitress, and so did Fetzer in the pantry. "I can tell you about the many, many women. I can—"

"As I was saying, ..." went on Dr. Good.

"Hilda, I have something to tell you," said Mayne, desperately.

But Hilda would not be silenced. She rose, pushing away from her the silver tray with its coffee service and its delicate cups. A flask of cognac which was not well balanced fell with a light crash upon a piece of fragile china; then her hands, spread suddenly apart in a frantic gesture, sent her pearls in all directions.

"You'll listen while I tell you everything! You'll—"

A terrified, watchful Fetzer came a little beyond the screen which stood before the pantry door. She knew the purpose of their coming—did they understand that Hilda was really mad, and did they know that madness was cunning and quick and dangerous?

Hilda turned her head and looked at Fetzer, her hatred leaping to her eyes.

"There is one of them, Uncle!" As Mayne rose she threw herself into his arms. "I want to go home with you!"

Mayne's eyes filled with tears.

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Can you prepare to go at once?"

Hilda fixed her eyes upon Ellen who had neither pretensions to learning nor connection with Stephen's hated work.

"She'll help me." She looked about wildly and Mayne and Ellen guided her up the stairs.

"I'll give you some medicine to make you feel better, then this girl will assist you." Mayne was trembling. It was, alas, not to his house that they would take poor Hilda!

Ellen helped the shivering figure into a street dress. The medicine began to have its effect; Hilda grew drowsy and lost control of her tongue. When Mayne returned she pointed to Ellen.

"What is it, Hilda? Are you afraid of her?"

Hilda shook her head.

"Do you wish her to accompany you?" Even in moments like this Mayne chose his words.

Hilda nodded and Mayne went to speak to Stephen. When he returned they helped Hilda down the stairs. She became more drowsy and had difficulty in finding the step of the throbbing motor. She laid her head on Ellen's shoulder and Ellen steadied her with her arm. The car gave a premonitory whirr, then it seemed to spring ahead. It did not move as though guided by the expert hand of Fickes and Ellen realized that Stephen was at the wheel and that Dr. Good sat beside him.

Once in the long journey Mayne asked a question.

"Isn't Mrs. Lanfair heavy against your shoulder?"

"No," answered Ellen.

Mayne's voice was thick and Ellen herself had shed tears.

At eleven o'clock the car stopped beneath a *porte-cochère* and a nurse and two orderlies came down the steps. They received poor Hilda tenderly and with businesslike hopefulness. The three men followed the little procession into the lighted doorway.

Until they reappeared, a space of time which seemed long, but which was in reality short, Ellen looked up at the beautiful doorway and at the dimly outlined ornamental shrubbery. A stranger had now joined Lanfair and his companions and together they approached the car.

"She'll sleep till morning, Stephen, then I'll be here, and Good also. We'll go into the city for the night."

Ellen heard a new voice, smooth, a little hesitating, and very kind. Dr. King had new theories and indestructible enthusiasm, and his experiments were being eagerly watched.

"I should advise against the patient seeing you at once, Dr. Lanfair."

"I understand," answered Stephen. He looked frowning at the car.

"That girl's got to be taken back. I may as well go home."

"She has comported herself admirably." Mayne raised his voice so that Ellen might hear.

Stephen stepped into the car as one who feels his way. He looked at Ellen as though her outline were dim.

"You'd better sit beside me. It will be rough riding there on the back seat."

He did not speak again until the journey was almost over, when, in the city limits, he slackened his speed.

"You've been of great service—" again he tried vainly to remember Ellen's name.

Ellen wiped her eyes.

"I'm very sorry for her," she said.

"Yes," said Stephen heavily. His own eyes smarted, though he had never expected to shed tears for Hilda.

Fetzer, hearing the motor, opened the door. She felt, it must be confessed, a little jealousy—it was she who should have helped Stephen! She climbed with Ellen the narrow stairway at the back of the house, and Stephen went up the broader stairway to his dressing-room. She sat with Ellen while she got ready for bed.

"It was God's will that the colored girl was out," she said devoutly. "Nobody will know anything. Even those women in the office don't need to know, ain't it so, Ellen?"

"I shan't tell them."

Fetzer rose and laid her hand across her cheek.

"Most people think he laid all this time on a bed of roses. But we know."

Ellen lay down and pushed the pillow away and turned over on her face, her cheek on her arm. Her heart throbbed, her cheek was flushed. The strange journey, Stephen's eyes, his long, slim hand, the touch of his arm against hers as she stepped to her place beside him, the darkness, the swift, unbroken pace, once a deep breath—all passed through her mind. She did not think coherently; she merely recalled each detail with nervous excitement.

Stephen wheeled his bed to the bay-window from which he could look out upon the river. Sleep was far from him. It was many years since he had thought of Hilda with tenderness, but he thought of her tenderly now. After a while he rose and went across to her rooms and sat down. The low moon illuminated some of the luxurious furnishings and cast others into shadow. He sat motionless, recalling the early days of his devotion, the hours of dreaming before Edward Levis's meager fire, Hilda's advances, his shy response, his rapture.

Then other recollections thronged, and face and heart burned. He rose quickly. He would not think of her unkindly in this house, nor in this hour, now that she was gone. No blame could be imputed to her; she was a creature unfinished, spoiled, ill. He wished that he had been as patient in his heart as he had been unfailingly kind in his behavior. Now she was gone, she could trouble him no more, harass him no more, embarrass, shame, terrify him no more. He went to his bed and to sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN UNHAPPY SCHOLAR

No sooner had Amos let Ellen go away from him than he regretted his foolishness. He might as well have walked back with her to the house where she lived and thus have been much longer in the half-paradise, half-purgatory of her company. He did not cross to the next street as he had intended, but walked rapidly after her.

The sun was setting and the river was bathed in golden light. Over all lay a spell broken only by bird-songs. Men and women walked slowly; a succession of lovers wandered arm-in-arm; automobiles moved quietly; and occasionally a pair of horses trotted briskly by, drawing a mistress who clung, for this hour at least, to the vehicle of an older time. But Amos saw neither the river nor the pedestrians nor heard the bird-songs; his eyes were fixed ahead searching for a figure which had already vanished.

When he reached Ellen's habitation a sheltering twilight had fallen and he sat down on a bench in the park. He saw lights shine here and there and he thought that she might be lighting them, though his idea of her duties was still vague. After a while he hid his face in his hands. The ways of the world, the quickening of the pulse as night drew on, the intercourse of delicate, silken-clad women and predatory men, the prospect of fond assignments, the eluding of watchful wives and guardians—it was the world of Evelyn Innes and Anna Karenina in which Ellen was moving, though only a narrow space of street and wall divided her from him. He felt that he should go mad.

Presently he saw that a car had glided into place before the Lanfair house. The door opened and let out a soft glow and at once a tall man and a short woman came down the steps and drove away. The man helped his companion into the car with careful solicitude—it was, except for one, the last drive which Stephen and Hilda were to have together. Amos saw himself and Ellen going thus happily.

When it was quite dark he rose and went on his way, past other handsome houses to a cross-street by which he approached the square. There again he stood still as though his powers of locomotion were sufficient to carry him only a short distance. The large, open space wore an air of festivity. In the center, as from the center of a spider's web, street-cars started to suburban districts, and round this center circled perpetually the gleaming lights of automobiles. In a still wider circle coincident with the pavement moved the human throng. At the curb stood more or less permanent groups held by the eloquence of a traveling quack or soap-vender.

The largest group listened to the loud singing and tambourine-playing of the Salvation Army, and Amos, hearing their music, moved idly toward them. The company was made up of two men and three women to whom religion was not a dull habit, but a burning passion, and on whose faces were recorded struggles as fierce as his own. Their leader was a short man with immensely broad shoulders and a countenance which expressed an almost savage earnestness. He had mounted a box in order to be seen and he was speaking rapidly, reminding his audience that they were sinners who needed a Saviour. He gesticulated with disproportionately large hands, hardened by work in the steel mill. He did not hold work to be a curse but a means of salvation.

Amos gazed without seeing and heard without understanding. Presently he moved on down the street, looking absently at jewels and boxes of candy and delicate slippers. In the window of the department store he saw a sign, "New Titles in the Thinker's Library." Alas, the store was closed!

When he reached the Kloster it was almost midnight, but Grandfather was awake and spoke feebly as soon as the door opened.

"Well?"

The vague question was startling. For an instant Amos could not remember the object of his journey.

"Oh, yes," he cried catching his breath, "I saw her; she's all right; she works hard."

"Will she come home?"

"No," said Amos. He stood with bent head, looking at the floor. He felt a sharp envy of Ellen. After a while a slight movement startled him. He saw Grandfather standing in the doorway. He had wrapped the sheet about him and might have passed for the importunate ghost of the King of Denmark. It seemed to Amos that Grandfather had been looking at him for a long time.

"Did you try to persuade her to come home?"

"Yes," answered Amos vaguely.

"And she wouldn't listen?"

"No."

Grandfather went slowly back into his room and lay down. After a while he uttered a sigh which seemed unending.

CHAPTER XXV

A PROJECTED ATONEMENT

STEPHEN'S forty-second birthday fell upon the day on which he made the final arrangements for Hilda's residence at the King Sanatorium. He had not seen her because she was obsessed by fear of him, and he sat in the office until the superintendent returned with Mayne and Dr. Good. Even Dr. King, sanguine as his temperament was, was in this case not hopeful.

"The family history is not encouraging," he explained, with deepest commiseration for Stephen, deprived before middle life of an attractive companion. "But you must not despair."

"Is her physical condition also likely to grow worse?" asked Mayne. He did not mop his brow upon this occasion; he felt, not without self-reproach, a deep relief.

"We can't prophesy about that. We have had patients of her type who have lived for a long time and others who lived only a few months."

"What do you mean by a long time?"

"Well, for some years," said Dr. King in his kind voice.

Stephen rose and took his hat from the table. He was depressed and intensely nervous. Mayne's large body and the superintendent's sympathy and Dr. Good's bright, observant eyes irritated him.

"She's to have, of course, every possible attention. You have Professor Mayne's address and mine."

"We make weekly reports unless we are directed otherwise. In case of an unusual development we should telephone you. You understand, Dr. Lanfair, that Mrs. Lanfair's attitude toward you is a part of her malady?"

"I understand perfectly."

At the door Mayne and Stephen bade one another good-bye. Both remembered a thin, eager boy with a black band on his gray sleeve and a short, slender, black-eyed girl.

"It's hard on you, Stephen."

"And on you."

Stephen stepped into his car beside Fickes. For a while he stared at the floor, his arms folded, his mind a blank. Gradually the expression of his eyes changed, the pupils darkened. There waited for him at the hospital a woman who had hastened a slow fire with coal oil; the problem was even more difficult than that of Mrs. Fetzer, but he had determined to solve it. He planned a course of treatment. He would offer to take the next twenty burned cases at the hospital.

Presently he lifted his head and glanced about at a landscape which recalled his visit to Edward Levis—was it two years or ten since he had made his sudden descent upon him? Here was a friend! He believed that he could even tell Levis his troubles; it would do him good. He sat a little more erectly.

Then suddenly an electric thrill passed through his body. He was free! Tears pressed upon his eyelids—he turned his head so that Fickes might not see them—tears of profound relief. What anxiety and torment had been his! And it was past, decently past, and he had played the part of a man throughout. Moreover, no public shame, no irremediable disaster had terminated the nightmare. Hilda's valedictory was heard by only a few persons,—her uncle, Dr. Good, Fetzer, upon whose devotion he could stake all that he had in the world, and this unknown but apparently trustworthy creature through whose quickness a serious calamity had been avoided. He would tell Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane where Hilda was, and he would inform a few of the older friends whom she had inherited from her parents, and to whom she had paid an indifferent attention; then all would be concluded except the pitiful end of her poor life.

They had begun to descend the hill toward the Kloster, and Stephen looked at it curiously. When he visited Levis they would come over here and prowl about. Ah, there were a thousand things to do in the world, a thousand places to visit! Hilda had liked only main-traveled roads on which there were theaters and shops; they had never seen the interesting countries, the Far North, the tropics, Ceylon, Carcassone, the church of Brou, the Far East. He was able to smile at the old white-bearded man pottering about among the graves in the cemetery of the Kloster, as though he smiled at Time himself.

Opening the door of his office he found Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane and went at once to work. There were a dozen patients waiting, and as many to be informed that he had returned. Miss Knowlton smiled at Miss MacVane when he began to prescribe for a patient whose treatment would be extended. He meant evidently to stay. But at other times he had meant to stay and had been persuaded to go away. When he said that Hilda was in the King Sanatorium they expressed their regret and went on with their work. They were conscientious souls and both felt a vague self-reproach.

When he had had his dinner he returned to his office. But he was tired; he would go for a walk. The night was clear, the air soft, and the river reflected the stars. He ran up to his room, where he found his housemaid engaged in laying back the covers of his bed. Ellen expected to go out and she had coiled her hair on top of her head in the transforming fashion condemned by Fetzer. She looked up and answered Stephen's "Good-evening" with a bright flush. Her heart beat

quickly; it seemed to her now that it was never quiet. Stephen looked at her, confused, as though she were a stranger.

"It's a warm night, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Ellen, "but there'll be a breeze from the river."

"Are you fond of the river?"

"It gets to seem like a friend."

She smiled and moved toward the door. She had learned her lesson well; while she was a housemaid she would do as housemaids did—or should. She carried with her now a pleasant anticipation—she had changed her mind, some day she would tell Stephen who she was. But the time was not yet ripe. In the doorway she paused.

"Would you like me to move your bed to the bay-window each evening?"

Stephen was watching her free walk and her straight shoulders and wishing for some young creature to walk and talk with, some boy or girl like this.

"Did you speak to me?"

She repeated her question.

"O, thank you; I'll do that when I want to sleep there."

He decided not to walk; he would call on Dr. and Mrs. Salter and tell them about Hilda and ask them to tell certain other persons. It was a duty which seemed suddenly pressing.

He continued through the spring to work all day and a part of the night. He had never felt more alert; after a while he attributed his alertness to freedom from anxiety. What might a man not accomplish under circumstances which were entirely favorable—with health and fortune and domestic happiness?

It was with a sense of amusement that he found himself thinking presently of the one creature in his house who was young. It was pleasant to meet her once or twice a day and see the color deepen in her cheeks. He did not realize that it was meeting him which made her flush; it was simply that she had color which came and went easily. She was always quiet, always unobtrusive, always low-voiced. She smiled, but he had never heard her laugh.

He began to be curious about her, but he asked no questions either of her or of Fetzer. He would learn, of course, that she was merely a dull country girl and the impression of intelligence given by a single instance of quick-wittedness would vanish when she began to talk. She seemed to have within her some spring of interest or satisfaction, but he could not guess what it was. But dull or not, she was very lovely.

Then one warm, bright night when sleeping seemed a waste of time, Stephen found his narrow bed pushed to the window. He smiled; then suddenly he grew pale and turned on his heel and began to walk up and down the room. He folded his arms across his breast as though to hold by force some leaping savage, unrighteous, thing. He was not so much appalled as astounded. He went down to his office and brought up Farmingham on the Muscles of the Eye. At three o'clock he laid the book down and turned out his light, smiling a little weakly at himself. He refused to connect this absurdity with any individual; he believed it was an effect of too close application to work.

In a third-story room neatly arranged was the overflow of his professional library, pamphlets and magazines which waited binding, and books which had passed their usefulness, but which he might still need for reference. On the day after his vigil, going thither to find a pamphlet, he passed Fetzer's room and came to the door of Ellen's room. There he saw Ellen's little bed, her table with its books, its neatly sharpened pencils, its vase of flowers. All was sweet and virginal and childlike. He remembered that Fetzer had said long ago that the girl studied; he was curious about her studies. He stepped in and lifted the three books from the table. The first was a geometry, the second a general history, the third a copy of "Vanity Fair" from his library. In the geometry lay several sheets of paper covered with neat triangles and circles.

He found his pamphlet and went downstairs slowly. He was indebted to this girl who had helped him in a hard place. Did she wish more education?—if so there was no reason why her ambition should not be gratified. He was positive now that she was superior to her present situation. His savings were large and his income constantly increasing; it would be pleasant to help an ambitious student. A comfortable philanthropic glow quite banished his lingering disgust at last night's unpleasant experience.

After dinner he rang for Ellen, who came to his study a little frightened. She had changed her black uniform for a white dress. Stephen knew her straight shoulders and her free step, but he had never realized quite the depth of her gaze when her eyes were squarely encountered.

"Sit down, Ellen."

Ellen took the chair indicated to her. The light shone full on her dark hair and her round chin and white neck. Something stirred again in Stephen's breast.

"Fetzer tells me you're a student."

"Yes," answered Ellen, blushing.

"What do you study?"

"Geometry and history and English and other subjects."

"Why do you study?"

"I'm going to college."

"Oh, you are! When?"

"In September—that is, if I can make certain arrangements."

"What arrangements?"

"If I can pass the examinations. Miss MacVane thinks I can enter the Sophomore class. I'm arranging to borrow a little from a fund for students who need help."

"Why are you going to college?" Stephen leaned forward in his chair. His interest in her quickened. To borrow from a fund, was she?

"I mean to be a doctor."

"A doctor!" Had Fetzer announced her intention of being an aviator, he would have been no more surprised. "Why a doctor?"

"My father meant to educate me to be a doctor as he was." Then Ellen leaned forward, her lips trembling. She could keep her secret no longer—her heart seemed to burst with it. "Don't you remember me at all?"

Stephen looked curiously into Ellen's face and thought of the hundreds of patients in hospital and office. But even though there had been hundreds he seldom forgot the eyes which he treated—certainly not such eyes as these!

"Were you ever a patient of mine?"

Ellen shook her head; he could see her lips tremble. She seemed to be unhappy because he did not remember her! What an extraordinary experience! He had never been more puzzled or more charmed.

"Ellen Lewis is your name, Fetzer said. Is that right?"

"Ellen Levis is my name. They call me Lewis when they can't say 'v.'"

Still he stared without comprehension. Ellen grew pale with distress. Was she the victim of an hallucination?

"Don't you remember *now*?"

"No." It was Stephen's turn to believe that some form of aphasia had blotted out a part of his past.

"You came to see my father the day he died, you and Mrs. Lanfair."

Stephen frowned; his lifted hand covered his lips; then he leaned backward into the shadow. He was shocked beyond expression.

"Not Edward Levis!" said he, at last quietly.

"Yes."

"You were the young girl who begged us to stay to supper? You were studying with your father and you had a little table by the window?"

"Yes."

"Your father isn't *dead*!"

"He died that evening of heart trouble."

"How do you happen to be here?" asked Stephen sharply.

"I wanted to earn my living."

"Had your father no property?"

"I'm not of age."

"Why didn't you go on to college?"

"My grandfather and my brother thought I had enough education, and the farm was run down and my brother thought the income should go to improving it."

"Did they drive you away?"

"Oh, no! I came of my free will. They thought what they did was right. It happened to suit Matthew's plans for the farm, but he would have done right even if it had inconvenienced him."

"Did you expect to earn enough to go to college in a housemaid's position?"

"No; but I earned something and I had a little. Then Miss MacVane encouraged me—she had nothing, and yet she went to college."

"How did you happen to come here? Did Fetzer advertise?"

"No," answered Ellen with difficulty. "My father and I passed here and he stopped and looked at your house. I came to look at it one day because it reminded me of him. I was very forlorn. I think I was crying and I crossed the street in front of an automobile and was struck and Mrs. Fetzer befriended me."

"When did you recognize me?"

"When you came home."

"Why didn't you speak?"

"I couldn't."

"Did your father ever speak of me?"

"He wanted to make you executor of his will, but he couldn't complete it."

"Why didn't you find me?"

"I couldn't remember your name."

Stephen leaned his chin upon his hand. He looked through Ellen at some object far beyond her. He saw a bare room in a dingy old house in Philadelphia, an old desk and his own head bent in remorse above it. He had been grateful, Heaven bore witness, for a while.

"So you have everything arranged?" he said at last.

"Yes."

"And you are happy?"

"Yes. I've quite forgotten how unhappy and forlorn I used to be."

"The prospect of studying delights you?"

"Yes." Ellen lifted her eyes to his. "I used to think that learning was everything, but I've found that it isn't. One needs satisfaction for the mind, but one needs satisfaction for the heart also. It seemed to me that I had nobody."

Stephen rose and went to the side of his desk and stood leaning upon it and looking down at Ellen.

"And you feel that now you have somebody?"

"Yes. I'm older and more sensible and I realize that Grandfather and Matthew are fond of me even though we think differently."

"And is this understanding of their affection sufficient food for the heart?"

Ellen's look was still straightforward, but her cheeks crimsoned. Fetzer would wonder where she stayed. She rose and stood before him.

"No."

"What else have you?"

"I have you," answered Ellen simply.

At that Stephen put his hand under Ellen's soft chin and lifted her head. She smiled at him, and when Ellen smiled she invited unconsciously more of a caress than a mere touch of hand. But he did not move and she turned her cheek a little against the warm palm, then went away. Her cup of happiness was full. Her father's desires had hitherto been her law; she had now another law.

For a moment Stephen stood motionless beside his desk, then he began to walk up and down. What an extraordinary chance! He began to lay plans. She must come down out of her attic; she must wait no more upon him. Fetzer and Miss MacVane and Miss Knowlton must be told at once who she was, and there must be no slighting of her because she had done this lowly work. One of his favorite occupations in periods of enforced idleness in trains or on steamers had been the construction of various schemes of education based upon what he felt were the deficiencies of his own. He would see what could be done with this girl.

Presently he paused and stood for a long time motionless by his desk. Levis dead! There had been hunger in Levis's eyes, hunger which he might have satisfied. But no reproach should rest upon him henceforth; he would do all for this girl that Levis could have done, perhaps he might do more. He would atone. It was a moment of pure philanthropy, unalloyed by any less exalted impulse.

CHAPTER XXVI

A VISIT TO EPHRATA

IN late September Matthew began to cut the corn in the field which he had ploughed a year ago when Ellen went away. He began early in the morning and worked doggedly and alone. The next day he would have help, but to-day he rejoiced—if so bright a word could describe his state of mind—in his loneliness. He breathed heavily; he was angry and mortified. His life had not turned out as he had expected; he had made, it was now perfectly clear, a basic error from the effect of which he should never escape. He had always believed that one could direct one's life and that so intelligent a person as himself could direct it successfully, but he had been mistaken.

He had chosen his wife with impeccable judgment—she was pretty and quiet and domestic and religious and troubled by no unbecoming ambition. She was still all of these, but each quality had been modified in some unexpected way. Her prettiness was spoiled by untidiness; her quietness was only quietness in comparison with the clatter of her family; her housewifely accomplishments proved slighter than he had expected; and her religion was, though he did not realize it, a good deal like his own, a possession for eternity, but of little practical use in this life.

She had slipped back quickly into the idioms which she had once tried to weed from her speech in order to please him, and little Matthew who was learning to talk copied her. About this subject she had already quarreled with her husband whom she accused of being ashamed of her.

He had not reckoned upon the physical depression which accompanies the bearing of children of whom there were now two. Millie was preoccupied with her sensations; she was constantly on the watch for fresh symptoms which she retailed to whoever would listen. The description of her morning miseries greeted Matthew's opening eyes; the account of her evening faintness kept him awake at the end of a weary day. She implied that for all her troubles he was to blame; a bride married by capture could have uttered a no more triumphant "Whose fault is it?"

From the pressure of unpleasant conditions Matthew was free only when he was in the fields. Domestic activities were now carried on, except for sleep, in the kitchen, and there on cold evenings even preparations for sleep were made. The fashion in which he had been brought up came to possess for him a moral and religious significance. When he remembered his youth—and he remembered it more and more often—he saw his father working at his desk, a mouselike Ellen by the window, Mrs. Sassaman busy with her tasks in a distant kitchen, and himself in his own room. Each might have if he wished the privacy which was an inalienable right, the solitude in which mind and soul could grow.

Though Esther was at present away, she had become a fixture in the house. She liked the freedom and the wages and she preferred Millie's company to that of her other sisters. She was certain that Matthew wished her gone, but his dislike did not trouble her; she knew that he feared her departure while he desired it. She had left once, and Matthew, with harvesting waiting, had done the washing.

He had repented his insolence to his grandfather and had been forgiven by him, but he was not at peace, though he went regularly to church. He had confidently expected that God would smooth his path when he so earnestly besought Him, and instead his path seemed to be growing each day rougher.

When in the middle of the afternoon Ellen came up the sloping road outside the field, he did not recognize her. She wore a changed aspect, the appearance of one intensely preoccupied with pleasant thoughts. He saw her wave her hand, and in the light of Millie's prejudices believed that she was some bold creature beckoning to him. When she slipped between two fence posts he knew her with a pang. He did not go to meet her, but stood bending forward a little until she reached to her full height to kiss his cheek. He had often accepted her kisses as though they were an infliction; now they brought tears.

"Well, Matthew!"

He looked down at her, recognizing the change in her state of mind; she felt herself to be, it was plain, fortunate and happy. He had made up his mind that when she returned she should not be received like a prodigal but now her expression made clear that she was not a prodigal in any sense.

"You've surprised me!" he said, astonished at his own delight.

"Are you glad to see me?" Ellen looked at him almost coquettishly.

"Yes," he answered with a deep breath. Then in the midst of his pleasure he was discomfited. She might stay to supper, and a welcome was doubtful. The secondary cause of all Millie's woes was Ellen.

"Can't you stop work a little while and sit down in the woods and talk to me?"

"Yes," said Matthew.

The oak trees, whose foliage was now a dark red, were but a step away and the two sat side by side on the old log. There was between them the most astonishing contrast. Matthew's youthful beauty was gone; his skin was tanned to a darker shade than his light hair; he did not sit erect and he was unshaven; but more startling was his air of weariness and dullness. He looked ten years older than Ellen and seemed to belong to a different race. She laid her hand on his knee.

"I have a long story to tell you."

"Well?" Matthew's eyes devoured her. He was bewildered and made uneasy by his delight. He wished to gather her into his arms and lean his head on her shoulder.

"Do you remember the day that Father died?"

"Of course."

"That afternoon I was sitting here reading and I looked up and saw an automobile standing before the door. When I went down an old friend of Father's was in the office, Dr. Lanfair, with his wife. They stayed only a little while, and soon after they went away Father became ill. He wanted me to give a message to Dr. Lanfair. Do you remember that, Matthew?"

"Yes," answered Matthew uneasily.

"But I couldn't remember his name. Last fall I got a place accidentally at his house. I wrote you how I had been struck by an automobile. But I didn't know then who he was. I had all arrangements made to go to college, but now he wishes to help me because of his old friendship for Father. I'm all ready and I wanted to see you before I left."

Matthew received this announcement in silence. She cherished no resentment; that was one of her notable characteristics.

Ellen read his thoughts.

"I understand everything, Matthew. You did what you thought was right, and you have certainly improved the farm. Isn't it lovely here?"

Matthew made no answer. A dull red crept up under the unpleasant growth of beard.

"I heard you had another little boy."

Thus recalled to his domestic ties he rose stiffly and hastily. A late guest would be unpardonable. "We'd better walk down to the house."

Sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, Ellen smoothed the paths of others.

"You needn't go down now; I'll go alone. After supper, can you come with me to see Grandfather?"

"Yes."

He walked with her to the opening between the two posts; then he did not return to his work, but went back to the log and sat down. She was but a few years younger than he, but she was youthful, free, unburdened, her life was just beginning. Education had not hurt her. For the first time a serious doubt of his own wisdom troubled him. He also for the first time experienced jealousy—he did not wish any one but himself to help Ellen.

His thoughts followed her down the hill. He hoped that Millie would be polite. He saw Millie through the eyes of an outsider such as Ellen had become, her ignorance, her dullness, her stubbornness. He was at this moment all Levis.

Like Matthew, Millie did not at first recognize Ellen. She always thought of her as a forlorn person, but this was no forlorn person who stood at the door. She believed at first that Ellen was some sort of agent, but after a moment's curious contemplation she said, "Well, is it you!"

Then she was silent. She saw the beautiful suit and hat and compared Ellen's appearance with her own, her straggling hair and her dark calico dress, open at the throat since she had last nursed her baby.

"You would never have caught me like this before I was married!" she cried, expressing in her tone all her weariness and bitterness.

Ellen's cheek lost its bright color. She was not an analyst of character and she had never looked forward to Millie's future and prophesied, "Thus she will become."

"Come in," said Millie as though in defiance of a critical eye.

Ellen saw a solemn little Matthew sitting on the floor and a much smaller John in a cradle which was none too tidy. She saw, also, without looking at them directly, a littered sink, a soiled table-cover, an unblacked stove, and windows unwashed for weeks. Looking at little Matthew she began to tremble, remembering how her arms had once ached to hold him.

"Matthew is a big boy. And what a lovely baby!"

Millie's maternal ecstasy had burned itself to a dull flame.

"Perhaps you wouldn't think so if you had to take care of him day and night!"

She accepted Ellen's offer of help with an air which said that since she was going to stay it was no more than right that she should lend a hand, and Ellen bravely put on a soiled apron. Millie had had no one to talk to in the week of Esther's absence, and now the failings of Brother Reith were commented upon and much neighborhood gossip retailed.

"It's the women who run after him. They are partly to blame!" explained Millie.

When Matthew arrived he breathed a sigh of relief. He was sure that he had heard Millie laugh, though at sight of him she lost her good nature. She began to ask questions about Ellen's affairs and pried deeper than Matthew.

"How old is this man who is helping you, Ellen? Is he an old man?"

"He was a schoolmate of Father's, but he is younger than Father was."

"Is his wife living?"

"Yes," said Ellen. "But she's not well; she's in a sanatorium."

"What ails her?"

"She has lost her mind."

A look of significant amusement passed from Millie to Matthew, who stared back furiously and pulled his chair to the table. He had thought of driving in the double carriage and taking the whole family to visit Grandfather, but now he changed his mind. He would no more have Millie share his ride with Ellen than he would three years ago have had Ellen share his ride with Millie. When he had finished eating he immediately hitched his horse to the buggy and drove to the door, and Ellen climbed in beside him. She did not kiss Millie nor did Millie offer to kiss her.

For the first half-mile brother and sister were silent and busy with recollection. Suddenly Matthew breathed a long sigh.

"I could help you with money before you get your inheritance," he said in a low tone.

"Oh, thank you!" Ellen did not remember the long postponing, she saw only the yielding. "It isn't necessary now, everything is arranged. Next summer, though, when I'm twenty-one—"

"Then of course everything will be fixed properly."

Close together she and Matthew went through the graveyard. She slipped her hand into his and he did not thrust it away. The sun had set and the cottage was in shadow.

"Here is Ellen, Grandfather," said Matthew as he opened the door.

Ellen stepped into the little room. The moment of reunion had come unexpectedly. Grandfather raised his beautiful aged head and looked at her, and Amos got to his feet. Tears began to run down Grandfather's cheeks; Amos said nothing, but a crimson flush burned his face. All were conscious of her youth and her vitality and all realized that she was not theirs.

"She's here to say good-bye," explained Matthew. "She's going to college."

Grandfather saw his castle at last flat upon the ground. Amos leaped to swift, jealous inquiry. How was Ellen going to college? Who was helping her? How did she get her fine clothes? But neither Grandfather nor Amos asked any questions.

When Matthew had seen the dim red light at the end of the train grow tinier and then vanish into the darkness, he returned to the Kloster. He did not wish to go home; his rage with Millie frightened him; he would hear only complaints against Ellen and if he defended her the effect would be disastrous. He regretted now the whole course of his life since he had risen in meeting and announced his intentions, and he blamed all on the influence of his grandfather. He remembered Grandfather's ridiculous charge that he had been hard on Ellen. He remembered also Amos's burning eyes. He opened the door of the cottage and sat down.

"I expect there was something more in Ellen's going than appeared on the surface," he said without any preface. "I expect that you annoyed her, Amos."

"Annoyed her? In what way?"

"I expect that Millie was more than half right," said Matthew distinctly. "I expect that you annoyed her with offers of love."

Amos rose, his face deathly pale.

"I'm older than you, Matthew, and I've been your teacher and your adviser, but I shall answer this insult for Ellen's sake. I told her long before she went away that if marrying would help her escape from you, I would—"

"Escape!" repeated Matthew.

"That's the word I used—escape. I said if it would help her to escape I would marry her. It was months ago. I talked to her only once when I met her by chance. I had nothing to do with her going away. It was I who tried to keep her here!" Amos's voice rose. "Levis was right in a sense—you know nothing about the world, you nor Uncle. But I know what the world is like that you have driven her into. I was the only one that tried to save her, remember that, please! Your affection for her is selfish. You would have liked to keep her so that all would run smoothly in your house, and when you can't have your way with her you drive her off—out you go, Ellen! I love her unselfishly, I don't expect to get anything out of her, I—"

"Nor did I expect to get anything out of Ellen," protested Grandfather.

Matthew began to shout.

"You did! You wanted her to start a sisterhood and to stay in this worn-out place. You wanted her to come here and live with bats and mice and dress in strange clothes and cut off her hair and whistle through her teeth as they used to do"—now the devil surely had possession of Matthew!—"I never wanted her to do anything like that. You talk as though she belonged to you. I am closest to her."

"Matthew!" warned Grandfather.

"It's true." Matthew rose. "You've ruined me with your religion, ruined me, ruined me!"

"What!" cried Grandfather, aghast.

"You think you have God here. I don't believe in God!" Matthew slammed the door.

In his buggy he was tempted to lash his horse, but that would bring him home the sooner. It was out at last, the dreadful conclusion he had been approaching for a long time. It was said aloud and he was not struck dead. He laughed like a drunken man.

Then, at the top of the hill, he heard a sound and paused. A great wind had begun to blow and the oak trees were roaring like the sea. It seemed to him that there was a message for him, but he could not interpret it. He felt suddenly weak and leaned against the side of the buggy.

In the cottage Grandfather lifted his hands toward heaven. The hope of his sisterhood was definitely ended, and now the prop of his secular congregation was gone.

"They are their father's children," he said in a whisper. "You are all I have left, Amos." He looked suddenly at Amos with new appraisement. In the loud confusion of Matthew's and Amos's speech he had lost Amos's confession. "You're all I have; you are trustworthy. I am not left desolate."

CHAPTER XXVII

ELLEN'S DREAMS COME TRUE

WHEN Ellen reached Harrisburg, Fickes awaited her. To him Fetzer had made a brief statement of Ellen's changed prospects and he said, as he guided the car over the smooth streets, that he wished her well and that he would miss her. He drew up at the front door, as was suitable to her altered fortune. She had inspired only friendliness; there was no one in the house who, thus far, did not wish her well.

She saw Stephen reading in the library whither he had often summoned her and where he had heard of Grandfather and the dim Saal and the lambs at play and the singing oaks. He had been made acquainted with Mrs. Sassaman and Mrs. Lebbber and had drawn from Ellen's reluctant lips the unpleasant story of Mr. Goldstein. He understood now Edward Levis's life and its disappointments and frustrations, and saw clearly all that he would have been able to do for him. He understood also Levis's daughter and her possibilities, which he believed to be unlimited. Now, alas! his philanthropic impulse was strengthened by other impulses, even more potent, though as yet unacknowledged to himself.

Ellen had begun to view her past history with detachment, and she had described for him the vagaries of her early associates not only with humor, but with tenderness.

"I wouldn't give up any of it, even to have been educated from the beginning. It used to seem dreadfully dull to sit there in the old Saal and watch the brethren and sisters, but I can see now that it was all beautiful. It was like the Rembrandt pictures in one of Father's books, all different shades of brown with sometimes a soft, golden light. I believe it was a good place for a child to be for a while."

Now, when Ellen entered, Stephen put aside his book and called her.

"Come here, Ellen."

Ellen sat down. Her cheeks glowed; her dark blue suit fitted closely her round figure; the eyes of Beatrix Esmond were no more shining, the head of Anna Karenina no more beautiful in shape. Stephen feasted his eyes, picturing her in dresses such as Hilda had worn, her smooth young flesh emerging flower-like from a gleaming sheath of delicate satin. She pushed her curls back from her forehead.

"How were the relatives?"

"All well."

"Are you ready to go?"

"Yes."

"Trunk packed?"

"Yes."

"Have you said good-bye to Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane?"

"Yes. Each of them gave me a present."

"Are you sorry to go?"

"I'm coming back," said Ellen, smiling. "This seems like a dream. Fetzer thinks I've made a mistake; she meant to train me into her position." Bright tears came into her eyes. "I think of my Father."

Stephen rose and crossed to his desk. He did not at that moment wish to think of Ellen's father. Ellen rose also.

"These are your tickets and here is your money. Your tuition is in the form of a check to the University. I thought it would be simplest that way."

"It's all to be paid back," Ellen reminded him.

Stephen smiled. He had begun to expect her to pay it back, but not exactly as she understood. She took the checks and the tickets, struggling meanwhile against tears. Then she lifted her head and stood like a young Victory, breasting the winds. She pictured no specific happiness, but only a general brightness. Every experience in the world which was worth while awaited her.

When her eyes met his, her heart began to beat heavily. She did not realize that life with its strange chances had dealt with her hardly; that she should have been bound not to middle age, but to free youth. She wished above everything in the world that he would again lay his hand under her chin and that she might turn her cheek against it.

But Stephen did not move. He knew that he might touch Ellen, knew that she half expected to be kissed, and he believed that a sense of honor restrained him. In reality prevision governed him; he knew that the present must sometimes be sacrificed to the future.

"You'll write once a week," he said more as a command than as a request. "You'd better put your letter into the form of a report of what you've been doing."

"I promise," said Ellen.

Fetzer escorted her to the train and bade her farewell with regret for the loss of a congenial companion. For the loss of Ellen's help she was not at all concerned, though she had no intention

of engaging any one to take her place. She would do all Ellen's work herself. Life in the Lanfair house would henceforth be very simple. Keener than her one consuming passion was now a consuming dread. Her husband's term was almost out and the Lord to Whom she prayed had but one more year to convert him and take him home; otherwise there was only one course for her.

Ellen took the seat indicated by the porter, with an air which declared that travel in parlor cars was not a new experience. She was determined not to seem puzzled or frightened or even over-pleased by the fortunes which dazzled her.

Having no knowledge upon which to base dreams of the immediate future, she turned after some vague speculations to the past. Her early life, she realized, was now behind her; she could not but feel, though she reproached herself, a deep relief. Her relatives were all troubled and she would have been glad to help them, but she knew no way. To live at Matthew's—how impossible! To become the leader of a band of religious women—how unthinkable! To her, religion was Grandfather's religion. To marry Amos!—most impossible of all! She would never marry; she would devote herself to her profession; she would apply herself with the most intense diligence, and would make Dr. Lanfair proud of her. She leaned back and closed her eyes, determined to become indispensable to him in a far greater degree than Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane together. Her admiration for his keenness of mind, his learning, his goodness of heart was unbounded.

When she was shown into her room in the third story of an old dormitory, her pathway seemed to be literally of gold. Flooded with late sunlight, the room faced west and north and looked out over the beautiful campus and the lake. She set down her satchel and walked to the window and stood looking out, comparing this scene with the scene of her first adventure, Mrs. Lebbert's house overhanging the deep chasm of the railroad yards, its grime and the shower of sharp particles which fell upon her cheek at night. Here were roofs and towers showing above broad tree-tops; yonder was a stretch of heavenly blue water.

Presently she turned and looked at herself in the mirror. Was it all a dream? The thick beating of her heart frightened her. She forgot her father's urging, her own unabated effort, Miss MacVane's assistance; it seemed to her that this happiness was Lanfair's gift. She began to put her small properties in their places, to examine wardrobes and bureau and desk.

As the weeks passed, she made friends slowly. She was not frightened by the complex life of the University, though at first it confused, nor by the long task before her; but she was shy in the company of youthful feminine creatures of all varieties of appearance, natures and histories. She had been associated with comparatively few persons and she was not accustomed to sharing her thoughts. The men students were entirely negligible; she knew that she was the object of their friendly curiosity, but she made no response to overtures for acquaintance.

She did not try to overcome her indifference, but devoted herself to one purpose and one alone. She had, as her father had realized, the student's mind. Her work had been planned for her by Stephen and Miss MacVane, and she gave herself wholly to acquirement. Her schedule did not point, except for one course in elementary biology, to medicine; she was to study English literature and composition, American history, French, Latin, and the history of art, and she became promptly what students called a "grind."

Nowhere else in the world is it easier to live the life of a hermit than in a university. To each student is offered a certain amount of social attention, but he is under no obligation to accept, and is soon left to himself if he indicates that isolation is his preference. Ellen made one friend, Miss Grammer, a quiet graduate student from a Western State who helped her with the arrangement of her programme and with whom, when the first adjustment was over, she went about with a tourist's eagerness. They listened enchanted to the chimes; they climbed the tower to watch them played; they gazed at mortuary marbles in the chapel and explored the deep, beautiful gorges which on two sides bounded the campus. As a graduate student, Miss Grammer had access to a Seminar room in the library, and thither she took Ellen to spend the long evenings. There on a window-seat, with the twinkling lights of the town below her and the lake hiding in the darkness beyond, Ellen learned her lessons, studying sometimes with a strong effort of the will because a dreamy contemplation of her good fortune tempted her. An elderly professor of history, adored by Miss Grammer, exhibited to them the hidden treasures of the library. He was a man of eager intellectual life to whom most young persons seemed dull, and he smiled at Ellen's profound attentiveness to all that he said until he observed that she followed up each uncomprehended allusion. The first mention of Benvenuto Cellini was answered by a puzzled flash of eye, the second by a nod of understanding. Ellen had meanwhile consulted an encyclopædia.

Miss Grammer had a small fortune and it was her dream to settle in some college town for life, buying a little house and taking in with her a congenial friend. She had found, she believed, her congenial friend. Every one formed, sooner or later, plans for Ellen.

Neither Professor Anderson nor Miss Grammer realized that what they did was each week minutely recounted. Ellen had written few letters, and none had been in the least like those in which she now found delightful occupation. She described her room and the campus and the color of the lake and the foam on the waterfalls and the red oak foliage against the pine trees. She described all her teachers and some of her fellow students and the chimes and the mortuary chapel, with its stiff marble effigies, and the chapel service and the sound of music across the open spaces of the campus. She wrote on Sunday, carried her letters with her to vespers, and mailed them afterwards.

Stephen received the letters on Monday evenings, and read them with delight. His own youthful response to music and art and poetry came back to him; it had been less articulate, but it had been no less keen. Ellen's descriptions reconstructed for him not only her own pleasure, but his, and he kept them in a drawer of his desk in the library and reread them often. It was possible then to see life again, freshly, even more intensely, through the eyes of youth!

He wrote briefly in reply. He was busy and so were Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane and Fetzer. Miss MacVane's eyes were better and all the women-folk sent their love. He was glad to hear that her theme had been approved and that her history mark was A.

In December his letters carried a more definite message. He said that both he and Fetzer would be away for Christmas and that the house would therefore be closed. He would be in New York and Fetzer would pay her annual visit to the penitentiary, where on account of his good behavior her husband would be allowed to see her. How would Ellen like to stay at school for the first part of the holidays and then come to New York to meet Fetzer, the excursion to be his Christmas gift?

The letter read as though it had been uttered in Stephen's quiet voice, but there had been nothing quiet about the hand which penned it or the mind which planned each detail of the visit. To observe youth's reactions to New York—how rejuvenating that would be!

Ellen traveled by night, according to directions. The journey might have been made by day, but Stephen had told her to start on a certain train. He had done so with deliberation—he wished her to learn independence. With hot cheeks he pictured Ellen traveling across seas and continents to meet him.

Fetzer had taken, the evening before, the luxurious quarters engaged for her and in the morning she went with Stephen to the train. She always did exactly as he bade her, but this was the first time she had put herself in danger of life and limb at his command, and she made of her alarm, as her taxicab threaded its way through the streets, an offering of affection.

Stephen brought a pale Ellen from the train and put the two women into a car.

"See that she gets a rest. I'll be up to lunch at one."

In the Belvoir Fetzer felt at ease—here was one spot which she had made hers and here she exhibited an air of proprietorship which impressed even the porters. Her own kingdom—she would like them to realize—was no less grand than theirs!

Stephen, coming to the door to escort his guests to the dining-room, looked not the least like pedant in charge of pupil, which character he bore in the mind of Fetzer. Freedom from anxiety and a new interest in life changed him visibly, straightened his shoulders and quickened a little his deliberate voice. He had read "Conrad in Quest of His Youth," he knew exactly what had revived him. He had talked all the morning with a rising young surgeon about an operative form of inflammation of the cornea, and had observed that the young man had come far less directly than himself to his conclusions.

He looked with delight at a refreshed Ellen who moved without embarrassment through the lobby where a hundred pairs of eyes watched her, and who walked, still unperturbed, the length of the dining-room. When his order was given, he told his guests his programme for the afternoon.

"We're going to the Metropolitan Gallery. Fetzer, did you bring your crocheting?"

Fetzer said, "Now, Doctor!"

"Good! You won't want to listen to all the preaching I mean to do and we'll leave you in a snug corner."

"Well," assented Fetzer, "I have a little rheumatism in the knees. I guess it will be better to sit still."

Having climbed the main stairway of the museum, with a supporting hand on each side, Fetzer was escorted to a comfortable seat in a warm room. She still looked with approval upon this man of important affairs who interrupted the course of his busy life to be kind.

"There are a few pictures I want you to look at closely to-day," said Stephen. "The others we'll pass by for the present. I want to give you a general view of the whole thing. Nothing wrong with your knees, I hope?"

"She's young," said Fetzer. "She'll get there yet!"

Stephen looked at the glowing creature beside him.

"Ever been sick in your life?"

"Never."

He continued to regard her—youth!—ah, nothing else was worth while. A light shiver passed over him. Then he laid his hand on Ellen's arm.

"In this room is a collection of primitives. They are enormously valuable in showing the development of art. I want to show you a Madonna and a single portrait of the period. See the grace and the lovely tenderness and then the flatness of the whole thing. Here is a real portrait—see the shrewd eyes and the kindly expression. But in the main they're valuable only because they're first."

"Professor Lamb wouldn't agree with you," answered Ellen, amazed. "He thinks that in some details they've never been surpassed."

Stephen listened with attentive, smiling eyes to illustrative allusions to Giotto and Cimabue. She should some day see Giotto and Cimabue! There was in Florence a dim church whither he had once gone alone; thither he would sometime go with a companion. He pointed out a few landscapes, a portrait of Walt Whitman, a Salome in yellow, a little woman in a white head-covering opening a casement window, three boys swimming in a green sea. Ellen's cheeks grew a deeper red—she had now no opinions. Her blood was quickened by Stephen's touch. Did she feel weariness? She would have walked till to-morrow.

At the end of an hour the two returned to Fetzer.

"I haven't heard one single word of English since we came, and it isn't Pennsylvania Dutch either. Nothing but outlanders. Where do they come from?"

Stephen explained the appreciative foreign population; then again he took Ellen by the arm. The museum had been his refuge a score of times while Hilda selected beautiful clothes or lay abed. He had made it a point of pride to know it thoroughly.

"I want you to get the impression of a voyage through the world. You must come often and stay all the time of your visit in just one section—here, for instance, and think of the pyramids and the palms and the yellow sand and the Sphinx and the Egyptian girl who wore that jewel in her brown ear, and of the jealous lover who stabbed her to the heart with that dagger, and of the tents of the Arabs on the yellow sand.

"And here you may think of ladies in voluminous skirts and tight waists and high-heeled slippers, who made love to gay gentlemen under this rococo ceiling and prinked before these mirrors." Stephen stopped before a mirror and looked into the dark eyes reflected there. In imagination he kissed Ellen's red lips. For him as well as for her it was a golden hour.

"Do you suppose I'll ever see it again?" asked Ellen sadly.

"Certainly!"

"With you?"

There was a savage defiance in Stephen's "Why not, pray?"

Ellen sighed; she had expected her father to show her the world, and she had been disappointed. Then Stephen's closer touch restored her content.

"Le Prophète" is not the greatest of operas, but the greatest tenor and one of the greatest sopranos were to sing and there were new and gorgeous stage-settings—it would serve as a good primer for Ellen. Stephen was amused when he thought of Fetzer and the display of women's bodies in the boxes, pitiful, thin bodies, and unpleasant fat bodies, and watching, he read her thoughts. Fetzer had, however, an advantage, she needed to look with but one eye, and that she fixed upon the stage where she found plenty to occupy and amaze her.

On Sunday he took his guests to service in an unfinished cathedral, so that Ellen might comprehend mediæval deliberation and understand how Chartres and Amiens were built—he expected to show her Chartres and Amiens—and in the afternoon he took her alone to hear a Russian pianist. She sat quietly and for a while he forgot even her. When he turned toward her at the end of a number, she was looking at him.

"This is best of all," said she, to his supreme content.

They walked down Fifth Avenue in the late sunshine. It seemed to Ellen that every one was happy, but none so happy as she.

"But it seems wicked!" she declared suddenly.

"What seems wicked?"

"To be so happy and so gay."

Stephen recognized a lingering impression of early teachings. None of that, he was determined, should be left in Ellen! He needed no narrow creed, either for himself or for her.

"That is nonsense. That feeling is wicked!"

Then Ellen asked a question which was prompted by a hunger to share his interests, and which might have been invented by the deliberate and cunning art of a much older woman.

"You said you were going to talk to a young surgeon yesterday morning. Did you?"

Stephen plunged into an explanation. To be conducted back to the passion of his life was all that was needed to complete his happiness. He spoke rapidly, his hand still clasping her arm. He was old enough to appreciate the value of a companion moulded by one's self. His thoughts were clear; he saw even farther into the subject than he did yesterday. She was not only companionable, she was inspiring, she was essential to his well-being—he would never, he said to himself, give her up. Youth, ah, he could win it back!

CHAPTER XXVIII

FETZER'S EYE IS OPENED

DURING the short spring vacation Ellen went with Miss Grammer to visit Niagara Falls. Stephen thought with satisfaction of Miss Grammer, placing her in the same class with Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane, whom he admired and pitied and with whom he liked to work.

He suggested that Ellen should spend the summer with Fetzer in his absence. He had begun to believe, by a strange and childish variety of logic, that if he did not attempt to see her he would receive a reward, the nature of which was clearly defined in his thoughts. It would have been the height of cruelty to wish that Hilda should survive; it would be the height of absurdity to pretend that her death could bring anything but relief. He had pretended even to himself for many years, and for a still longer term to others; now he would be frank with himself at least. If Hilda died, he could marry Ellen Levis; rather, when Hilda died, he would marry Ellen. He did not believe that Hilda's life could be prolonged beyond a few years.

In May he went abroad to a meeting of ophthalmists. He was to be one of many speakers, and he became, with the first paragraph of his address, the chief speaker. Conscious of his triumph, he believed that he had succeeded because he was intensely happy, or, rather, because he anticipated intense happiness.

Afterwards, sitting in a café, he watched the passers-by. There was but one real happiness in the world and that was to be his. To have Ellen with him, vivifying his days and filling his nights with peace—no man could ask for more.

When he reached his hotel he found a cablegram awaiting him. He connected it foolishly with the mood from whose influence he had not yet passed; he believed that his happiness was premonitory and he tore open the envelope with a shaking hand. It could bring but one message; he experienced in anticipation as he unfolded the sheet the inevitable shock which the announcement of death brings, even a death long expected and desired.

But Mayne's cablegram did not announce Hilda's death; it urged Stephen to wait in Paris and go with him on a motor trip.

In August at last he came home. The house went through its usual transformation; it seemed to Ellen now not that a machine had begun to run, but that a heart had begun to beat. She had studied and had sewed and had visited Ephrata. The half of her father's property had been delivered to her and Matthew would henceforth pay her an income from the farm. Stephen had explained her presence to the same few friends whom he had told directly of Hilda's condition, and she had been invited to ride with them and had a few times been asked to their houses. Fetzer grew pale; her year of grace was approaching its end and she lifted more and more ardently her justifiable prayer for deliverance.

Stephen's arrival, unlike his arrivals with Hilda, was heralded only by the sound of his key in the latch. The time was late afternoon of an intensely warm day. Still feeling the motion of the ship, and oppressed by the heat, he walked from the station through the almost deserted business section, across the burning square to the cool shade of Front Street, beyond which the quiet river studded with islands appeared to be a lake. His pace slackened. He thought of the dimness of his shaded house, of his own bed, of his offices where everything lay ready to his hand, of one-eyed Fetzer and homely Miss Knowlton and poor Miss MacVane and Fickes. They would be there, too, as well as Ellen. Ellen did not come into his mind as did the comforts of his house and those who made it comfortable; she was already there.

As he went up the steps he experienced a moment of fright lest his home-coming should not be complete. She might have gone to visit her kin; she might merely have stepped out for a half-hour. In either case his satisfaction would be imperfect.

But Ellen was at home. She heard the turning of a key in the latch and looked up from her book. She did not move, but fixed her eyes on the door which opened from the library into the hall. If it was he, he would in a moment appear there. The breath seemed to leave her body; she was conscious of a feeling of constriction in her heart. Then she bent a little forward and saw him looking at her. He seemed to speak, but she did not hear.

Stephen did not come forward, but leaned his shoulder against the door and looked down at her, his attitude one of deliberate contemplation, his hand thrust lightly into his pocket. His eyes were keen; he saw clearly and with gloating joy what had befallen her. He would have patience now!

The sound of his key in the latch had not been heard by Ellen alone, but by another pair of ears as keen as hers. Fetzer's heart leaped. She rose from her chair in the second-story hall, letting the curtain which she was mending slide to the floor together with thimble and scissors, and started downstairs. Even in her joyful confusion she remembered the proprieties and sought the service stairs and so came into the library from a rear door. She saw Stephen standing in the doorway and wondered whether he was ill; she hurried forward and saw Ellen. Though she was blind in one eye, the other was perfectly sound, and her perceptions were all the keener for the blindness of her eye. She did not see Stephen's face, she saw only Ellen, and Stephen recognized no more clearly than she what had befallen Ellen.

At once she withdrew backward to the open door and through it to the passageway, still walking backward, until a wall stopped her.

"Oh, the poor, poor girl!" she whispered, aghast, lifting her gaze toward the ceiling. "I can't

understand how things are as they are," she said, for the first time in her life with solemn reproach.

Without realizing the origin of the gentle sound of her departure, Ellen and Stephen were disturbed.

"I'm glad to see you home again," said Ellen.

He came forward and took her hand in both of his. Fetzter advancing for a second time heard him ask, "Where's Fetzter?" and moved forward. It was for her he inquired! Surely he had not seen in poor Ellen's eyes that betraying look which she had seen!

CHAPTER XXIX

GRANDFATHER AND AMOS MAKE DISCOVERIES

Amos had acquired during the past winter a considerable addition to his library. The publishers added the famous tales of "Père Goriot" and "Madame Bovary" to their lists, and in accordance with the suggestions of the clerk in the department store he was advised of their publication. He read no more at lightning speed, but allowed himself only a small portion each day. To teach school, to keep house, to cultivate a garden, to read in the evenings—it was a life common to thousands of prosaic citizens, but to him it was a life of wicked and surreptitious adventure. In April he received a copy of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," and with it, by a packer's error, a recently published and enormously popular story advocating an unremitting optimism in all the circumstances of life, a gladness which nothing could disturb, all-pervading as the air. He read it, sitting on a bench in the grove above Cocalico Creek.

"'I'm so happy that I sing for joy,' said little Mary. 'I just make up my mind to be glad, that's all that's necessary. I make everybody round me glad.'"

He looked with astonishment at the printed word. Was he to pay good money for this? A succession of strange expressions appeared upon his handsome face and finally a grin, all-embracing, malicious. In this fashion a lion might mock an unstockaded village.

Suddenly he rose and hurled the book with good aim exactly into the middle of the creek where it sank heavily; then he laughed a silly laugh. Life was not like that; life was orgiastic, sinister, monstrous!

In June he went to look after his supply of books. The Thinker's Library was not growing with sufficient rapidity for him, and now that his school was closed and he had so many long, idle hours he needed occupation. The day was rainy and cool and dismally unseasonable, and Grandfather looked at him in astonishment. The translation of "The Mystic Dove" was long, long overdue, but Grandfather still had implicit faith in its completion; Amos was slow, but spiritual tasks were not to be hurried.

When Amos had gone the old man felt lonely. He made his way after a while in the cool rain to the Saal and Saron, and walked through the buildings, peopling them with figures. The stairs leading to the second floor of Saron, were narrow and steep and he took them slowly, trying to find a hold for his cane and not daring to cling to the ancient rope which served as a rail, for fear that he might pull down the whole structure upon his head.

In the second story his mood brightened. Here the sisters had sat with their spinning-wheels and looms; here they had sung their ethereal matins, and had prayed for their beloved Father Friedsam; here they had talked of the mystical love of the Lord for his Sweet Flowers. An unsympathetic person would have shivered at the damp, gravelike air, at the narrowness of the tiny rooms, and at the ancient odors which suggested decay and dreariness; and an imaginative person would have remembered all the inevitable physical and mental abnormalities of conventual life.

But Grandfather was cheered and not depressed. In a sudden increase of mental vigor he began to plan once more the rehabilitation of the Kloster. Here should be placed a supporting beam; here fresh plaster, where the old plaster of clay and grass had crumbled away, leaving exposed the slanting rafters held together by wooden pegs. Here was a large space, newly opened like the hollow in which Amos had found "The Mystic Dove," and he began to explore the depths with his stick. He had gone over the old buildings many times, but never without hope of finding some writing which had been overlooked, and had even stared at the graves of Father Friedsam and Brother Jabez wondering whether they might not contain a written message for the present backsliding generation.

When his cane touched a small movable object, he forgot that he had often prayed for exactly such an experience, and he was amazed and excited. He knelt down and thrust his hand into the opening. A book! Many books! His old cheeks quivered and his beard trembled upon his aged breast. He pressed his body against the crumbling plaster so as to reach in still farther, reproaching himself because he was surprised at a blessing for which he had so ardently prayed. A library of books—other "Mystic Doves" and "Sweet Lilies!"

He drew them out, one by one. But the binding was not of musty leather, but of cheap modern cloth; the language was neither German nor Latin, and there was no musty odor of sanctity—what could they be? Still kneeling painfully, he opened the uppermost of the pile which he had made and began to read.

"Hitherto he had never compromised himself in his relations with women. As he had often said of himself, he had inspired no great passion, but a multitude of caprices. But now he had begun to feel that it is one love and not twenty that makes life memorable; he wished to redeem his life from intrigues, and here was the very chance he was waiting for. But habit had rendered him cowardly, and this affair frightened him almost as much as marriage had done. To go away with her, he felt, was equivalent to marrying her. His life would never be the same again. The list would be lost to him forever; no more lists for him. He would be known as the man who lived with—lived with whom? A girl picked up in the suburbs who sang rather prettily."

Grandfather turned fifty pages or so.

"He was the young poet whom all Paris fell in love with. He came up to Paris with a married

woman; I think they came from Angoulême. I haven't read *Lost Illusions* for twenty years. She and he were the stars in the society of some provincial town, but when they arrived in Paris each thought the other very common and countrified. He compares her with Madame d'Espard; she compares him with Rastignac; Balzac completes the picture with a touch of pure genius—they forgot that six months would transform them both into exquisite Parisians!"

Grandfather turned another hundred pages.

"Dearest, we cannot spend the night driving about London."

"He sighed on his mistress's shoulder. She threw his black hair from his forehead."

The book dropped to the floor.

"Ach, Gott im Himmel!" cried Grandfather. "What is then this?"

He explored deeply and still more deeply, till he had at last all the library before him on the floor. Who had carried these books to this spot? To whom did they belong? Together with the agony of which his cramped body suddenly became conscious, there rushed upon him a sickening suspicion of the truth. Only one person beside himself had access to the old buildings.

For a long time he stood staring at the odious books. He did not wish to touch them; he would have liked to press them into a closer heap with his cane and to set fire to them. But they were not his. Nor did he wish to leave them in this clean and holy place. He would carry them down, and when Amos returned he would confront him with them. The dream of his old age was not yet quite destroyed; there would be no restoration of the Kloster; but a repentant sinner might still serve a secular congregation. With him Grandfather would wrestle day and night.

He carried the books to the cottage in five long journeys. Baskets woven by the sisters were at hand, but he did not remember them and a heavily laden basket would have made a perilous burden. Up and down the two flights of stairs which were scarcely more than ladders he journeyed, his knees shaking. Then in his kitchen he placed the books in a row on the table.

Confounded, he sat with his hands clasped on his cane, waiting. The rain continued to fall; the monotonous drip from the eaves changed to the plunge of a miniature waterfall; the shadows of the Saal and Saron and finally the shadows of night fell upon the little house, and still he sat alone.

Amos meanwhile had journeyed through a landscape shrouded in rain and mist. Fields and farmhouses and noble groups of trees were hidden or showed only in ghostly outlines. In the neighborhood of the long line of furnaces and mills the mist produced many strange phenomena. Above the ground was a succession of dull masses, black freight trains, the lower floors of vast and shapeless buildings, and mammoth truncated pyramids of dim red or black or yellow ore. Once, above the layer of mist which enshrouded the upper portion of a towering blast-house, he saw a titanic figure, a man elevated apparently upon the mist itself, raising against heaven a defiant hammer. He felt in his own muscles a sudden tightening—he believed that he could swing a hammer like that and swing it hard.

The city was wrapped in the same dismal blanket. He wandered about the streets; he visited the Capitol and patrolled miles of the muddy river. He could not see the distant bank, and even the islands in midstream had vanished. He walked out beyond the city limits, and there from a little stone pier looked down into a deep, swirling pool. There was nothing in life, he believed, and nothing in death either. The men and women who wrote the books he read made very little allowance for the future; to them he believed the very conception was ludicrous.

Then Amos realized suddenly to what point he had come. He recoiled in horror from the deep pool and from his own wicked thoughts and rapidly retraced his steps. When he reached the city limits, he left the river road in fear and took to the first parallel street.

It had begun to rain heavily and he had no umbrella. He remembered the cathedral into which he had gone by mistake, and wondering at his earlier feeling of wickedness, he decided to take refuge there from the rain. He felt an intense curiosity; Roman Catholic beliefs were often mentioned in the books which he read. He hurried his steps, and when he reached the church he went in and sat down panting.

At first he experienced only a dull peace. His body was tired, his mind ceased to operate and the mere freedom from thought was comfortable. Gradually a deeper quiet came upon him, induced by the silence and the dim conception of ageless traditions which he had unconsciously gathered. Here as in the Kloster men had found peace; they had crept away and had taken vows and hidden themselves forever from the temptations of the mad world.

He saw a slender youth in a long, loose garment enter the church from behind the altar and kneel down. As he knelt he read from a little book, and sometimes he made a graceful, rapid motion with his hand across forehead and breast. Amos watched hungrily and knelt also, crouching almost to the floor. The young man had a happy face—would that he had courage to ask the nature and the effect of his orisons! He would do anything, follow any one.

But the young priest, having finished his devotions, rose, crossed himself, and went the way he had come. He had to Amos's eyes suddenly a complacent air which produced a reaction. The fierce hunger for life came back; he rose and went out, letting the door slam. He would buy more books. And—poor Amos!—he would do worse than that; he would learn something of the world at first hand. There were theaters and moving-picture houses—to him nothing human was hereafter to be foreign.

The rain had ceased, and again for a brief space the mist descended, not now in a thick blanket, but in ragged masses, and a wind blew from the river. The deeper chill of evening cooled the air, and as pedestrians took on a livelier pace, he moved more briskly with them. At the corner of the square he stood still and watched the street-cars moving on the weblike tracks, and the bright lights of the automobiles weaving a pattern round them, and the larger circles of human beings perpetually revolving. The group of Salvation Army workers stood where they had stood months before, singing shrilly, with an accompaniment of tambourine music, an old and sentimental religious song set to a popular secular air. Their leader looked about with the same solemnity, the same canine determination to snatch as many souls as possible from eternal death. Amos looked and listened unmoved.

Then suddenly, as though by this dullness he had opened finally a gateway for the powers of darkness, there rose beside him a representative of that evil which he believed to be the chief evil of the world. A short, heavy woman whose black eyes sparkled behind a figured veil came up to him, so close that her shoulder touched his arm. He took an involuntary step, then he looked down.

"You're all alone?" asked a flat voice.

"Yes."

"So am I, but I'm always glad for company. Perhaps you would come with me?"

"Where?"

The woman answered by turning back toward the dark street and Amos followed her. He walked lightly as though he walked without shoes, as an Arab might follow his master down a ghostly street. His folded arms might have held together a shrouding burnous, his air was secret. He turned like a soldier on parade into a dark hallway and climbed a flight of stairs and another and yet another, going as though he understood perfectly the object of his journey.

The last stairway opened into a room from which he could see an illuminated sky, and he realized that he was above the square. He could hear faintly against the sound of grinding brakes and automobile horns a confident declaration:

"I'm the child of a King,
The child of a King,
With Jesus my Saviour,
I'm the child of a King."

A cold sweat broke out upon him.

His companion moved quietly about the back of the deep, dim room, her motions imagined and not seen. As she moved, it seemed to Amos as though some monstrous and evil thing was bearing down upon him, an enormous, indescribable instrument of woe. His terror was not only mental, but physical; he lifted his hands as if to ward off the crushing weight. At the same time he felt the whole situation to be unreal; and so keen was this impression that he expressed it aloud.

"I'm not like this!"

"What did you say?" asked the flat voice.

Amos answered in deeds, not words. He rose to his feet and moving like a cat approached the door. Then he flung himself down the stairs, one flight, two, three, and out into the street. He believed that he heard footsteps behind him, felt dim arms outstretched for him. He saw, ten times magnified, the face of the captain of the Army. His face was all that he could see. He flung himself upon the little band, now almost without an audience, and pushed his way into the center.

The astonished captain laid a hand upon his arm.

"You're not fleeing from arrest, are you?"

"No," panted Amos. "I'm fleeing from evil."

"Then stand right where you are."

The tambourines began to beat furiously. A lassie started to sing with a volume of sweet sound which came uncannily from her tiny throat. She fixed upon Amos concerned and pitying eyes. The woman with the dark veil did not appear from her fastness.

Amos stood close to the captain, who, after another song had been sung, invited all who wished to be saved to come with him to the rooms of the Army. Apparently Amos was the only one interested in this important matter and him he led away, leaving the others to conduct the meeting. In a bare little room furnished with benches, a portable organ, and a few printed Scripture texts, he bade Amos sit down.

"Now, Brother, what's your trouble?"

Amos was for the moment speechless, the joys of confidence being new to him, but when he began to speak, he could not stop. He told of his youth and his uncle and Ellen and of his buying books and of the old Kloster.

"It was intended that I should found a conventual order."

The captain did not understand.

"A what?"

"A conventual order. We were to gather in others to live a life of meditation."

The captain knitted his heavy brows. "What were you going to meditate about?"

"The goodness of God and the sin of the world," said Amos faintly; and drew forth an amazing reply:

"I don't wonder you got nutty."

"Got what?" repeated Amos, puzzled. "Nutty?"

"You've understood me, Brother." The captain tapped his forehead significantly with his gnarled hand whose deep-laid grime no washing could altogether remove. "Then what?"

Amos described his despair, his contemplation of the dark pool, and his last and most terrible experience.

"I'm utterly vile," said he at last.

"You're worse than that," said the captain.

"Won't you advise me?" asked Amos timidly.

The little man stared at him. He asked again for a second description of Amos's long days, he looked at the mighty frame, and was filled with an impatience which was almost disgust. He rose as though he were going to turn Amos out. Instead he addressed him fiercely.

"Will you do exactly as I tell you for a month?"

"Yes," promised Amos weakly.

The captain opened a closet door and pointed to several sets of workingman's overalls.

"You pick out the longest of those and roll them into a bundle and come along."

Amos obeyed. He could not explain this strange course, unless he was to be conducted on a journey to see depths of misery and wickedness more abysmal than his own.

Whistling, the little man led the way out into the street, and returning to the square bade his companions good-bye. Of the wide, interested eyes of the leader of the singing he took special note, and smiled inwardly and said to himself with the air of a prophet, "Sally's got her eye on him." Then he climbed into a street-car, Amos close behind him. When they had traveled several miles he got out and led the way through an opening in a high fence into the yard of a blast furnace. The blast was in progress and the air was filled with rosy light.

"Come on," he said.

"What are we going to do?" Did some hideous immolation threaten? The place seemed like the lower regions.

"We're going to work," said the strange guide. "What ails you is not sin, but idleness; you've got too much time on your hands. I bet you ain't ever worked a whole day in your life! I'm the boss of the night shift and you're under me. Get me?"

With a gasp of astonishment Amos "got" him. But the captain, however efficacious his cure, was mistaken in his diagnosis. He believed Amos to be lazy as well as idle.

CHAPTER XXX

FETZER DELIVERS A SERMON

FETZER did not sleep well the night before Ellen returned to college, nor had she slept well for several preceding nights. More than once during the past ten days she had been astonished, not by Ellen, but by her admired Dr. Lanfair, who on warm evenings took Ellen riding in his small car.

They rode along the pleasant river or on smooth country roads. On the outward journey, accompanied by the setting sun, they talked. What Ellen had not told about her past, she told now. All that Stephen could remember of his European journeys, of France, of Italy, of the Alps, he recalled; new countries which he expected to see—with Ellen—he pictured from imagination.

Ellen opened her heart; his remained closed. He said nothing about his youth, his father, his marriage, his inner self, knowing that with reticence foregone, other inhibitions would be difficult. He still believed that some day he could honorably tell Ellen everything.

They drove home silently, their eyes upon the illuminated road and the bordering trees. Once, returning from Gettysburg, they saw a deer, blinded by the light, motionless, terror-stricken. The stopping of the car roused him from his paralysis and he sped into the woods. Their thoughts followed him to some deep refuge.

Wholly unsophisticated, Fetzer would have discerned nothing unwise in these excursions if she had not espied Ellen's look on the day of Stephen's return. She believed that Stephen was too modest to suspect that he was enshrined in this susceptible young breast.

She laid the last articles in Ellen's trunk, and when she went to bed she continued to mourn. The world was, take it as one might, a queer place. Then she turned on her side to sleep. Ellen was young; she would "get over it." After a while she realized that she had forgotten to say her prayers and she crept out of bed and knelt for a long time praying for many persons, but especially for Ellen.

Still she could not sleep. She reviewed Ellen's residence in the house. This last summer she had watched eagerly for the mail. Fetzer had believed that the letters which she looked for were from some college acquaintance; she realized now that they were Stephen's letters.

"He's not old." Fetzer was about Stephen's age. "And he's very good-looking."

Again she composed herself to sleep.

"He's perhaps a little too kind to people," she said after another half-hour, in her nearest approach to disapproval of her master.

In the middle of the night she began to think of her own troubles. The Lord had not answered her prayer; Jim was not converted, neither was he translated. His term ended on the first of February, and by that time she expected to await him in the Pennsylvania German village where they had been born and married and where everybody knew their history and his shame. She was not afraid; she believed that if he could be kept from drink and entertained he would be endurable, at least he would not be dangerous. If he did not do well—it was all the same, she was bound to him. It was as yet impossible for her to imagine herself in the little house with him, but she had no other thought than to go. She would still have Christmas, and then would come the inevitable misery. To her Duty was the "stern daughter of the Voice of God," indeed.

After Ellen had gone she began to put the house in order for her own departure, spending hours over each room, making lists in neat little books, and packing carefully Hilda's belongings so that if Stephen decided to give them away they could be shipped without repacking.

"If I get everything done, I'll then have a free Christmas."

Sometimes she walked from room to room adoring and sometimes for an hour she forgot that she was to go away. Then, as if in punishment for her forgetfulness, she found her husband walking with her or sitting close beside her at the table and on the doorstep in the evenings, his arm, his arm—Fetzer needed her prayers for herself!

Through the autumn Stephen was constantly occupied and constantly cheerful. He attended his patients with promises of improvement which did much to bring about improvement. Miss MacVane stood between him and overwork, and Miss Knowlton took upon herself a heavier burden than before. The period was one of supreme happiness for both women; they lived in a dream, each perfectly aware of her own state of mind and of that of her companion. Miss Knowlton, at least, was relieved by Ellen's absence; Ellen was to her like a fifth wheel. Stephen often sat on the edge of Miss MacVane's desk when the day's work was done and discussed cases with them. "We've had a good day, haven't we?" he would say, and Miss MacVane and Miss Knowlton would scarcely be able to speak for satisfaction. They both believed that it was unlimited opportunity to work and freedom from anxiety about Hilda's behavior which made him happy.

Fetzer had formed the habit of returning promptly from church each Sunday evening and after carrying Stephen his late supper, of sitting with him for half an hour. She always told about the sermon, to which she paid the closest attention for this purpose. He seldom went to church, but with this failing she was lenient so long as she could carry religion to him.

When she finished her sermon outline she invariably inquired for Hilda, and then asked for directions for the coming week. She was happiest when he set her tasks, a complete change in

the position of the office or library furniture or the planning of a menu for a dinner party of medical men. This fall he gave her few directions; he was satisfied with everything.

"And now I must go away!" mourned Fetzter.

One Sunday evening early in December, she carried him his supper and sat down near him in the only straight chair, a more comfortable seat being according to her code unsuitable. When she entered she saw him fold a letter and put it into his pocket, and recognized the size and shape. Poor Ellen—Fetzter hoped that she did not write as she had looked! Though she understood Ellen's earlier history, it seemed to her, all else aside, that Ellen had lifted her eyes to an unattainable star.

As Stephen praised her sandwiches and tea, and asked her about the preacher and the choir and the attendance, she quite forgot all her worries, forgot poor Ellen, forgot her wicked husband with whom she would soon have to live, forgot everything but her adoration. But she was soon recalled from her dreams. Stephen put aside his cup and began to walk up and down the room.

"Stay and gossip a while, Fetzter. We must plan a nice Christmas for Ellen."

Fetzter looked up startled.

"Is she coming for Christmas?"

"Surely!"

"But she didn't last year!"

"No, but we went to see her. This year she's to come home."

Fetzter began to smooth the seams of her black silk dress. It was a present from Stephen and she felt like a queen in it. She passed over the astonishing word "home."

"What do you mean by a nice Christmas?"

"Oh, wreaths and holly and flowers and a turkey and presents—such a Christmas as young people like. I don't suppose she's had a real Christmas for a long time. She was here two years ago, wasn't she? What did you give her then?"

"A white apron."

Stephen laughed and Fetzter began to tremble. It was her feminine duty to protect Ellen.

"Do you suppose it is best for her to come? On account of her lessons?"

"She won't have any lessons. Of course she's coming! Wasn't she here all summer?"

Fetzter said in her heart, "But you weren't here!" Aloud she said, "Does she know she is to come?"

"Know it? Why, this is her home, Fetzter—surely you understand that!" He stopped in his walk and looked down. Fetzter was not one to make difficulties. "I should think you'd be glad to have her. She's young, and youth is everything."

With a great effort Fetzter raised her eyes. She was not thinking of Stephen or of herself, but with deep unselfish concern of Ellen. It was hideous to want what one could not have!

"I should think she'd like to be with young people," she said with a little gasp.

Stephen had taken up his long stride; he stopped again and looked down. Rarely, and very rarely, jealousy of Ellen's young companions troubled him.

"She likes to be here!" he said sharply. "She—" Then he stopped short. Fetzter was still smoothing the seam of her dress. He was glad that he had not met her glance—he did not wish to betray himself. For an instant and only an instant he hated her, then he blushed for himself—good, devoted, innocent, unsuspecting Fetzter could have no doubts of him! "I may not be here all the vacation, but that makes no difference in her coming."

Fetzter lifted her tray and bade him good-night, and when she had put all the things neatly away, went up the stairs to her room and sat down at the window. She had not met his eye, but for the first time she had heard his voice speaking to her sharply. It had the effect of light as well as sound; dark corners were suddenly illuminated. There were his frequent letters, there were the automobile rides, there was his present eagerness. She had not seen his face when he greeted Ellen; who knew what his look had expressed?

"He's all alone," she said in an awed voice after a long time. "It's very, very hard to be alone.... He's had all along from the beginning a hard time.... It was a wonder that he stood it.... He deserved better in this world.... But this cannot be!" She spoke with childish simplicity. "This would be wrong!"

The next Sunday evening she carried Stephen his supper and sat down and gave him the outline of the sermon.

"It was on the subject of always having enough light to live by and it not making anything out if we have nothing else but that," she explained in her native idiom. The sermon, if one could judge by her pale cheeks, had moved her.

She inquired about Hilda.

"I so often think of her sitting down there when there is all this here."

Then she took her future happiness in her hands. Her husband could not live always and she had expected some day to come back; now she imperiled that prospect.

"I'm sorry that I cannot be here over Christmas," she said soberly.

"Not be here at Christmas! Why not?"

"He comes out the last of January."

Stephen looked up quickly. The absurdity of preparing for a month when a week would suffice did not at first occur to him. He had seen Jim Fetzer at the trial—he was a mad brute.

"You're not really going back to him!"

"Yes, I am."

"To live with him?"

"Who else has he?"

"Let him take care of himself!"

"But he's my husband"—Fetzer pronounced it "husbant."

"He'll shoot you again."

"No, I think not. He knows now what the jail is like."

"It seems an odious proceeding."

Fetzer returned his gaze. She was a human being and so was he, there was at this moment no distinction of rank between them.

"You would not leave her stick," she said.

Stephen swallowed the last mouthful of tea. There was something behind Fetzer's strangeness; it was ridiculous for her to leave before she must. If she went Ellen could not come! It was not possible that she was trying to spoil his plan! He rose and stood quite close to her.

"Why do you go before Christmas, Fetzer?"

A deep red flooded Fetzer's cheeks. On the left side the white scar lay like a hand.

"I must get my place ready for him. It is everything all run down. The fence must be fixed and I'm going to take water into the kitchen. I'm used to the conveniences here. I—"

Stephen too flushed crimson. He laid his hand on Fetzer's shoulder.

"Look up and tell me what you're driving at!"

"I mean that I must go."

"You mean that you're taking pleasure in deliberately spoiling my little plan for Ellen's Christmas!"

Fetzer looked at him appalled. Oh, that Ellen had never come to make life hard!

"You're making some sort of foolish pretense," he continued. "Don't you want Ellen to come here?"

After a long time Fetzer said, "No."

"Why not?"

"I think it isn't for the best."

"Why not?"

"It's hard on her."

"How so?"

Fetzer looked down at her folded hands.

"It's hard to want all the time what you cannot have, especially when you see it before you."

"What is there Ellen wants which she can't have?"

Fetzer rose, pushing back the light chair upon which she had been sitting.

"You know," she said quietly. "It is hard even for me to live here for some reasons, though I'm a little older than you and I'm a very ignorant Pennsylvania Dutch woman and I have this." She laid her hand across her cheek. "Sometimes I think how different everything might have been if I had been born different. Miss MacVane—I expect it is so with her and with Miss Knowlton too. But we are older and we can resign ourselves. But I'm sorry for this young girl, that everything should be spoiled for her."

"How spoiled?" Stephen asked the question as quietly as Fetzer had spoken, but his heart was not quiet. He was not, like her, unsophisticated, and he saw, not for the first time, his attentions to Ellen through the exaggerating medium of his own desire. He suspected with alarm that Fetzer had been prompted by some worldly-wise, discerning person. There were these other women in the house, there were Hilda's friends. Could some fool have meddled?

But Fetzer's prompting had sprung from her own heart, and it did not take into account any reputations before the world.

"Because nothing can come of it for her but trouble," she said, and went out of the room with dignity, not forgetting to say good-night or to lift her tray.

CHAPTER XXXI

ELLEN REMEMBERS BROTHER REITH

IN the fading light of a December afternoon Miss Grammer and Ellen went together to an organ recital in the chapel. Only the lamps at the organ were lighted and they found their way to a pew in the twilight and sat very still, seeing dimly the mosaics picked out in gold, the faint outlines of arched windows and the shadowy forms of human beings. They were not curious about what was being played; for them music was merely an aid to meditation. Miss Grammer saw a little brown house whose snug interior was like that of a ship's cabin. It had built-in cases of drawers, many book-cases, a few pieces of mahogany furniture, and at the windows white curtains and red geraniums, and it was surrounded by neat flower-beds in which there was a continual succession of old-fashioned bloom.

Ellen's thoughts dwelt upon a human and not a material object. She saw Stephen's smile and heard his "Well, Ellen!" It was only at such moments as this that she allowed herself to think of him. A history paper had recently been marked B, instead of A, and she knew the reason perfectly, she had been meditating during a lecture upon the admirable character of her benefactor. There are long periods in youth when the present suffices for happiness, when the distant future casts no shadow upon the drifting hours. She was content to work as few students ever worked and to allow herself grateful thoughts during organ recitals and late in the evening when she sat on the window-seat in the Seminar room waiting for Miss Grammer to complete her longer tasks.

This afternoon the organist seemed to have selected his compositions for the special benefit of dreamers. He used soft stops, and one lost at times almost all consciousness of sound. His little yellow-haired boy had climbed to the organ bench and the light fell upon him as he sat motionless watching his father's hands. It seemed as though he were producing the music by a childish magic.

"Two years from now I shall probably be settled for life," said Miss Grammer to herself. "I shall not buy a house for a year, however, until I am sure that everything suits me. I shall have a fireplace with a couch before it and my bookshelves shall be all about me like a wall. *If only nothing happens!*" Miss Grammer shivered. Alas, things had often happened!

"Two weeks from now I shall be at home," said Ellen. "It will be almost dinner-time and I shall be going down to the library. Perhaps I shall have a letter this evening."

The last part of Ellen's dream came true. She did not read the letter at once; it pleased her in her confident happiness to postpone it until she had finished her evening's work. After dinner she and her companion went back across the dark campus to the library. They listened for a moment to the noisy brook over which they crossed on a little bridge, they watched velvety black wind clouds blot out the stars, they smiled at a whistling boy, they heard the sound of a dance tune from a fraternity house.

"People are gayer than we, but they aren't happier," said Miss Grammer.

"Oh, I'm gay, too!" said Ellen.

She wrote themes in English and Latin; then she looked over many pages of history notes and answered mentally a list of questions which she had set down at the conclusion of to-day's lecture. She could answer them all—there were to be no more B's! Occasionally the name of a studious Junior was added to the list of Seniors elected to membership in the Phi Beta Kappa Fraternity—it was a goal at which she aimed.

Then at last she opened her letter.

"My dear Ellen," wrote Stephen, "I find that I shall have to be away at Christmas—I'm going South with Professor Mayne. Fetzer is, I'm sorry to say, to be away also, not as heretofore merely visiting her wretch of a husband, but preparing a home to which he will come permanently next month. Then Miss MacVane will take charge of the house. I think your best plan will be to stay in Ithaca with your friend. Would you like to go to Buffalo again? What would you like to do?"

After a while Miss Grammer looked up. Ellen's head was bent low.

"What's the matter? Have you had bad news?"

Ellen lifted a pale, astonished face.

"No," she said, trying to make her voice sound natural. "Only I'm to stay here for Christmas. Dr. Lanfair and Mrs. Fetzer will both be away."

"Well," said Miss Grammer practically, "I'm sure we shall have a pleasant time." Blinking in her queer fashion, she delivered a little homily which expressed her philosophy of life. She had had deep and wide experience with disappointment.

"There's only one person for each of us to be absolutely sure of, that's ourselves, and we've got to make our happiness dependent upon things which we can get for ourselves. Now one can always have books and nature, and we should make the most of those pleasures and learn to rely upon them and not upon human beings or worldly fortune. I've had to do that."

Miss Grammer returned to her books and concentrated her attention upon them. Her remarks indicated no vain boasting; she had done exactly what she claimed to have done. But she was quite forty.

Ellen sat for a little while looking out of the window. She felt stupefied; presently she was conscious that she had difficulty in breathing. Was she going to cry? She must get quickly from under these smothering ranks of dull books and this heavy pile of stone and away from the keen eyes of her companion. It had always been her habit in trouble to run out of doors. She rose and put on her hat and coat.

"Just a few minutes and I'll be ready," said Miss Grammer.

"I think I'll go now," answered Ellen steadily. "See you in the morning."

Miss Grammer looked at the door which closed gently. She knew the main facts of Ellen's life, and suspecting that Harrisburg held some young man to whom she was attached, she sighed.

Outside Ellen stood still. The night was bright and starlit. She went round the great building to the rear and there sat down upon a familiar bench which was a part of the architectural design and bore an inscription which she knew by heart:

"To those who shall sit here rejoicing,
To those who shall sit here sorrowing, greeting!
So have we done in our time."

She was filled with wonder and amazement. Could such misery be real? He was going South with Professor Mayne! He could have no other reason than his own pleasure. If he had stayed at home, Fetzer would have stayed also—she knew Fetzer's plans. He didn't care; she was nothing to him but a poor creature who needed help.

Hearing the sound of men's voices, she realized that it was foolish to sit here alone, when at any moment a company of students might take a short cut across the hill. She longed for the shelter of her room, for her smooth pillow—the sky and the stars and the cold air offered no balm. Perhaps in her room she could think this out, could find some ray of comfort, could remember some detail of their association upon which she could once more build happiness. She rose and went rapidly down the walk and across the brook.

Once in her room, she did not go to bed, but sat down by the window and looked out at the dim campus. Her pain, dulled for a few moments, returned. He was going away, she should not see him! She put her hand to her side, to soothe the actual, physical distress.

Presently, as if to ascertain whether this agony had put a visible mark upon her, she turned on the light and examined herself in her mirror curiously and with humility. She was not thinking of her appearance; she was asking herself a question. Then she lifted her head with a splendid defiance to resist the fire of amazement and resentment which ran through her. The resentment was not against Stephen, still less was it against herself; it was against life.

"I haven't done any wrong," said Ellen aloud. "It isn't my fault."

At once, moving deliberately, she undressed. She counted the strokes of the brush on her thick hair, she hung up her clothes with painstaking, she laid out fresh clothes for the next morning. But once in bed, she could not sleep; a faint recollection disturbed her, a vague incident connected with this hour, promising in the most tantalizing way an interpretation if she could but read it aright.

Later in the night she dreamed. She seemed to see Millie, a little, weazened creature who pointed at her and chattered, rat-like, about the pursuit of Brother Reith and the unlawful pleasures which he allowed himself in the absence of his wife.

CHAPTER XXXII

GRANDFATHER PLANS A CRIME

DURING the long hours in which Grandfather waited for Amos, he reviewed his life, searching like Job to find where he had erred and how he had brought upon himself the heavy punishments of his old age. He had tried to do his duty, had preached righteousness, had tried to interpret the Bible correctly, had given to the poor. He had married, but the instinct to mate had been implanted in the human heart by God Himself. Except in this one act, his whole life had been one of self-denial.

In spite of his effort to be righteous, his life had followed a descending scale since his thirtieth year. Then his wife had died, and about the same time three families had left the church, two to become Lutherans, the other to go to church no more. They had all been rich in this world's goods, and what was far more important, they had been large families.

Afterwards Mary had married Edward Levis and the danger to her soul had occupied his anxious heart. He had recovered presently his sense of security and had built great hopes upon Matthew and Amos and Ellen; but here again he had been cruelly disappointed—Ellen had left him and Matthew had behaved shamefully. Last week Millie had come angrily complaining that Matthew was bewitched; he would not go to church, he was teaching the children to despise her, and he had taken to reading books which he had once considered wicked.

"He tells little Matthew that things I say are wrong. My way was him good enough when we were married. It is that Ellen!"

And now Amos had gone, and the souls of all three were in peril; they were sheep lost upon the mountain.

If it had not been for the discovery of these unclean volumes, Grandfather would have had a search instituted at once for his nephew. But to him they explained everything. He felt a destroying rage with Amos; he could look upon him with far less leniency than upon Matthew and Ellen. It was in his case as though a dog which for years pretended gentleness had turned and rent the hand that fed it. He had practiced a long piece of deceit; some of these books he must have had for months. Grandfather pondered upon his comings and goings and decided correctly upon the exact day on which he had made his first excursion in search of literature. With fresh suspicion he took from the table drawer "The Mystic Dove" and Amos's translation and discovered that work had ceased months ago. He looked with tears at the marginal scribblings.

"I trusted him too much," he said bitterly.

He sat waiting all the rainy afternoon and evening.

But Amos did not come. Night fell after a gloomy twilight and Grandfather went exhausted to bed. He locked the door with a stern pressing together of his thin lips, but after a while he rose and unlocked it. He even opened it and, shivering, looked out into the black landscape. But no human being was to be seen and only the mocking blast of an automobile horn from the curve near by was to be heard.

Another day passed and Amos did not come. On the third day Grandfather saw the rural carrier drop a letter into his box and hurried feebly to the road. He opened it as he returned through the graveyard, but found that he could not read. He was frightened until he remembered that he did not have his spectacles.

But even spectacles did not make reading possible at once. He stared at the sheet for a long time before he understood exactly what Amos meant.

"Dear Uncle, you will be surprised to hear that I am going to give up my school. I have written to the directors. There are plenty others who will be glad to have the place. Uncle, I have found peace. For a long time I have been uneasy in a spiritual way. But I have found a friend and he says that what I need is to work hard and the soul will take care of itself. I work in the furnace and in the evening I am with him. He is a Salvation Army worker. There are three men and two women who work together. One man and one woman are married, the rest are single people. It is like the idea of the Kloster in a way. I hope you were not anxious. I had a heavy burden on me, Uncle."

When he at last understood, Grandfather was violently excited, not by anger or by disappointment, but by hope. If Amos had found peace, so much the better. But he need not stay away—this was the place for him to labor; let him bring his friends here! Grandfather penned a forgiving, welcoming response.

But Amos was not to be persuaded. He answered saying that he was glad he was forgiven, but a life of meditation and prayer suited none of them; they must be up and doing, the harvest was white. "It is our custom to go where sin is," explained Amos. "We do not wait for sinners to come to us."

"'We'!" repeated Grandfather.

The word had for Amos a specific meaning.

"There is a young woman here, Corporal Sally, who is a noble woman. She has had a sad history, but has come through." Little did Grandfather dream the struggling against sin, represented by a worldly Ellen, behind these simple sentences!

Then, alas for both writer and reader, Amos explained that he could no longer believe in the keeping of the Seventh Day, the ceremony of Foot-washing, the exchange of the holy kiss. He did not hold them to be the essentials of religion.

He said in conclusion that if Grandfather needed him, if he should be sick, for instance, he could come at once. He signed himself Grandfather's "in the Lord."

"In the Lord!" Grandfather lifted his stout old stick and brought it down heavily. It struck "Esther Waters" and Esther fell to the floor. "The Raft" was torn across one of its grimmest pages, "Madame Bovary" was cruelly slashed.

Then a wilder mood came upon him. The end of the Kloster was decreed, that was clear. The props were removed, the pillars loosened, the foundations weakened. When he was gone no one would be left to cherish the old buildings. Curiosity-seekers, long the bane of his existence, would carry away the treasures of books and curios, the wooden blocks upon which saintly heads had rested, the elaborate charts penned by devoted fingers. An insistent antiquarian often visited Grandfather—he would come and take that which he coveted and perhaps sell his loot, making capital of the things of the saints! There was no rational explanation of earthly affairs; reward was not given to merit, nor peace of mind to those who deserved it. It would be well to make an end.

His anger quickened. The Kloster was his; even in human law he might claim it, might sell it, do as he liked with it, as the last Seventh-Day Baptist. After him there would be no one who had any real claim upon it.

Suddenly he had a vision. He saw clean, merciful, leaping flames doing quickly what time would do gradually. The suggestion seemed to come miraculously and with it a plan for its carrying-out. There was an angle where the Saal and Saron joined, where a pile of kindling could be laid. He felt an overwhelming weariness with life and an eager desire to be rid of it. He began to plan cunningly.

In the night he took from his woodbox an armful of fine kindling and carried it up the stone steps and round the meeting-house to the spot which he had selected. The night was cloudy and there was not a sound, not even the distant baying of a dog or the echo of footsteps. He returned and secured two matches, the small can from which he filled his brass lamp, and also the ponderous key. He would look for the last time upon the treasures which he loved. He opened the door of the meeting-room in the Saal. The old benches, the table with its superimposed reading-stand which formed the pulpit, the faded charts on the wall—he saw them clearly, though their outlines were almost invisible. He repeated to himself the inscription on one of the charts, then he stood trembling and sighing.

He walked through the meeting-room to the kitchen where of old meals had been prepared for visiting brethren and their families who came to spend days in worship—he groaned as he thought of their multitude, a far greater multitude in his dreams than they had been in reality.

The interior of Saron was black, but he needed no light. He touched lovingly an ancient chair, an old loom, a row of pewter spoons, a hand-woven basket. He climbed last of all to the matin room. Now he was breathing heavily. The thought of Amos had returned, filling him with rage. Matthew and Ellen were children, his children, but Amos was not. He hoped that the forthcoming tragedy would haunt Amos all his days. He meant to come back to this room and await his end.

He went trembling down the steep steps and out to the angle of the wall where he had laid the little woodpile. He struck a match and its light showed faintly. He had selected the spot cunningly; it was invisible from all points except a field, and in this field, sown with winter wheat, there was certain to be no observer. The fire would not be discovered until the flames leaped through the roof and the opposite wall. When he tried to light the wood it did not burn, and he remembered his coal-oil and lifted the can.

But before he had tilted it Grandfather paused. He had given the hours of a long life, not to dreams of arson and self-destruction, but to meditations upon the majesty and the goodness of God. His visit to the matin room had started a familiar train of thought. He ceased suddenly to hear the crackling of flames and the thunder of falling beams and rafters and thick old walls; he heard the sweet and heavenly singing of women far above his head, the ethereal sounds issuing from fasting bodies. He forgot his rage, he forgot Ellen and Matthew and Amos, he forgot himself. His wrongs ceased to be real; the realities were white-robed choirs, a heavenly peace of mind. He stood listening.

After a long time he carried the oil can and the wood back to the cottage and put them in their places. Then he opened the window and sat down. It was almost midnight, the hour when Father Friedsam had been accustomed to waken his spiritual children so that they might worship their Creator. With folded hands and monkish mien Grandfather rose and stepped out of his cottage and up the stone steps to the meeting-house and there ascended the pulpit platform. The room which he saw was not this dim, low-ceiled room of his ministry; it was a loftier room with a latticed gallery for singers. He saw before him an entering procession, and alone in the darkness he lifted his voice and praised God with a psalm.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ELLEN UNDERTAKES TO CONQUER HERSELF

THE first sting of disappointment past, Ellen believed that she was glad that her Christmas journey had been made impossible. She might have betrayed herself, and the only light in her darkness was the hope of keeping Stephen's good-will. Her experience of human passion was limited; she believed that the simple fact that Hilda lived would keep his heart from wandering. Pure hearts, she believed, did not wander, nor did they seek those which were bound. To feel his eyes upon her in amazement, disapproval, or scorn—there was the one contingency intolerable and shameful.

Not once, during her self-examination, did she surmise that she was regarded in any other light than that of a beneficiary. Stephen was grateful to her father for some remembered kindness, he sympathized with her ambitions, and he had given her what must seem to him—however large it was to her—a little from his store. Fetzer's opinion that she had lifted her eyes to a distant and unattainable star was her own opinion exactly; indeed, to Fetzer he was not nearly so exalted a person as he was to Ellen.

She felt, alas! now that she understood herself, another humiliating emotion, jealousy of all who had anything to do with him, of Miss Knowlton who obeyed his commands, of Miss MacVane who kept his house, of Fetzer who might some day return to her post, of Professor Mayne who went about with him, even of the patients who saw him daily. One could become, it seemed, wholly ludicrous.

Another woman might have tried to conquer this passion because it could result only in misery and humiliation for herself, but Ellen tried to conquer it because it was wrong. It had not been wrong to love him; she had fallen blindly into that error—upon that she proudly insisted; but it would be sinful to continue. From the narrow theology of Grandfather and from the character of her father she had unconsciously constructed a code of behavior as rigid as Grandfather's precepts and as her father's probity. Her nature was developing rapidly, but in this respect it retained all its natural simplicity and innocence.

She determined, therefore, poor Ellen, that she would banish Stephen from the heart which he unlawfully occupied, and with this end in view she laid down specific rules for herself. In the first place she would think of him no more. In this determination she was not as childlike as she seemed for she planned for herself deliberate distractions. She would study still harder; she would respond to some of the friendly overtures which were continually made; and, above all, she would dream no more. She laid away the tiny watch which Stephen had sent her at Christmas—it was absurd to try not to think of him and then deliberately to recall him whenever she needed to know the hour! She went to a few dances, she received a few student callers, she even went walking four times with a graduate student who confided to her the history of his past and his hopes for the future. She decided drearily in March that she was conquering herself.

She would go to Harrisburg in June only for a day on her way to Ephrata. Her self-examination led her farther than her relations with Stephen, and she believed that in her preoccupation with herself she had been undutiful to her grandfather and to Matthew. When Miss Grammer, who had taken a cottage on the lake, invited her wistfully to go with her, she burst into tears.

"I wish I could. But I've written to my brother that I'm coming home."

Miss Grammer studied her gravely. Had the object of love died or had he been married? It was the former of these sorrows which she had suffered in her youth.

"You knew that you might come with me, surely, Ellen?"

"Oh, yes."

"You are tired," said Miss Grammer.

Spring breaks the best of resolutions of Ellen's particular variety. The willow branches turned a brighter yellow, the brook bubbled more and more loudly, crocuses and scilla enlivened the grass. Presently flowering shrubs bloomed; one walked in welcome shade where yesterday there had been sunshine; bees hummed in and out of classrooms where students nodded. Those who had studied ceased to be industrious and those who had been idle continued in their course. There was little talk of Avogadro's Law or of the Elizabethan spirit of Shelley; there was discussion of baseball games and boat-races. Envy was transferred from him who made high marks to him who, like the wise virgins, had provided against springtime by saving permitted absences.

On Memorial Day there was a boat-race and the students departed with few exceptions to the lakeside. A half-dozen, studious like Miss Grammer, worked in the library, their thoughts occupied with matters alien to boat-races, and others whose purses were empty sought points of vantage on distant hillsides. Only Ellen turned her back upon both work and play and went in an opposite direction. She meant this afternoon, while the struggle on the lake was in progress, to take herself to task.

She selected her battleground with poor judgment. One may win a victory over one's self as one walks on a frozen road or under the bare branches of wintry trees, but when one approaches the scene of conflict through beds of daisies and sweet clover one is weakened at the start. Even her physical strength seemed to be failing when at last she sat down on a fallen tree at the edge of a little wood and clasped her hands round her knees. The land fell in a gentle slope to the campus

whose towers rose above the tree-tops. Beyond, and far below, the lake lay clear and blue. There was no house near by and there was no sound of the life of human beings, and nothing to take her attention away from her own problem.

She believed now that her obsession was a mortal sickness and that from it she could never escape; she hoped only to hide it and to proceed so that it might be unsuspected by others. She had tried since Christmas to put Stephen out of her mind and had failed. She had reminded herself that her affection was not and that it never would be returned. Indeed, it seemed to her that already Stephen's letters had grown more curt and businesslike; perhaps he understood and was trying to make clear to her the hopelessness of her situation.

She reproached herself for her blindness. It was upon the night when she had returned from the King Sanatorium that this had begun; she should have understood herself then, and not created for herself a fool's paradise. The effect of this emotion was like the effect of death, it colored everything. The universe had narrowed to a point. She did not realize how unlike most lives her life was, with its limited circle of acquaintances, and its intense affection for a few human beings.

The afternoon wore slowly on; far away the straining bodies of the rowers bent above their oars waiting the word to make a belated start, the thousands of spectators shouted, and presently the long observation train began to move with the boats. She should have been with her schoolmates in body and in spirit, but she did not even think of them.

Suddenly it seemed to her that some restraining band within her weakened and broke. In imagination she let her eyes devour Stephen, let herself be enfolded by his arms, lifted her lips to his. She uttered a sigh of complete abandonment; she began eagerly to comfort herself with reminders of his gifts to her, his smile upon her, his hand on a memorable occasion lifting her chin. When he had walked with her in New York, he had never let go her arm; when he helped her into his car his clasp lingered. She found herself speaking aloud.

"If I could only see him! I haven't seen him since last summer! If I only knew that he didn't despise me, that he thought of me, I shouldn't care for anything else. Then I could work once more. If I could only see him! Others can, and I would give my life for him!"

She heard dimly the cheering of a multitude. It must be that the race was won; the visitors could produce no such volume of sound. But her victory was not won! She rose and went down the hill to the road, her shoulders bent. Her childhood had been ended by her father's death, and now her youth was ended by this misfortune. She remembered, alas, a word of Amos's—"burn with sinful passion"—and she was filled with shame.

She crossed the deserted campus to the library, walking aimlessly, and descended to the cool corridor leading to the Seminar room. The door was open and she could see Miss Grammer at work within. Unheard, she stood looking at her curiously, almost as though Miss Grammer were dead. So that was what was left for one, that was what one became!

CHAPTER XXXIV

A DARK TOWER

WHEN Stephen returned from his excursion with Professor Mayne, Miss MacVane had installed a young woman in his office and had herself taken charge of his house, filling her new position with Fetzner's devotion.

He had given no directions for Ellen's letters to follow him and when he read them on his return he discovered with selfish pleasure that she had missed a week. So she couldn't write, poor child! A pretty dreary time she must have had with Miss Grammer! So had he with Mayne. He longed to tease Ellen until her eyes filled with tears and then to brighten them again. He had changed his Christmas plans neither out of respect to Fetzner's opinion, nor because he wished to avoid encouraging Ellen's affection, but because of the sharp eyes of the other women in his house, and because he believed his deliverance was at hand. Hilda was worse, and her malady was likely to take henceforth a more rapid course.

Ellen's mid-year examinations were successfully passed and he proudly showed her report card to Miss MacVane, who looked at him keenly and enigmatically from behind her thick glasses, but kept her thoughts to herself. Ellen and Miss Grammer had been invited by Professor Anderson to the box of his fraternity at the Junior Promenade, and Ellen had danced. Did Ellen dance? His heart sank. Professor Anderson was an old man—she must have had a more agile partner. She went to the theater—she did not say with whom. She won election to Phi Beta Kappa, and his eyes sparkled.

In the spring impatience tortured him. He was tired and his nights were restless. Life was passing; he was now forty-three years old and joys, unless they were snatched quickly, would cease to be joys.

Late in May Dr. King asked for a personal interview—the message could mean only a change for the worse. To be free, to have a few years of life at high pitch—how eager was his longing, how clear his visualization of the nature of that happiness! A year from now Ellen would have finished her course—it would be absurd to wait beyond that time.

But freedom was not at hand. Hilda, he learned, had seemed to improve and had asked for her husband. Dr. King was almost jubilant; the improvement offered hope for all similar cases. She was so much better that he believed it might be possible for her to have a period of liberty in her home under the care of attendants. He felt an intense sympathy for Lanfair, and an intense satisfaction in the news he had to impart. Mrs. Lanfair had not been long enough away for her return to seem like a return from the dead as sometimes tragically happened. But Lanfair must not let himself be too hopeful.

Stephen looked silently down upon the eager little man. Hopeful! He began to tremble. Was he to take her home *now*? It couldn't be; he would have to explain, to make excuses. He stammered an incoherent answer and followed along thickly carpeted corridors, his cheeks quivering. He fixed his eyes upon the back of Dr. King's well-clad figure and was absurdly and grossly offended by the pattern of his coat. He said that he must get hold of himself, that this would never do.

Only the fact that his guide locked and unlocked all doors through which they passed differentiated the journey from a journey through any large and well-appointed house. It appeared to be endless, but when they paused before Hilda's door, it seemed to have lasted no more than a second. Stephen laid his hand on Dr. King's arm. With difficulty he commanded his voice, and the words when they were formed seemed to come from some other throat. If the interview could be only a little delayed! It was not possible that he would faint! He had felt a similar terror years ago when he had traveled toward Philadelphia expecting to hear that he was forever disgraced.

"Has she been prepared for my visit?"

"Oh, yes! She's waiting for you!"

The superintendent pushed the door open and tapped on an inner door and a nurse greeted them in a friendly voice.

"We've been watching for you, haven't we, Mrs. Lanfair?" she said, turning to some one within.

Stephen felt an insane desire to imitate with childish and impertinent syllables the rise and fall of her voice. He found himself in a luxurious sitting-room. For a moment he could see nothing; then he discovered Hilda in a rocking-chair close to the barred and awninged window which opened upon a portion of the lawn laid out in imitation of a Japanese garden. He could hear the delicate sound of running water, and see birds dipping into a pool.

While he tried to speak, he observed that Hilda had grown stout; though she did not look like herself, face and figure were nevertheless familiar. Ah! it was her uncle whom she had grown to resemble, and there was something grossly unpleasant in the change.

"You see, I've brought him!" announced the superintendent, as though this had been accomplished only by a very great effort.

Poor Hilda saw plainly—for this moment she had been cunningly planning. She did not rise or move forward or make any motion, except a motion with her lips. All that she wanted to say to her uncle and Dr. Good on the night when she came away, she said now, eloquently. Her heavy, motionless body seemed to add treble emphasis. Such accusations uttered with an

accompaniment of hysterical laughter or of waving arms would have seemed mad; but she did not speak like a madwoman. One would have said that her reasoning was sound though her premises were false.

She had uttered a dozen sentences before her audience came to themselves. Then Stephen moved backward. He was not afraid; he simply wished to get away, to end the intolerable tirade as soon as possible. The nurse stepped between him and Hilda, and the doctor closed and locked the door quickly, himself and Stephen outside. Dr. King was distressed.

"One can never tell," he said, frowning. "I can't say that I'm altogether surprised, but I felt that the experiment should be made. You understand my motive?"

"Certainly," Stephen assured him.

In the office Stephen repeated his directions for Hilda's comfort. He would not sit down; he wished to escape quickly as he had wished to escape from the hospital when there had been lengthy operations with long incisions or with copious letting of blood. He had always avoided contact with unpleasant realities. When a nurse came to speak to the superintendent, he went out and got into the car, which he had driven himself. He had expected to go on to Philadelphia for the night, but his business there seemed suddenly unimportant. Neither did he wish to return home.

At the first crossroad he got out to investigate a suspicious sound in the running-gear of his car, and seeking the tool with which to tighten a screw scratched his left hand deeply, and irritably wiped away the blood. Then he stood still looking about. Harrisburg lay toward the west—a road led there directly; Philadelphia toward the east—Mayne was expecting him. He could not see Mayne of all persons in the world!

Then suddenly his eyes narrowed, the beat of his heart quickened, he smiled slowly. He had once visited Ithaca in the spring, it was lovely with its thick shade, its waterfalls, its lake; he determined that he would see it again. Then he laughed. He would go if it was as homely as Chestnut Ridge, if the month was January! No one need know, no one would ever be the worse for it. He could be there by to-morrow evening and any one so industrious as Ellen could cut Saturday classes. Saturday and Sunday would be days to set against months of unhappiness. He said again that no one would be the worse for it.

Suddenly he laughed at himself for a fool. Why had he not gone before? Why not at Christmas-time? If the mere intention could bring about this lightness of heart, this heavenly clearness of vision, this certainty of purpose, this deep joy, why had he not had all these long ago? She was, he did not doubt, prettier than ever, but it was not her prettiness which he valued, it was her youth, her steadfastness, her devotion. He was certain that she loved him, he remembered with amusement his short-lived jealousy.

He speculated as he drove upon the rarity of human happiness. His father's life—how dull, how arduous, how ill-rewarded! Mayne's—how favorable from without, how hollow within! What undeserved calamity had visited Fetzer—foolish Fetzer to whom he had listened so obediently! What disappointment Levis had suffered! How little satisfaction he himself had had and with what high hope he had begun! But here was happiness within reach!

He noticed with sharpened observation as he drove north, those changes in the landscape with which he had been familiar in his youth; he would point them out sometime to Ellen. He drove rapidly and unweariedly, his depression passing, feeling that he understood the joy of the aviator. His route lay to the east of Chestnut Ridge, but he would see presently a country similar to that in which he had been born and had spent his youth.

He did not think of Hilda, sitting heavily by the shaded window; his thoughts leaped ahead. He drove on and on like one possessed.

"I could give her riches and ease and travel," he said to himself. "It wouldn't be an unfair exchange for youth." It may have been the gathering dusk, it may have been a springing breeze, but a cool wind seemed to blow across his very heart. To wait another five years or ten! He must have Ellen now.

He was tempted to stop as twilight fell, but he changed his mind. He had come to the point when fifty miles nearer her was a goal to be desired. He could reach her, he believed, before noon of the next day; he did not care where he slept or whether he ate. He had ceased to think of her good or of his own honor or of her father—he thought of but one matter.

"It won't hurt her to be kissed," he said to himself, smiling. His thoughts came disjointedly, sometimes they expressed themselves in single words—"Adorable" ... "hungry" ... "her dark eyes" ... "peace" ... Once he laughed aloud. "It won't hurt her mind, she'll blossom like a rose!" Sometimes he smiled grimly. Fate should not cheat him, let her set her trap never so well! There was, he believed, nothing between him and the satisfaction of his desire but a few hours of swift driving.

He was so occupied with his own thoughts that he did not realize till darkness was almost complete that he had taken a wrong turn. He stopped his car and got out, a tall gray figure in the dusk, and surveyed the landscape, and discovered that he had come into a country like the country of his youth. He could not look far in any direction, for low, bleak hills had closed in upon him. Through a cleft between two of them the sun cast a last reflected gleam. Seeing no dim human habitation, he studied the road—though it was little traveled, he believed that it would be best to go on. In the next valley there would doubtless be a village where they could set him straight. The pale light was on his left; the road led at least in the right direction. Then suddenly

he smiled. Memory played queer tricks—a forgotten fragment of poetry, recited often by his father, surprised him:

"Naught in the distance but the evening, naught
To point my footsteps further! At the thought
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing, dragon-penned,
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought."

He shivered suddenly. This was a sinister landscape; familiar as such scenes had been to him in his youth, he should not like to be held here for the night. Alas, his poor father had had no other landscape to look upon in all his latter years!

He stepped out of the car and mounted a little bank, and discerned far ahead a hopeful gleam. Driving on carefully and slowly, he saw with relief that the light shone from the window of a small, faintly outlined house. Amusedly, as he pushed open the sagging gate, he went on with his appropriate verses.

"What in the midst lay but the tower itself?
The round, squat tower, blind as a fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world—"

He knocked at the door, but there was no answer. He knocked again more heavily. There was a light, there must be human beings about; perhaps the occupant had gone to drive home the cow. Perhaps a deaf person lived here. He stepped to the window and peered in.

The interior was like a hundred interiors which he had seen in his childhood, a little room which was at once kitchen and living-room, its furniture a bare pine table, a few chairs, a half-dozen cooking-vessels, dirty, out-of-date calendars pinned against the wall, rags in a broken sash, and, hanging on a nail, a miner's grimy coat and a woman's shawl. He had driven with his father to such houses as this a hundred times and had sat waiting in the buggy or on the grass by the roadside amusing himself with childish games. Sometimes he had been puzzled and distressed by a sound whose cause he then understood but dimly. Memory played him another trick, it caused him to hear the same sound now.

He could not see into the inner room, perhaps the deaf person was there; he knocked again and opened the door. Then he laid his hand across his lips. The sound had not been remembered—it had been heard. It proceeded from the inner room.

"What's the matter?" he asked loudly and impatiently. "I've come to ask my way. Is any one ill?"

He saw that a distorted figure lay upon a low bed. Fearing that here was an emergency which had been repellent to him from his youth, he went unwillingly toward the inner room and stood with his hand upon the jamb.

"What is the trouble?" he asked again.

With painful effort the woman turned and looked up at him. It was not as he had feared; her need was of a different sort. Upon her pale face stood drops of perspiration and she clutched her thin chest with both hands. It was the same agony which had smitten Edward Levis with merciful swiftness, here long drawn out. He had seen but a few cases, but he recognized it as different from all other sorts of anguish. But he could not be delayed!

"Bill's went for the doctor," said a faint voice from the bed.

"How far has he gone?"

"There's none nearer than Weller."

"What!" Stephen gave a great start. Weller! Then he had veered far to the west! This was a place he knew. He looked back over his shoulder into the outer room and into the darkness beyond the door. He recalled the neighborhood, the roads, the ragged outlines of the ugly hills, the very house. Outside this gate he had sat in his father's buggy and waited and waited. He had heard his father's voice in the magic formula which he said at dying beds, "Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem"—it was here, he remembered distinctly, at a Roman Catholic bedside. No, he was dreaming, life did not present such strange coincidences. He saw that the agonized figure was relaxed; he heard himself asking, "Is there no doctor at Chestnut Ridge?"

"Not now. They had one after the other, but they didn't stay."

"When did your husband leave?"

"A half-hour ago, I guess. It seems longer. I guess the next spell'll finish me."

"Did he walk?"

"He thought perhaps he could get a ride. But there's three"—the sentence was taken up after a long pause—"three grog-shops."

"Are you afraid to stay alone a little longer? I have a car. I can send the doctor back."

Glistening drops appeared upon the pale face.

"Oh, my God, don't leave me!" She raised herself feebly upon her elbow, animated by a wild hope. "You ain't a doctor, I suppose!"

"I'm not a general practitioner."

She sank down, accepting the excuse as final.

"It don't make any difference, the next one'll finish me." She lay quiet as death, fearing to breathe. It might be that another moment would bring a fresh spasm, it might be that there would be no other for hours.

Stephen looked down upon her. He could see the pale face with a black smutch across it; he saw an empty bottle on a chair by the bed. He had had no experience in this department of medicine for twenty years, and his practice had been limited to hospital work under the eye of an instructor. He believed that of simple specifics a mustard plaster would relieve—there was certainly no other drug to be had here.

Suddenly the pupils of his eyes dilated, then contracted. His gaze was fixed absently on his own hand, still lifted against the door frame. It was a slender white hand. Across the back the blood from the scratch, now many hours old, had dried. The wound looked for some reason unnatural, and he moved his hand with a horizontal motion close to his eyes and put it back against the door frame. He noticed with quickened perception that he placed it exactly upon the spot which it had already made warm. Then he laid it in the other hand and stroked it. A drop of blood oozed out, but it was not the blood which alarmed him, but the puffy redness of the wound, the thick, ominous raising of either lip and a dull pain which he felt clear to his elbow. He had a flask of peroxide in his bag, but he had not used it, and now more drastic treatment was required. It was required, moreover, at once; an infection like this broke down the tissues with incredible swiftness.

His hesitation, his silence, his effort to arrange his thought, roused a suspicion in the mind of the woman on the low bed. She raised herself to a sitting position, trying to hold together the ragged gown which half covered her. Of his importance, his wealth, his intellect, she had no conception and for none of them would she have had any regard.

"For God's sake, don't go away!"

Stephen still cradled his hand. He looked curiously at the wretched creature, now lying prone and exhausted. He frowned in the effort to concentrate his mind upon a new and very simple problem. He believed that his hand was seriously infected and that it should be treated at once, that haste was imperative. He believed also that the woman left alone might die. A cold sweat broke out upon him. He had been acutely impatient with his father because he had not weighed his valuable life against two worthless lives and had suffered himself to be murdered. His father, however, had merely taken a chance, there had been a possibility of escape, but for him there was no escape. The mischief was done; unless he had speedy aid he might die in agony.

He felt his heart contract and laid his hand upon it. To die! He was not old. Life which he had recently so bitterly complained of—what inestimable happiness it offered! What delight for the eye! What intense pleasure for the mind! And Ellen—what of Ellen, with whom he had expected to be in a few hours? He had anticipated rapture in the assurance of her love. He might now never see her. It was curious that it was easier to risk his life than to forget his passion!

The moments passed; there was no sound within or without the little house; the woman still lay motionless. It might be that she slept; he realized basely that a step would carry him away.

Then, quite suddenly and simply, he knew that for him there was no choice. He had lived, for all his suffering, selfishly, his heart hardened and not softened by the single affliction of his life. He had done many kindnesses, but he had never made a sacrifice. He had helped the poor, but it had cost him nothing; he had performed almost miraculous cures, but they had been performed in a sense easily.

Yet he was not at heart selfish, and now, rising from depths almost unstirred since his youth, a single powerful impulse moved him. He had come unknowing and unsuspecting to his Dark Tower, which, well for him! was set in a familiar landscape, presided over by the guiding spirit of his youth. There was a verse which said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." He had been trained by precept and example; was his father's last hour made easy by confidence in his ultimate return? Did his pleading gaze ask only that the period of departure might not be long? As tenderly as though he had been his father, he bent over the poor bed, forgetting life and all its joys and Ellen.

He remembered now that there was a spring a few yards away. He had been sent there by his father and he had dipped the clear water from an open space beside a bed of water-cress. Making his way thither in the starlight, he filled a pail. He found a box half filled with kindling and built a fire and set the water on it, and fetched his traveling bag. He opened the sore wound on his hand and poured into it half the contents of his bottle of peroxide and bound it up. He found in a dirty cupboard a supply of mustard, provided possibly for this emergency and forgotten. He thought with a faint smile of Miss Knowlton—if her professional eye could see him! He remembered that he had sat for a long time on the weedy bank across the road when he and his father had been here—his car stood beside the exact spot. He seemed to hear now distinctly his father's voice—would it be necessary for him to console the dying? He could not offer a formula upon which he had not thought for years!

He heard a moan in the inner room and returned quickly. The woman had turned once more on her back and had seized her thin chest. Lip and brow were beaded. He worked quickly, the perspiration standing on his own brow. When he had done all he could, he knelt down on the floor and took the clutching hands in his. He spoke, scarcely aware that he was speaking, offering all the comfort that he could give. He had never spoken to Hilda in this fashion; not even quite in this fashion had he dreamed of speaking to Ellen.

"I'll stay with you. I'm sorry for you. It will be better soon. I'm sure it will be better."

When the spasm was over he rose to his feet. In the cessation of agony sleep came quickly. He stood motionless for a long time, occupied with strange thoughts. He was intensely, incredibly happy; he understood suddenly that his father had had this happiness often; his own danger became negligible, he quite forgot it. Even when, as he moved about, the pain in his hand quickened, it was still negligible.

CHAPTER XXXV

AN UNDELIVERED MESSAGE

DAWN, which came as slowly as the dawns of winter, brought a returning Bill in the car of a physician whom he had found after much forgetful wandering. A lifeless body lay upon the bed.

Stephen looked curiously at the old doctor who descended stiffly from his car.

"You don't know me, Dr. Weller?"

"No."

"I'm Albert Lanfair's son."

"How do you happen to be here?"

"I lost the road and came in to ask directions, and once here, could do nothing but stay." He meant to exhibit his hand, but thought better of it. He must get home without wasting time. He had not undone the bandage, he felt less pain, and in the cheerful light of day believed that he had exaggerated the seriousness of his condition. If trouble appeared, however, he wished to be at home.

He drove with reckless speed southward, remembering grimly,

"The King of France, with twenty thousand men,
Marched up the hill and then marched down again."

He tried not to think of Ellen; when, sometimes, her face appeared before him, his cheeks burned. The strange night had affected all his thoughts; his heart had somehow changed; he saw clearly what he would have made of Ellen.

As he drove into Harrisburg he felt the first premonition of a chill, and understood its significance. The pain in his hand had returned and when he stepped into his office he stumbled. The young assistant looked up from her desk and Miss Knowlton appeared at once from the inner room. He held out his hand.

"Ever see anything like that?"

Miss Knowlton undid the bandage. At his touch a blush covered her pale cheek, but when she looked up the color had vanished.

"Dr. Lanfair! What have you done?"

"I scratched myself on a wire. It's nothing."

"A girl in the hospital jabbed her hand with an icepick and infected it, and it had red streaks round it like this!"

"Well, she has her hand, hasn't she?" asked Stephen banteringly.

"She nearly lost it. You're going to see Dr. Salter?"

"Yes; telephone for him, there's a good girl."

He crossed the passageway to the library and sat down, suddenly fearing that his pain might bring tears; then he laughed at himself. There was nothing seriously the matter with him.

"It was foolish to have called you," he apologized to Dr. Salter. "Miss Knowlton is to blame."

Dr. Salter bent above the outstretched hand, a stout, blue-eyed, cheerful soul who possessed the secrets of hundreds of men and women, and held in spite of them the most hopeful views of humanity. He had known Hilda and Hilda's mother.

"What in the world have you done?" he asked.

"I scratched it on a wire."

"Why didn't you come home?"

"I did. I'm here."

Having concluded a cruel opening of the wound, the doctor gave a hovering Miss Knowlton minute directions.

"You have an ugly-looking hand, Lanfair."

For the moment Stephen felt neither pain nor fear, only a leaping excitement.

"I'm not to be frightened," he said with a defiant laugh.

By evening he walked the library floor. At ten o'clock he went to his room and walked there. Miss Knowlton said lightly that she would spend the night—the doctor wished the dressing changed frequently.

"Your professional manner is absurd," declared Stephen. "You'll come presently and take my temperature and watch to see that I don't read it."

Miss Knowlton smiled and put a thermometer under his tongue and placed herself beside him, her hand on his wrist, her air important. She had sent for a fresh uniform which billowed about her when she walked.

At midnight Stephen went to bed. Exhaustion dulled his pain for half an hour; then he sat up, roused, he believed, by a ghastly dream of Ellen in danger. But he knew in a second that it was

not Ellen's danger. When he lifted his hand, it felt heavy and tight and burned like fire, and he understood exactly what might happen to him. The infection suffered by his father had affected him slowly, paralyzing irremediably both body and brain; this was different; it could be fought, but it must be fought quickly and with cruel weapons.

Miss Knowlton, hearing him stir, came in from the next room.

"I'll look at your hand," she said in a new, smooth voice. "You'd better lie down." Stephen obeyed, his mind not on his pain, but on a graver necessity. "It doesn't look any worse," said Miss Knowlton when the bandage was again in place. "Would you like me to sit by you?"

Stephen's negative sounded drowsy. But he was not drowsy. There was an amazing fact to which he must give his mind and he wished to be alone. He saw his father lying with half-closed eyes upon his pillow; he saw that he himself lay fever-flushed with a swollen, bandaged, torturing object by his side, and that he had come to the same dark brink. His father had stepped out bravely; he did not believe that he should go bravely. His father had had a hope, but he had no hope. When his father had recited the creed, he had spoken with conviction; but he had no convictions.

He believed suddenly that even to say the words would help if he could remember them. Childishly pleased, he recited, "Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem," in a tone which brought Miss Knowlton to his side.

"Did you speak to me?" She began to open the bandage.

"I was only trying to remember some old Latin."

Miss Knowlton remembered afterward that as Stephen said this and as she saw his wrist, purple above the bandage, the market-wagons had begun to rumble past and dawn was in the sky.

"I'm going for hot water," she said soothingly as one speaks to a sick man.

Outside the door she found Miss MacVane, pale and shocked, her hand lifted to rap.

"There was a call on the telephone from the Sanatorium," she said in an awed tone, her eyes blinking behind her thick glasses. "I don't know what to do about it."

"Anything the matter?"

"Mrs. Lanfair is dead," said Miss MacVane. "They say 'suddenly,' that is all."

Miss Knowlton grew a little paler and more important.

"Well, he can't be told now," she said. "You get Dr. Salter, quickly, will you?"

Stephen did not realize that daylight had not yet fully come when Dr. Salter appeared in his room. It seemed a long, long time since he had come home—was it a day and night or two days and nights or four? He didn't think it queer that there was another man with Salter—nothing seemed queer or of any moment whatsoever, not even a strange question put to him. They did not mean to let Stephen die.

"Lanfair, can you understand me?"

"Oh, yes!" Stephen laughed.

"Do you trust Mayne and me to use our best judgment for you?"

"About what?" asked Stephen. In a moment of full consciousness he recognized Mayne, who bore upon his expansive face the record of more than one shock. If clearness of mind had lasted for another instant, Stephen might have suspected the cause of Mayne's disturbance of mind. But he grew confused and asked in a jovial and impertinent tone, "What's the matter with you, old boy?"

"About your welfare," said Mayne earnestly.

"Oh, bosh!" cried Stephen, and turned on his side. There was but one thing he desired, peace to pursue a search. What was it his father had said? He presently began to mix his English and Latin. He knew that that which he sought was an ineffable happiness, but he could not quite grasp it.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MATTHEW AND ELLEN

ELLEN sent to Harrisburg no notification of her coming. She was now convinced that she had thorough control of herself, and that she could meet Stephen safely. He might be away—the possibility brought a painful moment of mixed misery and relief. Shifting her heavy bag from hand to hand, she walked up the sunny street, past the jewelry shop of Mr. Goldstein, past small hotels in whose windows idle men sat drowsily, to Front Street. The river seemed to have no current, but lay a burnished sheet under the low and glaring sun. In the park a few sprawled figures occupied the benches.

She rang the bell, and when no one answered, she opened the door with a key which she had hesitated to use, and putting down her bag walked through the hall and passageway to the offices. It was long after working hours, but Miss Knowlton and Miss MacVane would be putting desks and files in order and closing the day's records. She believed that they would be glad to see her, and she longed for the refuge of their homely femininity. She now allied herself in spirit with them and their kind.

But neither Miss MacVane nor Miss Knowlton was at work. The office had an unused appearance; shades had not been lifted, and even in the dim light she could see on all the furniture a film of dust. The air was not merely cool, it was damp, and her final impression of strangeness deepened to a fear of calamity. The house seemed to be empty.

She returned with a quickly beating heart to the front hall. In the library shades were irregularly drawn and here also dust covered the polished surfaces of tables and chairs. One small article of furniture had been moved and at it she stared while a deeper chill smote her heart. It was Hilda's little tabourette, upon which now, as formerly, lay matches and boxes of cigarettes. She leaned helplessly against the door. Had Hilda come back?

When she heard steps approaching she turned slowly and in unreasonable terror. But they were heavier and slower steps than Hilda's. Still her step might have changed! She looked toward the stairway and beheld Professor Mayne, large, elegant, cigarette in hand. Her heart leaped to a more terrible conclusion—Stephen was dead!

Mayne regarded her with his bland smile. He had lived recently through two harrowing experiences, but one was on the whole a relief, and the other, while it shocked him, did not touch his own person or habits.

"What is it you wish?" he asked kindly.

"I'm looking for Miss MacVane."

"You mean Dr. Lanfair's secretary?"

"Yes."

"She has unfortunately been somewhat indisposed. She is absent."

"Is Miss Knowlton here?"

"She is in the hospital attending Dr. Lanfair."

"Is he ill?"

"He has had an infected hand, a severe case of septicæmia, but we have saved him. He is improving."

Ellen forgot all her resolutions.

"Can he be seen?"

Mayne shook his head, then looked at her curiously. Was she an employee of Stephen's, like the middle-aged women who were so concerned about him?

"Oh, I remember you!" he said. "You are the young woman who assisted with my niece. Are you still employed here?"

A foolish red appeared in Ellen's cheeks.

"No."

"Did you know that my niece had—had passed away?" Mayne almost said "expired."

"No," answered Ellen. She felt that she was not expected to make any comment and she made none. She stood awkwardly looking about. "Is there anything I can do?"

"I believe not, thank you," answered Mayne in his booming voice. He passed into the library and sat down in Hilda's corner of the sofa and lifted a newspaper.

Thus dismissed, Ellen lifted her heavy bag and carried it across the street to a bench. The air was intensely hot and she was hungry, but she did not connect weakness or hunger with her despair. He was ill, he had been very ill or he would not be in a hospital. And he had sent her no word! Moreover, she had been in a sense turned out! Certainly Fate was helping her to conquer herself!

Then, suddenly, a desperate longing came into her heart, a longing for childhood, for innocence, for ignorance, for freedom from this consuming passion. She wanted her father's sheltering arm, the sound of his voice. Lacking him, she thought of those nearest her in blood—Grandfather had loved her and so had Matthew and Amos. She believed that they would welcome her. Twilight

was at hand; it was the hour when tired men and women hasten homeward; she too would go home.

She walked rapidly toward the railroad station. At the Square, while she waited for a break in the line of automobiles, she saw in a group of Salvation Army workers a tall brother shepherding the passers-by to positions within earshot of the preacher's voice. In that figure she could not be mistaken, it was the first feature of a familiar landscape seen after a long journey. She did not stop to account for his presence or his blue uniform, she went up to him quickly.

"Why, Amos!"

Amos looked down at her, growing first pale, then crimson. She had become, he believed, merely a part of the fearful and unrighteous past; she had vanished entirely, together with impulses to worldliness and evil. But here she was, looking up with her dark eyes as she had looked when she was a little girl. Her eyes seemed unhappy, and his heart bounded. Then it sank like a stone and uneasiness succeeded his rapture.

"I'm working for the Lord, Ellen," he explained, glancing at the group of singers who had turned to look for him. "I'm married."

"Don't you live with Grandfather?"

"No."

"Is he alone?"

"He doesn't want anybody," explained Amos quickly. "He knows he has only to ask and I'll come." The sharp whirr of a tambourine summoned him imperatively; it spoke, not with a religious, but with a domestic sternness. His wife had been expecting him to bring the stranger promptly into the circle of inquirers; she did not approve of this lengthy conversation.

"I must go," said Amos uneasily. "She is there."

Back in the noisy group Amos neither spoke nor sang. When one of his companions began to pray, he removed his cap and bent his beautiful head. But he was not praying, he was thinking of the Kloster and the past. Now that he was in the world he was not of it. He was like a monk who had left his monastery too late. The glare of the sun was too bright, the noise of the world too loud. In his hard day's work he forgot himself, but his evening tasks, his public orisons, his soliciting of strangers, were odious. There were times when he bitterly regretted his marriage; there was no time, indeed, when he did not wish it undone. But he believed that in seeking to win souls he was obeying God, and in this conviction he found consolation.

In the dingy railroad station Ellen waited for her train. The station had seemed hitherto an opening gateway; she had thought it vast and wonderful when she had arrived with her father. Her second entrance, when she came to make her living, had been more sober. Waiting for her train for Ithaca, scarcely hearing Fetzer's good-byes because she was thinking of Lanfair's, she had found it again a dazzling portal. Now, at last, it was an entrance to prison. She believed that all happiness lay behind her. She stepped into the train, and when she reached Ephrata went her way on foot.

The moon shone brightly on the Kloster and on Grandfather's cottage and on the white tombstones in the churchyard. Ellen choked back a sob; her absence from this spot reproached her.

It was a long time before Grandfather answered her pounding.

"It's Ellen," she called, when at last she heard his hand on the latch. "It's very late, I know."

Grandfather opened the door. He was dazed; the moonlight was not bright enough to make her outline clear.

"May I stay here to-night?"

He neither greeted her nor answered her.

"It is Ellen, Grandfather."

"Ellen?" He repeated a word without meaning.

"May I stay here to-night?"

He seemed now to see her, but he regarded her as though she were a jinn or spook or other baleful creature of the witching night.

"I never turned any one away," he said at last in a gentle tone.

It was clear in the morning that she was regarded not only as a transient, but as a disturbing visitor. Grandfather followed a regular routine which took him now to the Saal, now to Saron, now out into the fields, as the brethren might have traveled a hundred and fifty years ago. He believed himself to be, indeed, one of them.

In the afternoon Ellen took up her journey to Matthew's. Inexpressibly tired, she wanted only sleep in a quiet bed.

She saw Matthew crossing from the house to the barn and called to him. He did not come to meet her, but let her approach him, which was exactly like Matthew. His face was set in a somber expression, his shoulders were bent. Seeming neither glad nor sorry to see her, he took her satchel and walked with her back to the house.

In the kitchen the old chaotic condition persisted. Esther had achieved the object of her life and had gone away with her prize to a distant farm, and Millie had had a succession of inefficient servants. She languidly accepted Ellen's offered help.

"Where are your grand people?" she asked.

"Mrs Fetzler has left there."

"And the man, where's he?"

"He has been ill."

A plate slid suddenly from Ellen's hands into the iron sink. Her course appeared incredible.

"He's ill, and I'm here!" she said to herself. "He might die and I not see him!"

When Matthew said at supper that he would drive to the station for her trunk, she asked whether she might go with him. She saw at once that Millie wished to go, but she could not yield her place. From the drug-store she would call the hospital and talk to Miss Knowlton—why had she not thought of it this morning? She could have cried with relief. She was sorry that Millie was disappointed, but she would make it up to Millie twenty times over.

The drug-store was crowded with customers for ice-cream and soda water, all of whom were trying to speak above a strident talking machine which ground out a lively song. Only a little man of one of the plain sects seemed anxious to hear the music at the same time that he was a bit disturbed by his own pleasure. The proprietor and the customers regarded Ellen curiously, but did not recognize her. When the telephone bell rang, all looked at her and ceased speaking, believing that she was calling a lover.

The talking machine, too, was silenced and she knew that every word could be heard through the thin booth. Miss Knowlton could not come to the telephone, but a message would be given her. Ellen inquired for Lanfair and was told in the optimistic tone characteristic of hospitals that he was entirely out of danger. She opened the door of the booth weakly and paid the charge. Matthew was waiting outside and she climbed into the wagon. She would have liked to tell him everything, but that was a weakness. He had, she surmised, enough to bear.

She was conscious of an added coolness in Millie's attitude, but to her weary mind it seemed unimportant. She laid her head upon the pillow which had been hers in childhood, and before the tears were dry upon her cheeks she was asleep.

But Millie's attitude was not unimportant. Her disposition was now thoroughly established; she was worn and sour and unhappy and she found pleasure only in believing herself ill-treated. She had never forgotten that Matthew had taken Ellen to the Kloster two years ago without inviting her, and the repetition of the offense was grossly insulting. It was not he whom she blamed, but Ellen. She would have been glad to believe that Ellen was deliberately trying to "come between" them.

The next day Ellen wrote to Stephen. She said that she had gone to the house in Harrisburg and had heard from Professor Mayne about his illness and that he was better. She had then come to her brother's. She had called the hospital and had heard that he was still better. She was sorry that he had been ill. An undefined feeling restrained her from speaking of Hilda.

In a week she had an answer from Miss Knowlton. Dr. Lanfair was improving and was glad that she was with her brother—that was the best place for her to be. He would be well enough in a day or two to leave the hospital, then he and Fickes and Miss Knowlton would go to the shore. Even though it was Miss Knowlton who wrote, Ellen did not visualize him as helpless. She cried at night, but by day she went quietly about innumerable tasks. The postscript of Miss Knowlton's letter was a "Finis" at the end of a story: "We hope that you will pay us a call on your way back to college."

She grew slowly and miserably aware of the domestic volcano over which she lived. Millie believed now with all her heart that she had come to make trouble; though Ellen's help lightened her tasks by more than half and enabled her to put on flesh she made it appear constantly, by devices difficult to describe, but known to all who are compelled to associate with women of her type, that she believed the help to be unwillingly given.

For a long time Ellen did not understand the exact source of this resentment. She laid her hand as of old on Matthew's shoulder; she walked with him about the farm on Sunday afternoons; she pored with him over calculations. Most foolishly of all she tried to improve the extraordinary speech of little Matthew.

The summer was intensely warm; through July the opening of an outer door brought heat like a leaping flame into one's face, and the nights were often one long wish for morning. Ellen grew gradually accustomed to the hard labor, to the rising before dawn, to the insufferable afternoons. She shared Matthew's anxiety about the harvest; it seemed that before the wheat crop was brought in destructive storms must break.

Sometimes in the late afternoon when vitality was at its lowest point, she remembered the airy rooms in which she had lived last summer, the bare floors, the furniture in chintz covers, the drifting of white curtains in a gentle breeze. But of last summer she did not often let herself think. She heard no word from Stephen, nor sent him any. She remembered now half-acknowledged dreams, more vivid in retrospect than they had been in actuality, of position and travel and great possessions, and her heart burned, now with self-reproach, now with resentment at life's cruel chances.

The wheat was safely harvested and no rain fell. Matthew, increasingly anxious about the corn, searched the sky for clouds. He was irritable even with the children. Ellen bore with him and pitied him and obeyed the commands of Millie.

Early in August Matthew sat one evening on the doorstep. There had been since noon a low bank of clouds in the west, but he had often been deceived by banks of clouds. When they rose higher, he was immensely cheered, pointing them out to Millie, who merely looked sullenly in the opposite direction, and said nothing. He turned to Ellen and asked her to walk with him to the woodland from which they could get a better view. She looked at Millie's lowering face.

"Won't you go, Millie? I'll stay here."

"I wasn't asked," said Millie briefly, her very flesh tingling with resentment.

For an instant Ellen hesitated; then she followed Matthew across the yard and the stubble-field to the woodland.

Before their eyes the sun sank in a blaze of glory. On bright days only could a low range of hills be seen from this point, but now they believed they could see beyond to the gleaming river. As the sun disappeared they sat down on the old tree-trunk. The hot wind bred restlessness and sadness.

"I was wrong about everything," said Matthew soberly after a long time. "What I said in the meeting-house was nonsense, as my father said it was. I was misled."

Ellen was appalled. Matthew had arranged his whole life in accord with that confession. But she could give him no comfort; when Levis died she had been a child, and since that time, greatly as she had been troubled, she had felt no need for superhuman reassurance.

"It must have been very hard to give it all up after you had believed it."

Matthew snapped his fingers. "It went, like that! I simply didn't hold to it, that was all."

"Did you ever try to believe again?" asked Ellen.

"No; why should I? I don't want you to think I don't believe anything. When I come up here and the wind is blowing, it seems to me that I get an idea about God, greater than was ever thought of down in those little rooms. But I can't get hold of it. Perhaps some day I shall. It's only that He is and that He's here. I can't describe it."

A long sigh stirred the leaves above them. Ellen was disturbed.

"There's surely going to be a storm, and we should go down."

As she rose there was a bright flash of lightning and the oaks began to sing. She held out her hand.

"Let's run, Matthew!"

Matthew took the hand and lifted it. Thus they stood for a second, their arms outstretched, and then plunged down the smooth field and into the yard. In the doorway Matthew called Millie, but she did not answer. He went upstairs to find her, but she was not there. Both the children were asleep and pinned to the pin-cushion on the bureau, in true melodramatic fashion, was a note. Matthew read it and returned to the kitchen.

"Where is she?" asked Ellen.

"She has started home," said Matthew slowly. "She says it is to stay."

For a long moment there was only the tick of the clock and the rumble of distant thunder. Then Ellen lifted her head.

"Would it help if I went away?"

Matthew leaned heavily against the table. His face was intensely white, his gray eyes darkened. The hand upon which he leaned trembled.

"I have a friend at the University with whom I can stay for any length of time. She'll be glad to have me till the term opens."

Matthew lifted his hand and examined the callous spots upon it. It had seemed to him that peace had descended upon his house. He believed that Ellen would stay with him if he needed her. He saw the peace continued, the old life restored, his children brought up correctly, himself contented. He longed intensely for Ellen's learning, for her outlook upon life. If she stayed he might yet repair the effect of his own madness. But like Ellen, he had been trained to follow a certain rule of conduct and he could not go counter to that which he had been taught.

"I guess I should bring her back," he said at last thickly. Then a quiver passed over his face. His sense of honor was of the variety which leads, if need be, to the stake. What he said was not easy to say. "Oh, I have many, many times wished for my father!"

In a few minutes his horse galloped down the lane. The lightning was now almost incessant and the thunder rumbled heavily. Standing at the door Ellen saw his white face against the side of the buggy. Then she went upstairs, and when she had closed the windows and looked in upon the sleeping children she began to pack her trunk.

In the morning she walked slowly down the road. Matthew had come back, and Millie would return later in the day. The storm had made all fresh; goldenrod was abloom along the fences. She thought with longing of Miss Grammer and of the deep Seminar room at the library. Work!—

ah, that remained!

She wished that she did not have to go to the Lanfair house, even though Stephen was away, but there were a few possessions in her room which she must secure. Besides, she did not know how to explain her failure to go. In the station she inquired about the night train to the north. When she heard that it still left at 10.35, she smiled with bitter amusement, having unconsciously expected that a new era had begun, even for trains.

The open space before the station was almost deserted, only occasionally a traveler plunged into the sunshine from the cool shadow of the portico. But indifferent to the heat, which was almost tropical in spite of last night's storm, Ellen made her way toward the street of Mr. Goldstein and thence toward the river. She saw the dome of the Capitol and stood still. Why not spend her brief hour with memories of her father and spare herself a keener pain?

But she went on toward the shining river, her shoulders lifted so that three elderly gentlemen sitting in the windows of a clubhouse opened drowsy eyes and craned admiring necks. All had comfortable fortunes, one had great possessions and one had memories of intense happiness, but all would have exchanged that which they had for that which Ellen had and which they would have no more.

Suddenly she crossed the street and sat down on a bench in the park. She was breathing rapidly, she must compel herself to be composed. She must forget her dreams, she must take account of what she still had and thus fortify herself before she entered Stephen's house.

Work?—the reminder had consoled her this morning, why could it not console her now? Friends?—she had made few, and Miss Grammer was old. Books?—ah, what miserable defect in her made them seem dull? The beauty of the world?—it, alas! merely quickened one's pain.

How often she had stolen away to the heights above the lake or to a secluded seat from which she could watch Triphammer Fall! She thought of it now without pleasure. How often she had marked the perpetually changing aspect of the stream before her! As if to recall her pleasure she looked at it with attention. Below her on the bank stood a pair of young aspen trees whose delicate interlacing branches formed a lattice-work through which the river showed here a pale lavender, here a delicate gray. Toward the farther bank a mile away a rosy cloud seemed to rest upon the water. The sight brought not pleasure but tears. She was to see the river no more with the eye of possession; this was not home to her, it was a place of strangers.

She rose quickly. She would get the books which Lanfair had given her, the dress which hung in the closet which had been hers, and she would flee.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A BITTER WAKENING

STEPHEN woke from unconsciousness to incredible sensations of nausea and weakness and pain. In his mind two convictions alternated; the first that he was an enormous body which no room could contain; the second that he had no body whatever, that all flesh had been removed from his bones by some terrible process. Gradually all the indefinable pain and terror concentrated in his left side.

As consciousness quickened he realized that he was not at home, but in a strange bed in a strange room, and that a strange woman in a white dress sat beside him. Slowly he accounted for his presence in this place, confusing, however, in spite of the pain, his right hand with his left. It was his right hand, he believed, which he had hurt. He tried for a long time to lift it and succeeded at last in bringing it with a feeble jerk within his area of vision. It was still there and he could see no change in it. He gave a long sigh and recognized Miss Knowlton's blue eyes looking at him from a white face. After gazing at her steadfastly he brought out a few foolish words.

"Your—mouth—is—twisted."

Miss Knowlton's mouth was twisted. She yearned to be of heroic service and at the same time she desperately hoped for the return of Dr. Salter. She had sat often by the bedsides of reviving women who had to be told that no living joy had come from hours of purgatory; and it was after many experiences of this sort that she had become an attendant in a doctor's office. She waited for Stephen's return to consciousness with even more frightful apprehensions.

Another hour passed and she was still sitting in the same place, when the first numbing suspicion of the truth dawned upon Stephen. If his hand was there and sound, why this agony in his other shoulder? He turned his unpillowed head slowly and looked down, but the covers hid his body. He tried to lift his left hand as he had lifted his right, but he could not move it. It was doubtless tightly bandaged; it was necessary in such cases to be thorough and Salter and his assistants cut deep. He closed his eyes to shut out thought.

But thought was not to be permanently shut out. With a sudden impulse he reached across his body, but he reached vaguely and met only Miss Knowlton's strong grasp.

"I'd try to lie perfectly still," she advised earnestly.

He left his hand in hers. It was comfortable to feel a human touch and it suited a cunning plan to pretend to yield. Her mouth twisted again, but he made no comment upon it. He closed his eyes and after a while withdrew his hand gently and slipped it back under the covers. Miss Knowlton had an eagle eye and he must move with caution. He smiled feebly—she furthered his scheme by drawing up the covers to his neck. He moved his hand little by little, and touched with the tips of his fingers after long and exhausting effort his left shoulder.

His first emotion was, incongruously, one of amusement.

"They've taken it off," he said aloud as though his circumvention of watchfulness was the only important fact.

Miss Knowlton ignored his cleverness. "I'd try to get to sleep now." In the effort to prevent her lips from twisting she looked at him with a threatening gaze. If Dr. Salter would only come! Suddenly he caught her hand and held it in a weak and desperate grip. She closed both her own upon it.

"Did they take it off?"

Denial was useless.

"Yes, Doctor."

"At the shoulder?"

"Yes." She lifted his hand and held it against her breast, then she bent over him and wiped away his tears. He turned his head, conscious of his ignominy, but she felt solemnly that she had lived through a great moment.

He slept a drugged sleep. In the morning he woke to consciousness as one wakes to bereavement; first a vague suspicion that all is not right, then full perception of the leaden weight from which there is to be henceforth no escape.

Dr. Salter repeated to him presently the opinions of his colleagues, their hesitation, their deep concern, their final agreement that delay would be fatal, and Stephen managed to answer gayly. Then he closed his eyes and Salter went away.

With returning strength came increasing activity of mind. He remembered the journey upon which he had set out and its interruption. He was uplifted no longer by the spirit of sacrifice; he felt only a sort of shamed humility. Some mighty power had mishandled him, and resistance was absurd. There were moments when he wept feebly.

He believed presently that he was going to die, and he tried to recollect a magic formula which had once comforted him, but which he could no longer remember. Miss Knowlton saw his knitted brows.

"Is there anything you want?"

"Do you know anything which begins 'I believe'?" No sooner were the words uttered than he realized that he had delivered himself to the tyranny of a sentimental piety.

Miss Knowlton, being a church woman, knew the Creed perfectly. Having concluded a glib recitation she began a psalm. Her mouth was once more awry, she believed that she had lived through a second great moment.

It was not until the fifth day that he thought of Ellen. At once a reviving flood filled his veins; he became impatient with his helplessness, with bandages, with feeding with a spoon, with the tender ministrations of over-solicitous nurses. He moved restlessly in his narrow bed. Ellen would be coming home—if she did not stay for the Senior festivities, she might be on her way now! But Fetzer was not at home and he was not there! He tried to reckon the time which had passed since he had written to her, but the problem was too difficult. When he saw her, everything would be right, everything; she would smile at him, she—

"Oh," he cried suddenly, "I am helpless, useless, weak, crippled!"

It was midnight and no one but Stephen himself was present at this first moment of full mental and physical consciousness. The various shocks through which Miss Knowlton had sustained him were slight compared with the cruel realization that life was over and done for, that even Hilda's death could not give him Ellen, that she was lost to him. He measured for the first time his love. Without his hope of Ellen he had nothing. He felt himself sinking deep into an abyss; he knew that body as well as soul was faint, he believed that death might be at hand.

Then suddenly an extraordinary experience was his; he seemed to grasp for an instant that solution of life for which he had struggled a week ago in fever and pain. He lay thinking intently in the quiet night. The door was closed, traffic on the street was for a short time suspended, the nurse did not return. His father had had all Stephen's youth in which to sow; now suddenly, warmed not by sunshine, but by the heat of pain, and watered by affliction, the seed bore fruit. Forlorn, maimed, broken in spirit, he remembered his father's teaching, he heard his father's voice describing again the wooing of that importunate Lover in whom he believed:

"Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast."

He remembered the Chestnut Ridge schoolhouse, filled after a mine explosion with weeping women and children; he recalled his father's prayers, their prayers. Even he had prayed and had been comforted!

The memory of boyhood became detailed; he was suddenly in the midst of an almost fatal experience. He had gone to swim in a deep mine hole and had become exhausted. Hanging over the edge of the bank was a branch of an old tree, and he had reached for it desperately without any expectation that it would sustain him, but it had proved firm and he had drawn himself slowly but safely out of the black water. He remembered the rough bark against his bare, shivering body, the heavenly consciousness of safety. He felt now a similar security, but it was of the soul.

On the seventh day Mayne came to visit him. He did not know exactly where to look, and with recourse to a physician's gesture, he laid his hand on Stephen's wrist. He glanced meaningfully at the nurse, and she, returning his gaze with an understanding nod, departed.

"I have sad news for you, my boy," he said solemnly.

In a flash Stephen saw himself walking through carpeted corridors following the back of a Prince Albert coat.

"Well?"

"Hilda has passed on."

"When?"

"A week ago."

Then everything was over, even the poor body was put away. He felt for an instant more than an orthodox solemnity, a tenderness which bred tears; then misery sprang upon him like a beast from the jungle. If he had not gone on his journey northward, if he had waited a few pitiful days, he would not be lying here, done for! His slight color vanished, his hand trembled, the skin of his face quivered.

"What is it?" Mayne's hand went back to his wrist.

He began babbling his formula. He tried not to say it, but his weak tongue would not be controlled, and Mayne looked down upon him more embarrassed than he had ever been in his life. His philosophic good-humor furnished him with no panacea to offer this smitten creature, returning in feebleness of mind to some forgotten piety of his youth.

It seemed to Stephen after a few days that he could, if he were clever enough, get Ellen back. He still had periods of pain, but his brain now worked smoothly. She had an angel's heart. If he needed her before, he needed her doubly now. Her youth was only a small part of her; he needed her cheerfulness, her devotion, her enthusiasm. In exchange he would give her riches, travel to the ends of the earth, everything she could desire. He would not be tyrannical over her, but she must be his. When the fires of his soul burned lowest he promised her liberty and riches—if she served him till his death! The meditations of his midnight hour had not yet worked their complete

work upon him.

But where was Ellen? To-morrow was the latest day upon which she could be expected. He was to have sat up, but he would postpone it another day because they would certainly not let him both sit up and see a visitor.

When she did not come, he grew restless. She had attended dances, she had mentioned the names of young men. The weakness of body which had kept him humble and quiet had vanished, physical strength intensified each emotion.

When another day passed, his restlessness became apparent to his nurse. He would have inquired of Miss Knowlton but he believed that she enjoyed prying into his soul and he feared some betraying expression. He asked for his letters and was allowed to look over them. Miss MacVane had attended to his business correspondence and now awaited eagerly his further pleasure. He cared nothing for business correspondence—here was a letter from Ellen, written two weeks ago from the University—Miss Knowlton helped him with the stiff paper.

"She ought to be coming along," he said, trying to keep his excitement out of his weak voice.

"She came to the house some days ago to inquire and went on to her brother's. She asked for you by telephone from there—at least some one called from Ephrata."

Stephen turned his head away. Miss Knowlton spoke as though Ellen's inquiry were unimportant. He was sharply irritated. She needn't think that Ellen would not come!

But only Ellen's letter came.

"She's sorry I am ill!" said Stephen to himself. He closed his eyes and Miss Knowlton thought that he was drowsy. She treated him now like a loved infant.

"Would you like to *go sleepy by*?"

Under his breath Stephen said, "Curses on the tribe!"

By leaving at this moment Miss Knowlton missed another great crisis.

"I shall send for Ellen," said a certain Stephen.

"You shall not send for her," said another Stephen. "She is young, lovely, she must be free."

"But I will."

"Oh, no, you won't! You are old, maimed, forlorn."

"But she'll come!"

"If you love her," the other whispered, "you will never let her come."

Miss Knowlton asked, presently, whether she should not answer Ellen, and he nodded, and turned away his face. It was surely not required that he prevent her from coming! His heart warmed to Miss Knowlton and he knew nothing of her kindly postscript. Her eyes were as sharp as Fetzter's, and she had once had a suspicion. But it was unfounded, she knew perfectly, and she had only friendly feelings for Ellen. Sometimes the beating of her heart almost suffocated her. Stephen was helpless without her and she believed that his misfortune had narrowed to nothingness the gap between them. She interpreted a growing humility and gentleness as a growing regard for herself. A little color remained steadily in her cheeks and she acquired a sort of majesty of mien. She selected the friends who should be admitted to his room; she barred out those who, she thought, would prove exciting; she did not inform him, until he was almost well, of the concern for his life which was almost city-wide.

Stephen continued humble and patient. The next week he went to the shore with Miss Knowlton and Fickes. He had now, he believed, given Ellen up. Among his friends was a conspiracy; they all had confidence in the healing power of occupation and they meant presently to bring him back to an orderly house and to an office set to run with its former machine-like regularity. Devoted assistance should make his affliction of no account, for his office practice at least.

At the shore he passed an intolerable month. Miss Knowlton read to him in a voice which took on after the first page the mournful tones of an Æolian harp set to sing in a south wind. She selected religious compositions which made him blush. Fickes carried him about, over miles upon miles of smooth roads, but Fickes, always a dull companion, was now awed and more silent than ever.

He put the thought of Ellen away and sometimes he recited the Creed against her. He meant when he was delivered from Miss Knowlton to look secretly into this strange return to his believing youth, to discover whether he had been cheated in his weakness or helped in his need. At times, looking down at his shoulder, he said bitterly, "I should have something in exchange." At other times he dwelt upon possibilities which he could not put into words, but which answered the questions of weariness and despair.

There was a cruel bitterness in the fact that Ellen did nothing whatever to make the putting away of her difficult. Of all the world, she was indifferent to his misery. He evolved presently an unworthy explanation for her absence—she was repelled by his maimed condition. Then he grew sensitive to the eye of mankind.

One day Miss Knowlton approached his shaded chair on the beach with a letter. Unexpectedly another conspirator had joined them.

"To Dr. S. Lanfair, M.D."

Stephen smiled. Poor Fetzter, was an eye easier to lose than an arm?

"Read it."

"'Dear Friend,'" read Miss Knowlton noting all Fetzer's peculiarities of style. "'I take my pen in hand'—it is a pencil by the way—'to say that my prayers are answered and he is gone to where there is no more sin and sorrow. *He made a good end*'—italics—'I heard of your troubles, but we all must bear troubles, that is God's law. I suppose your holiday is over—anyhow, I will be at my old stand when you come back. Yours respect.'—period—'Mrs. James Fetzer.'"

"My holiday! Does Fetzer think I'm off on a holiday?"

Miss Knowlton looked at him, her long, homely face beaming with encouragement.

"Aren't you? She expects you to go back and get to work."

"She does, does she?"

"There isn't any reason why you shouldn't."

He looked at Miss Knowlton and grinned.

"I'll bet you and Salter and Fetzer and all the rest are in cahoot."

"When shall we go?" asked Miss Knowlton, trembling and believing, poor Miss Knowlton! that she was taking the first step toward her throne.

"At once, by all means," said Stephen grimly.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A QUIET HOUR

WHEN the journey was over and the offices inspected, Stephen sat in his room. Fetzter, controlling her emotions in his presence, had gone to the third story both to rejoice and to weep; Miss MacVane and Miss Knowlton, moving about the office, worked with shining eyes. Stephen had promised to see a few patients to-morrow; life would be, Miss MacVane expected, if there was to be any change, happier. Miss Knowlton did not put into words what she expected. Neither thought of Ellen Levis; their household was complete.

The storm in the night had given the park a springlike greenness. The river from Stephen's room was blue, with tiniest silver ripples. A soft breeze stirred the curtains gently and a cool green light filled the pleasant room. The familiar walls rested his eyes; though he had known little but misery in this house, he loved its stateliness and it was now a safe haven. He had begun to be curious about what had been said and done in the medical world in his absence. He had not forgotten the quest upon which he intended to go when he should be wholly relieved from espionage. In the meantime, he thought, drowsily and childishly, it was sufficient to be quiescent and humble. He believed that he should never see Ellen nor desire greatly to see her.

Then he opened his eyes at a slight sound. Ellen was at hand; she had crossed the street and her familiar figure which had a moment ago startled the women in the office approached his door, though Miss Knowlton had directed her with lofty kindness to Fetzter's room.

"She'll take you to see the doctor," Miss Knowlton promised.

"Is he still ill?" Ellen asked, astonished.

"He's not entirely well." Miss Knowlton spoke as though he were her child. "But he'll see you, I'm sure."

If Miss MacVane's sight had been keener, she would have interpreted the long look which Ellen gave Miss Knowlton. In it were astonishment, resentment, and even defiance. She would break no resolutions, would not endanger her self-control, her ticket for her journey was in her purse, but she would not be escorted to Dr. Lanfair's room by Mrs. Fetzter at Miss Knowlton's suggestion!

Stephen saw her at first dimly across the wide room—could she be a deluding vision? He felt the injured resentment of a man hit when he is down.

When he was convinced of her reality, he clutched the arm of his chair. He did not rise to meet her, realizing that he would need all his physical strength to support his resolution and his pride. When she came toward him, and he saw that some harsh trouble had deepened her eyes, he grew still more weak. He wished for Fetzter or Miss MacVane or Miss Knowlton—he thought with confused rage of Miss Knowlton—if she was worth anything she should have defended him from this!

"I didn't know you were here," said Ellen in her low voice. "Miss MacVane and Miss Knowlton just told me."

"Or I suppose you wouldn't have come!" Had he said the foolish words or merely thought them?

"I'm going to Ithaca to-night," went on Ellen.

She was halfway across the room on her way to shake hands with him when she halted. "I'm going to—" She stood staring, incredulous, at his maimed body. She could not move or speak. It is hard to say which she felt more deeply, an anguished pity or a sharp resentment.

Stephen saw her horror; the theory which he had framed to account for her absence was then quite proved. He even believed that he saw her hands lifted to shield her eyes. Her repulsion and terror were unendurable, they constituted the final insult of fate.

"Does it frighten you?" he asked, wishing to hurt her. She had no business to come now!

Her gaze transferred itself to his eyes and held them for a second. After a long moment she spoke slowly, looking down, with the slightest emphasis on her last word.

"What did you say to me?"

Stephen leaned forward, hating himself.

"Didn't you know, Ellen?"

A dumb mouth answered.

"I had an infected hand. Won't you sit down?"

Ellen did not move. Her eyes lifted, regarded him steadily.

"Did you never wonder why I didn't come?"

Stephen could not endure her gaze. Alas, he was not cured, she was dearer, more desirable than she had ever been. Perhaps if he were wise and wary, if he did not betray himself, he could keep her childish affection until some one won her away! He could then grow gradually accustomed to that which now seemed worse than death.

"You wrote and I answered," he said lightly. "Did you say you were going back to school? Why so early, Ellen?"

"I'm going to—"

"Do sit down!" he cried. Did she mean to flee? "I won't hurt you. I can't hurt you!" With an effort of his will he looked at her again; he saw her waving hair, her broad forehead, her dark eyes, her round figure, all of sweet Ellen. He looked at her, steadily and long, in the quiet room as though he should never see her again.

He saw not only her body; he saw with a clear vision her soul, and knew that his journey northward would have been in vain, that he could never in such fashion have made her his. In her gaze was all her father's quiet dignity, all his self-respect, which could not be impaired though all else were taken. She had gained, Stephen saw plainly, the resources of maturity; though she had been cruelly hurt, she still lifted her head.

But he saw more than the beauty of Ellen's body and the worth of her soul; he read her heart and found there that what he desired was to be given him. He rose to his feet without taking his eyes from her. The energy of life returned; he felt no weakness; he knew that that which he was to have was of inestimable value and he determined to be lacking in no grateful return.

Ellen moved a little toward him, her eyes now downcast.

"I have come to say good-bye."

He made no answer. The edge of the awning was slightly lifted in the breeze, the green light brightened, a shaft of sunlight struck across the room, and he stood still. He would not say, "Ellen, I am too old," or, "Ellen, I am maimed." He would not hurt her more than she had been hurt. She had, it was clear, no suspicion that Fate had given her less than the best. He stood looking at her quizzically, almost merrily, waiting for her to lift her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXIX

FETZER CLOSES A DOOR

FETZER presently dried her tears and, remembering a message which was to be delivered to Miss Knowlton, smoothed her hair which was already smooth and went down to the office. When she entered both women looked up in surprise.

"Where is Ellen?" asked Miss MacVane. "Is she going to stay? It's too early to go back to school."

"Ellen," repeated Fetzter. "Is she here? Do you mean our Ellen?"

Miss MacVane grew a little pale and Miss Knowlton turned her head quickly.

"She came in a long time ago and I sent her to find you. I told her that Dr. Lanfair was in his room and that you'd take her to speak to him."

"Did she go upstairs the front way?" asked Fetzter.

"She must have," answered Miss Knowlton.

"How long ago was this, then?"

"A half-hour," said Miss MacVane.

"It's much longer than that," corrected Miss Knowlton. She rose, her cheeks scarlet. Ellen should have followed directions.

"Doctor should have some nourishment," she said sharply. "I'm going to take him a cup of iced broth."

Then to her astonishment Miss Knowlton found her way barred. Fetzter had closed the door and placed herself in front of it. She stood again in the hall on a hot August afternoon and saw Ellen's look. A flame leaped to life in her heart, then died down, leaving only glowing embers. She believed that she knew what was happening in Stephen's quiet room. As for these poor souls, they had had no experience of life. She looked at them with the utmost kindness.

"I wouldn't go now," she said, flushing. "He'll ring when he wants"—she had meant to say "you," but she said valiantly "us." Then a sound startled her, almost shocked her. It was a man's laugh, hearty, clear, happy, ringing through the quiet house, and penetrating the closed door. She laid her hand on the side of her face, the tips of her fingers covering the black patch, and smiled a brave smile. All of them heard the laugh again.

"Ellen, she will make him happy," said Fetzter in her pleasant idiom.

"He deserves to be happy," said Miss MacVane soberly after another moment of silence.

Miss Knowlton, who was younger, said nothing. She returned to the inner room, and there with automatic regularity of motion lifted bottles from a shelf which had not been dusted to one which had.

THE END

Transcriber's Note:

Page [190](#)

always unobstrusive *changed to*
always unobtrusive

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ELLEN LEVIS: A NOVEL ***

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