The Glory of the Conquered: The Story of a Great Love

by Susan Glaspell

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THE GLORY OF THE CONQUERED

THE STORY OF A GREAT LOVE BY SUSAN GLASPELL

1909

To DR. A. L. HAGEBOECK,

Who Made This Book Possible

CONTENTS

PART ONE

I. ERNESTINE II. THE LETTER III. KARL IV. JACK AND "HIGHER TRUTH" V. THE HOME-COMING VI. "GLORIA VICTIS" VII. ERNESTINE IN HER STUDIO VIII. SCIENCE, ART AND LOVE IX. As THE SURGEON SAW IT X. KARL IN HIS LABORATORY XI. PICTURES IN THE EMBERS XII. A WARNING AND A PREMONITION XIII. AN UNCROSSED BRIDGE XIV. "TO THE GREAT UNWHIMPERING!" XV. THE VERDICT XVI. "GOOD LUCK, BEASON!" XVII. DISTANT STRAINS OF TRIUMPH XVIII. TELLING ERNESTINE XIX. INTO THE DARK

PART TWO XX. MARRIAGE AND PAPER BAGS XXI. FACTORY-MADE OPTIMISM XXII. A BLIND MAN'S TWILIGHT XXIII. HER VISION XXIV. LOVE CHALLENGES FATE XXV. DR. PARKMAN'S WAY XXVI. OLD-FASHIONED LOVE XXVII. LEARNING TO BE KARL'S EYES XXVIII. WITH BROKEN SWORD XXIX. UNPAINTED MASTERPIECES XXX. EYES FOR TWO XXXI. SCIENCE AND SUPER-SCIENCE XXXII. THE DOCTOR HAS HIS WAY XXXIII. LOVE'S OWN HOUR XXXIV. ALMOST DAWN XXXV. "OH, HURRY—HURRY!" XXXVI. WITH THE OUTGOING TIDE PART THREE XXXVII. BENEATH DEAD LEAVES XXXVIII. PATCHWORK

QUILTS XXXIX. ASH HEAP AND ROSE JAR XL. "LET THERE BE LIGHT" XLI. WHEN THE TIDE CAME IN XLII. WORK, THE SAVIOUR XLIII. "AND THERE WAS LIGHT"

THE GLORY OF THE CONQUERED

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

ERNESTINE

She had promised to marry a scientist! It was too overwhelming a thought to entertain standing there by the window. She sought the room's most comfortable chair and braced herself to the situation.

If, one month before, a gossiping daughter of Fate had come to her with—"Shall I tell you something?—You are going to marry a man of science!"—she would have smiled serenely at Fate's amusing mistake and responded—"My good friend, it is quite true that great uncertainty attends this subject. So much to be expected is the unexpected, that I am quite willing to admit I may marry the hurdy-gurdy man who plays beneath my window. I know life well enough to appreciate that I may marry a pawnbroker or the Sultan of Turkey. I assert but one thing. I shall not marry a 'man of science.'"

And now, not only had she promised to marry a man of science, but she had quite overlooked the fact of his being one! And the thing which stripped her of the last shred of consistency was that she was to marry, not the every-day, average "man of science," but one of the foremost scientists of all the world! The powers in charge of things matrimonial must be smiling a quiet little smile to-night.

But ah—here was the vindication! He had not asked her to marry him. He had simply come and told her she was to marry him. And he was a great, strong man—far more powerful than she. She had had positively nothing to do with it! Was it her fault that he chanced to be engaged in scientific pursuits? And when he took her face so tenderly in his two hands—looked so far down into her eyes—and told her in a voice she would follow to the ends of the earth that he loved her—was there any time then to think of paltry non-essentials like art and science?

But she thought of them a little now. How could she get away from them when each year of her past marched slowly in front of her, paused for an instant that she might get a full view, and then passed grinningly back to the abyss of things gone, from over the shoulder tossing straight into her consciousness a jeering, deep sinking "You too?"

Ernestine Stanley—that was the name she read in one of her books open beside her. Why her very name stood for that quarrel which had rent all the years!

Until she was ten years old she had been nameless. She had been You—and Baby—and Dear—and Mother's Girl—and Father's Girl, but her mother and father had been unable to agree upon a name for her. Each discussion served to send them a little farther apart. Finally they spoke of Ernestine and reached the point of agreement through separate channels. Her father approved it for what it meant in the dictionary;—her mother for the music of its sound. That told the whole story; their attitudes toward her name spoke for the things of themselves bestowed upon her.

Her father had been a disciple of exact science,—a professor of biology. He believed only in that which could be reduced to a formula. The knowable was to him the only real. He viewed life microscopically and spent his portion of emotion in an aggressive hatred of all those things which he consigned to the rubbish heap labeled non-scientific.

And her mother—she never thought of her mother without that sad little shake of her

head—was a dreamer, a lover of things beautiful, a hater of all she felt to be at war with her gods. Ernestine's loyalty did not permit the analysis to go further, except to deplore her mother's unhappiness as unnecessary. Even when a very little girl she wondered why her father could not have his bottles and things, and her mother have her poems and the things she liked, and just let each other alone about it. She wondered that long before she appreciated its significance.

As she grew a little older she used to wonder if something inside her would not some day be pulled in two. It seemed the desire of each of her parents to guide her from what they saw as the rocks surrounding her. Elementary science was all mixed up with Keats and Heine and Byron. Another one of her early speculations was as to whether or not poetry and science really meant to make so much trouble.

Of course from the very first there had been the blackboard—the blackboard and all its logical successors. As perversity would have it, it was her father bought her that blackboard. It was to help turn her in the way she should go, for upon this blackboard she was to do her sums. But the sums executed thereon were all performed when some one was standing at her shoulder, while many were the hours spent in the drawing of cats and dogs and fish and birds, of lakes and trees and other little girls and boys. She never had that being-pulled-in-two feeling when she and the blackboard were alone together. The blackboard seemed the only thing which made her all one, and she often wished her father and mother loved their things as she did hers, for if they were only sure, as she was, then what some one else said would not matter at all.

They lived in a university town, her father being a professor in the school. In the later years of her college life he forced her into the scientific courses which she hated. She sighed even now at the memory of those weary hours in the laboratory, though while hating the detail of it, she responded, as her father had never done, to the glimpses she caught of the thing as a whole. It was ironical enough that the only

thing she seemed to get from her scientific studies was an enthusiasm for the poetry of science. In those days many thoughts beat hard against the door of Ernestine's loyalty. Why did not her mother see all this—and make her father see it? Was there not a point at which they could have met—and did they not fail in meeting because neither of them went far enough?

It was when she was in her senior year that her father died. She finished out her laboratory work with lavish conscientiousness, feeling a new tenderness of him in the consciousness that his ideas for her had failed. That hour before his funeral, when she sat beside him alone, stood out as among the very vivid moments of her life. The tragedy of his life seemed that he had failed in impressing himself. His keenness of mind had not made for bigness. Life had left an aggressiveness, a certain sullenness in the lines of his face. His mind and his soul had never found one another—was it because his heart had closed the channel between the two?

And then they went to New York and Ernestine began her study of art.

A great light seemed turned back over it all tonight. She understood much now which she had lived through wonderingly. She seemed now really to know that girl who went to New York with all the dreams of all her years calling upon her for fulfillment. She knew what that girl had dreamed when she dreamed she knew not what; knew what she thought when she thought the undefined. She smiled understandingly, tenderly, at thought of it all—the bounding joy and the stubborn determination, the fearing and the demanding and the resolving with which she began her work. She was a great deal like a child on the long-promised holiday, and much like the pilgrim at the shrine. Somewhere between those two was Ernestine that first winter in New York.

It was after the second year, after that strange mixture of things within her had unified to fixed purpose, and after it had become quite certain her dreams had not played her false, that the other big change had come. Her mother slipped away from

the life which had never held her in the big grip of reality. She had been so long a longing looker-on from the outer circle that the slipping away was the less hard. Ernestine stopped work in order to care for her, reproaching herself with never having been able to give to her mother with the unrestraint and bounteousness she had given to her work. During those last weeks she often found her mother's eyes—sombre, brooding eyes—following her about the room like the spirit of unrest.

"Try to be happy, Ernestine," she said, when about to leave the house in which she had ever been a stranger. "Life is so awful if you are not happy."

She took her back to the little town and put her away beside the man with whom her soul had never been at peace. That first night she awakened in the dark hours and fancied she heard them quarreling. The hideous fancy would not let her go to sleep, though she told herself over and over that surely death would bring them the peace life had so long withheld.

She went back to her work then with a new steadiness; loneliness feeding the fire of consecration. Often when alone in her room at night she felt those disappointed eyes following her about, heard again that plaintive: "Try to be happy, Ernestine. Life is so awful if you are not happy." She had many times opened the book in which her mother copied the poems written at intervals during the years, but always would come the feeling of their holding something at which it would be hard to look. To-night, with her new understanding, this wondrous new touchstone, she took them from her trunk with eagerness. She longed now to know the secret of her mother's life; she would know why happiness had passed her by.

There was tragedy in those little poems—a soul's long tragedy in their halting lines, in the faltering breath with which they were sung. Indeed they were not the songs of a poet at all; they were but the helpless reaching out of an unsatisfied, unanchored soul. The blackboard had never given back what it should; the crayon would not

write. Was it true there were countless souls who went away like this—leaving unsaid a word they had craved to say?

"For our souls were not in tune"—was a line she found in one of the verses and which she sat a long time pondering. Was not the secret of it here? This the rock which held the wreckage of their lives?

She left her room and went out of doors. The night was very still. A tender peace brooded over the world. She lifted her eyes to the stars—her soul to the great Wonder. Enveloping her was Life—drawing her straight to the heart of things was Love. Doubts and speculations and ominous memories seemed blown away by the breath of the night. The years had no lesson to teach save this—One must love! All that was wrong in the world came through too little loving. All that was great and beautiful sprang from love which knew not doubts nor fears. What was a "point of view" when one throbbed with the memory of his good-bye kiss!

There was a force which moved the world. She was in the grip of that force to-night. All else was but the tiny whirlpool against the mighty current. And she was not afraid. Love would deal kindly with her own. She lifted her soul to the great Mother and Father of the world. "Oh take me and teach me!"—was her passionate prayer.

CHAPTER II

THE LETTER

What was that story the old Greeks told about love being the union—or reunion—of the two halves of an originally perfect whole? The envious gods—who were a very bad lot—cut the original perfect being in two. Then love is a finding of one's own—also, a getting ahead of the gods. I have more respect for the old Greeks to-night than I ever had before! But you cannot know just how it is. You are younger than I, and I do not believe the fear of life passing you by ever entered and chilled your heart. You were always sure it was coming some time, weren't you, my

new-found little one? You could not have had that calm, sweet look in those big eyes of yours had you feared the best of life might be withheld from you. But can you fancy what it would mean to have felt for many years that somewhere there was a cool, sweet spring of eternal joy, and to become fearful your footsteps might never lead you to those blessed waters? And then can you fancy the profound thankfulness that would fill one's being, when after long wandering, after several mistakes and disappointments, the music of those waters was borne to the ear? And when, almost fearful to believe, and yet very, very sure, one stepped a little nearer, can you fancy the joy in finding the cooling breeze from that eternal spring upon one's face, of seeing it there as one had ever dreamed of it, knowing that beside it one could drink deep—long and very deep—of those life-giving, soul-satisfying waters? Can you fancy the all-pervading thankfulness, almost unbelievable joy, in that first hour of standing beside the long-desired, the half-despaired of water of life?

"Thank God I was not weak enough to resign the whole for the half! There was once a voice said to me: 'This is a pretty good spring. There is not much chance of your finding the other. Why not take this?' But something—your voice from a far distance?—called me on.

"A strange enough letter for a man to be writing the girl who has just promised to marry him! Conventionally, I suppose, I should say to you: 'I never knew anything like this before.' And instead I am saying: 'There was something once of somewhat similar exterior. But I was mistaken. I was disappointed.' But doesn't this make you see—dear new love—dear real love—how happy I am, and why?

"But you poor little girl—how I've cheated you! Why, liebchen—God bless the Germans for inventing that name for you—you were entitled to weeks and weeks of beautiful, delicate courtship. Will you forgive me for jumping right over those days when I should have sent you roses and nice pretty notes, and prepared you in proper and approved way for all of this? But I had been waiting for you so long that when I

found you, I just couldn't wait a minute longer.

"And it was Georgia—my red-headed, freckled, foolish cousin Georgia did this! Why, liebchen, I'll take my oath right this minute Georgia hasn't a freckle! I'm even willing—(oh Lord, am I?—Yes, by the gods I am)—to read every abominable line she writes for that abominable paper. Am I an ingrate? Didn't Georgia bring me to you?—and is anything too much, even to the reading of her stuff—yes, by Jove, and liking it?

"Now prepare yourself to receive the sympathy of every one you know when you tell them you are going to marry me. Some kind of divine hallucination is upon you, acting for my good, and you do not see how profoundly you are to be pitied. But other people will see, and will tell you about it, only you will think they are under a hallucination, which is one of the phases of yours. The truth is I am a grubbing old scientist. I prowl around in laboratories and don't know much of anything else, and more than half the time my hands are stained with unaesthetic colours you won't like at all. And they tell me I have a foolish way of sitting and thinking about one thing, and that sometimes I don't do things I say I am going to—meet my appointments and things like that, although of course that won't apply to you. And here you might have married some artist chap, or society fellow who would know all about the proper thing!

"But never mind, poor little girl—I'll make it up to you. You may miss some of the lesser, but you'll have the greater. You'll have the love that enfolds one's whole being—the love that is eternal. Yes, dear—eternal. The mariner has his compass, the astronomer his stars, the Swiss peasant has his Alps—and we have our love. It must mean all those eternal things to us. Don't you feel that it will?

"This train is rushing along jostling my hand so I can scarcely write. But then my heart is rushing on jostling my brain so I can scarcely think, so perhaps my handwriting matches my thoughts.

"And we'll work! We'll work to prove how much we love—is there better reason for working than that? I can work now as I never did before, for don't I want to prove to this old world that I appreciate its bringing me to you? And you'll teach me about this art of yours, won't you, my little girl with the long, serious name? I'm ignorant, sweetheart, I don't know much about pictures, but don't you think that I can learn? Why, liebchen, I'm learning already! I never knew what they meant by lights and shadows until I saw your face.

"But tell me, how does it happen your hair grows back from your temples that way? Why, no one else's hair does that. And where did you learn about tilting your chin forward like that and looking straight out of your eyes at one? It is so strange—no one else does any of those things. I've often thought of the many things in science I do not understand and never will, but they are the very simplest things imaginable in comparison with that puzzling way you smile, the wonderful way your face lights up when you are happy.

"Are you looking up at the stars? I think you are. And in the heavens do you see one newly discovered, unvanishable star? That is the star of our love, dear,—the star which has changed heaven and earth. Are you dreaming about it all?—Oh but I know you are. I will fulfill those dreams, dear girl. I have waited for you too long, I prize you too inestimably not to consecrate my life to the fulfilling of those dreams."

CHAPTER III

KARL

He was one of the men who go before. Out in the great field of knowledge's unsurveyed territory he worked—a blazer of the trail, a voice crying from the wilderness: "I have opened up another few feet. You can come now a little farther." Then they would come in and take possession, soon to become accustomed to the ground, forgetting that only a little while before it had been impassable, scarcely

thinking of the little body of men who had opened the way for them, and now were out farther, where again the way was blocked, trying to beat down a few more of the barriers, open up a little more of that untrodden territory. And only the little band itself would ever know how stony that path, how deep the ditches, how thick and thorny the underbrush. "Why this couldn't have been so bad," the crowd said, after it had flocked in—"strange it should have taken so long!"

Not that the little band sought popular acclaim, or desired it. "Heavens!" he had once exclaimed to a laboratory assistant, after a reporter had been vainly trying to persuade him to "tell the whole story of his work in popular vein,"—"you don't suppose medical research is going to become a drawing-room lap dog!"

But he need not have feared. A capricious fancy might rest upon them for the minute, but the big world which followed along behind would never come into any complete understanding of such as they. In an age of each man seeking what he himself can gain, how could there be understanding of the manner of man who would perhaps work all of his lifetime only to put up at the end the sign-board: "Do not take this road. I have gone over it and found it profitless." Failure is not the name they give to that. They say his wanderings astray brought others that much nearer to the goal.

In his last year at the medical school one of his professors had put it to him like this: "You must make your choice. It is certain you can not do both. You will become a general practitioner, or you will go into the research work for which you have shown aptitude here. I am confident you would succeed as a surgeon. In that you would make more money, and, in all probability, a bigger name. That is certain. In this other, you take your chances. But if I were you, I would do whichever I cared for more."

That settled it, for he had long before heard the cry from the unknown: "Come out and take us! We are here—if only you know how to get us." There was in his blood

that which thrilled to the thought of doing what had not been done before. With the abandonment of his intense and rugged nature, he yielded himself to the delights of the untravelled path.

At the time of his falling in love, Dr. Karl Hubers was thirty-nine years old. He had worked in European laboratories, notably the Pasteur Institute of Paris, and among men of his kind was regarded as one to be reckoned with. Within the profession his name already stood for vital things, and it was associated now with one of the big problems, the solving of which it was believed this generation would have to its credit. The scientific and medical journals were watching him, believing that when the great victory was won, his would be the name to reach round the world.

Three years before, the president of a great university, but newly sprung up by the side of a great lake, sitting in his high watch tower and with mammoth spy-glass looking around for men of initiative in the intellectual domain, had spied Karl Hubers, working away over there in Europe. This man of the watch tower had a genius for perceiving when a man stood on the verge of great celebrity, and so he cried out now: "Come over and do some teaching for us! We will give you just as good a laboratory as you have there and plenty of time for your own work." Now, while he would be glad enough to have Dr. Hubers do the teaching, what he wanted most of all was to possess him, so that in the day of victory that young giant of a university would rise up with the peon: "See! We have done it!" And Dr. Hubers, lured by the promise of time and facility for his own work, liking what he knew of the young university, had come over and established himself in Chicago.

In those three years he had not been disappointing. He had contributed steadily to the sum of the profession's knowledge, for he worked in little by-paths as well as on his central thing, and he himself felt, though he said but little, that he was coming nearer and nearer the goal he had set for himself.

His place in the university was an enviable one. The enthusiasm of the students for

him quite reached the borderland of reverence. To get some work in Dr. Hubers' laboratory was regarded, among the scientific students, as the triumph of a whole university career. And it was those students who worked as his assistants who came to know the fine fibre of the man. They could tell best the real story of his work. They it was who told him when he must go to his classes and when he must go to his meals, who kept him, in times of complete surrender to his idea, in so much of touch with the world about him as they felt a necessity. Their hearts beat with his heart when a little of the way was cleared; their spirits sank in disappointment as they lived with him through the days of depression. And as they came day by day to know of the honesty of his mind, the steadfastness of his purpose, to feel that flame which glowed within him, they fairly spoke his name in different voice from that used for other things, and when they told their stories of his eccentricities, it was with a tenderness in their humour, never as though blurring his greatness, but rather as if his very little weaknesses and foibles set him apart from and above every one else.

Generations before, his ancestors up there in North Europe had swept things before them with a mighty hand. With defeat and renunciation they did not reckon. If they loved a woman, they picked her up and took her away. And civilisation has not quite washed the blood of those men from the earth. Germany gave to Karl Hubers something more than a scholar's mind. At any rate, he did a very unapproved and most uncivilised thing. When he fell in love and decided he wanted to marry Ernestine Stanley, and that he wanted to take her right over to Europe and show her the things he loved there, he asked for his year's leave of absence before he went to find out whether Miss Stanley was kindly disposed to the idea of marrying him. Now why he did that, it is not possible to state, but the thing proving him quite hopeless as a civilised product is that it never struck him there was anything so very peculiar in his order of procedure.

His assistants had to do a great deal of reminding after he came back that week, and

they never knew until afterwards that his abstraction was caused by something quite different from germs. They thought—unknowing assistants—that he was on a new trail, and judged from the expression of his face that it was going to prove most productive.

CHAPTER IV

FACTS AND "HIGHER TRUTH"

"Mr. Beason," said Georgia McCormick, looking across the dinner table at the new student who had come to live with them—almost every one who lived around the university had "students"—"if you had a dear cousin who had married a dear friend, if said dear cousin and dear friend had gone skipping away to Europe, and for one year and a half had flitted gayly from country to country, looking into each other's eyes and murmuring sweet nothings all the while that you had been earning your daily bread by telling daily untruths for a daily paper, if at the end of said period said cousin and friend, forced by a steadily diminishing bank account to return to the stern necessities of life, had written you a nonchalant little note telling you to 'look up a place for them to lay their heads'—which being translated in terms of action meant that you were to walk the streets looking for vacant houses when vacant houses there were none—if this combination of circumstances befell you, Mr. Beason—just what would you do?"

Beason pondered the matter carefully. Mr. Beason applied the scientific method to everything in life, and was not one to commit himself rashly. "I think," he announced, weightily, "that I would tell them to go to a hotel and stay there until they could look up their own house."

"But Mr. Beason," she rambled on, eyes twinkling—Georgia had decided this young man needed "waking up"—"suppose you loved them both very dearly—suppose they were positively the dearest people who ever walked the earth—and that

breaking your neck for them was the greatest pleasure life could confer upon you—what would you do then?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Beason, bluntly; "I never loved any one that dearly."

"'Tis better to love and break one's neck,"—began Harry Wyman, who aspired to the position of class poet.

"If you had ever known Ernestine and Karl,"—a tenderness creeping into Georgia's voice—"you'd be almost willing to hunt houses for them. Almost, I say—for I doubt if any affection on earth should be put to the house-hunting test. Even my cousin Dr. Karl Hubers———"

"Your—cousin?"—Beason broke in. "Your—?"—in telling the story Georgia always spoke of the unflattering emphasis on the final your. But at the time she could think of nothing save the transformed face of John Beason. The instantaneousness with which he had waked up was fairly gruesome. He was looking straight at Georgia; all three were held by his manner.

"Now my dear Mr. Beason," she laughed finally, "don't be so hard on us. My mother and Dr. Hubers' mother were sisters, but please don't rub it in so unmercifully that poor mother has been altogether distanced in the matter of offspring. You see mother married an Irish politician—hence me. While Aunt Katherine—Karl's mother—married a German scholar—therefore Karl. And the German scholar was the son of a German professor. In fact, from all I have been led to believe the Hubers were busily engaged in the professoring business at the time Julius Caesar stalked up from Italy."

"Now Georgia," hastened Mrs. McCormick earnestly, "this newspaper work gives you such a tendency to exaggerate. I never heard it said before that the family went that far back."

"Perhaps not. But just because a thing has never been said before, isn't there all the more reason for saying it now? And I'm just trying to make Mr. Beason

understand"—demurely—"why some people are scholars and others are not."

But Season's mind was working straight from the shoulder.

"Does he ever come here?" he demanded.

"Yes, indeed; he honours our poor board quite often with the light of his countenance."

Beason accepted that as unextravagant statement of fact.

"Well, do you—know about him?" he asked, bluntly.

"That he's 'way up? Oh, my, yes. And we're tremendously proud of him."

"I should think you would be," said Beason, rather grimly.

"Karl is indeed remarkable," said Mrs. McCormick, blandly expansive, well pleased with both Karl and her own appreciation of him. "I feel that our family has much to be proud of, to think both he and Georgia have done so well with their work."

The expression of Beason's face was a study. Georgia laughed over it for weeks afterwards.

"Now my chief interest," said Wyman, who was at the stage where he put life in capital letters, and cherished harmless ideas about his own deep understanding of the human heart, "is in Mrs. Hubers. There, I fancy,"—it was his capital letter voice—"is a woman who understands."

"A dandy girl," said Georgia, briskly.

"She has the artistic temperament?" he pursued.

"Oh, not disagreeably so," she retorted.

"You see," turning to Beason, who was plainly impatient at this shifting to anything so irrelevant as a wife, "I play quite a leading part in Dr. Hubers' life. I'm his cousin—that's the accident of birth; but I handed over to him his wife, for which he owes me undying gratitude. I'm looking for something really splendid from Europe."

"I wish I hadn't gone home so early that spring," sighed Wyman. "I'd like to have seen that little affair. It must have been the real thing in romance."

"But it was nothing of the sort! It was the most disgraceful thing I ever had anything to do with."

"Now Georgia," protested her mother, "you know you are so apt to be misunderstood."

"Well I couldn't be misunderstood about this! Oh, it was awful!—the suddenness of it, you know. You see Miss Stanley was an old college friend of mine. In fact, I roomed at their house,"—she paused and seemed to be thinking of other things—serious things. "A year ago last spring," she went on, "Ernestine stopped here on her way home from New York. Her parents had died, but an old aunt lived in their house, and she was going to see her. I had always told her about Karl, but she had never met him, because when Ernestine and I were together so much, he was in Europe. So I wanted her to meet him—well, principally because he was a good deal of a celebrity, and I thought it would be nice. I'll be real honest and confess it never occurred to me there would be anything exciting doing. Well, Karl didn't want to come. First he said he would, and then he telephoned he was busy. So I just went over to the laboratory and got him. I told him he was expected, and if he didn't come, mother and I never would forgive him. He washed his hands and came along, grumbling all the way about how one's relatives interfered with one's life—oh, Karl and I are tremendously frank, and then when he got here—well, I'll just leave it to mother."

"He did seem to be greatly impressed with Georgia's friend." said Mrs. McCormick, consciously conservative.

"I never saw him act so stupid! Oh, but I was mad at him! I wanted him to talk about Europe and be brilliant, but he didn't do anything but sit and look at Ernestine. Fact of the matter is, Ernestine doesn't look quite like the rest of us. At least Karl thought

she didn't, and evidently he made up his mind then and there he was going to have her. Ernestine left Chicago sooner than he thought she was going to, and what does he do but go after her—and get her! You see, all of Karl's ancestors weren't meek and gentle scholars and wise professors. Lots of them were soldiers and bloodthirsty brigands, and those are the ones he brags about most and in spite of his mind, and all that, those are the ones he is most like. I suppose it was in the blood to get what he wanted. I'm sure I don't know how he did it. Lots of men had wanted Ernestine, and she had the caring-for-her-art notion—she's made good tremendously, you know—but art took a back seat when Dr. Hubers arrived on the scene. That's all there is to it. I wouldn't call it a romance. It was more in the line of a hop, skip and jump."

She had pushed back her chair a little, but laughed now, reminiscently.

"Oh it was just too funny! Some of it was too rich to keep. Karl came here the day after he returned—wanted to hear me talk of Ernestine, you know. People in love aren't exactly versatile in their conversation. I did talk about her for two hours, and then I ventured to change the subject. 'Karl,' I said, 'what do you think of the colour they're painting the new Fifty-seventh Street station?'

"He had been sitting there in rapt silence and he looked up at me with a seraphic, far-away smile. 'Colour,' he said, dreamily, 'was there ever such a colour before?'

"'There certainly never was,' I replied, meaning of course the brick red of the aforesaid station.

"'That divine brown,' he pursued,' that soft, dark, liquid brown of unfathomable depth!' Now there," nodding laughingly at Beason, "you have a sample of the great Dr. Hubers' mighty intellect."

Beason hovered around, hoping for a few more stray words, but as Harry Wyman and Georgia were talking about some foolish newspaper affairs, he went to his room and tried to settle down to work.

A half hour later Wyman, who had also gone in to do a little studying, came out to where Georgia was looking over the other evening papers.

"Say," he laughed, "you've got to do something for that fellow in there—he's crazy as a loon. You've got him all stirred up, and if you don't go in and get him calmed down he won't sleep a wink to-night, and neither will I. He says Dr. Hubers is the greatest man in the world. He says he won't except anybody—no, sir, not a living human soul! He's been walking up and down the floor talking about it. Gee! you ought to hear him. He says he came to this university on purpose to get some work with Dr. Hubers, that his life will be ruined if he doesn't get it, and that he's going to make all kinds of a ten-strike, if he does. And you can't laugh at the fellow, for he's just dead down in earnest! He wanted me to come out here and ask you some questions—I can't remember 'em straight. How he worked—whether he was approachable. Oh, he fired them at me thick. Say now, he would appreciate it, if you'd just go in and give him a little talk about your cousin. Kind of serious talk, you know. Why, he'd just hang on every word."

And Georgia, laughing—Georgia was strongly addicted to laughing—said if there was any man ready to hang upon her every word, that she, being twenty-seven and prospectless, must not let him get away.

She told Beason many things—some of them facts and some of them "higher truth," Georgia holding that things which ought to be true were higher truth. She told him how Karl had tried to burn down his father's house, when a very small boy, to see if something somebody had said about fire was true, how he dissected a strange and wonderful bird which came to the house on a visitor's hat, how he inspired a whole crew of small boys to run away from home as explorers, how he whipped a bigger boy most unmercifully for calling the Germans big fools. Georgia arranged for her cousin what she called a thoroughly consistent childhood. And then some less high truth about his working his way through college, getting money enough to go

abroad, his absolute forgetfulness of everything when immersed in work—facts and higher truth tallied here.

"Karl's queer," she said. "He's roasted a good deal by the academic folks—pooh-hoos a lot of their stuff, you know. He seems to have a strange notion that science, learning, the whole business is for humanity. Unique conception, isn't it?"

After she went away, Beason said he had no doubt that when one came to know Miss McCormick, he would see, in spite of her lightness of manner, that she had many fine qualities.

"Qualities!" burst forth the enthusiastic Wyman. "Say—you just ought to hear the newspaper fellows talk about Georgia McCormick! I tell you she's a peach, and more than that, she's a brick. She's the divide-her-last-penny kind—Georgia McCormick is. And I want you to know that if ever any one had the joy of living stunt down pat, she's it. It's an honest fact that if she was put in the penitentiary and you went to see her after she'd been there awhile, she'd tell you so many funny and interesting things about the pen. that you'd feel sore to think you weren't in yourself. And smart? And a hustler? Well, her paper's done some fool things, but it's had sense to hold on to her all right-all right."

And Beason replied that of course Dr. Hubers' cousin was bound to be smart.

CHAPTER V

THE HOME-COMING

"Yes, suh, Chicago only two hours, suh," and the porter smiled broadly. There was both memory and anticipation in that smile.

The car was almost empty. Across the aisle a man slept peacefully; a little farther ahead a young lady read of the joys and sorrows of a knight and his lady who had

lived some several hundred years before, and still farther on a lady all in black was looking from the window, evidently lost to sorrows of more recent date. As no one was paying any attention to the man and woman back there in the rear of the car it was perfectly safe, when the porter passed on, for her hand to slip over into his.

He responded with that quiet, protecting smile which always made it seem no bad thing could ever come to her.

"Almost home, dear," he said, and then for a long time neither of them spoke. Many big forces flowed freely into the silence of that moment.

She looked up at him at last with a smile which broke from her seriousness as a ripple breaks from a wave.

"Suppose we had to say everything in words!"

"Suppose we had to walk on one leg!"

"Oh, but that—you know, Karl, it's a little like the rivers and the ocean. The words are the rivers flowing into the ocean of silence. Rivers flow into oceans—but do they make them? And then the ocean gives back to the rivers in the things which it breathes out. There are so many reasons why it seems like that."

"Ernestine, where did you get all this? I sometimes think I'm not square with you at all. Why, I've been in all those places before! I saw the Bay of Naples long before I ever saw you—and yet I didn't really see it before at all. Don't you see? Eyes and appreciation and every decent thing I take from you. Where did you get it all, Ernestine?"

She pushed back a little curl which was always coming loose,—he loved that little curl for always coming loose.

"Perhaps I 'got it' from that way you have of looking at me—the way you're looking at me now; or maybe I got it from the way you say 'Ernestine'—the way you said it just now. But does it matter much what comes from which?"—with which bit of

lucidity she wrinkled up her nose at him in a way which always vanquished argument and returned to the silence which seemed waiting to claim her.

He watched her then; he loved so to do that—just see how far he could follow. Ernestine seemed to draw things to her in a way very wonderful to him.

"You know, liebchen,"—as he saw that steady light of resolution shine through the veil of her tenderness—"it seems so queer to me that you really do anything."

"Well for a neatly turned compliment—"

"I mean it seems so queer you should really amount to anything."

"Now before you overwhelm me with further adulation, what are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about your being an artist. I can't get used to your being anything but Ernestine! That day last spring when we went to see your Salon picture, and when those chaps were talking to you, and I realised that they just simply accepted you as one of them—that you belonged, and that that was all there was about it—I, oh I had such a funny feeling that day. And now, a minute ago, when I saw that look, I had it again."

"Why, Karl, you don't mind, do you?"

"No, it's just that it seems queer. You see you're such a wonderful sweetheart, it's hard to think of you as anything else. I'll never forget that day over there. Something just seemed to leap up within you. I—well I think I was a little scared—or was I awed? Something that was shining from your eyes made me feel things in my backbone."

"But you're glad?" she laughed.

"Of course I'm glad; and I'm proud. But it's—queer."

She smiled at him understandingly; the understandingness of her smile always went beyond her words. It was a beautiful face upon which he watched the play of lights,

saw the changing currents of thought and dreams and purpose. But the thing most rare in it, that which made one quite forget accepted standards, was the steadfastness with which a certain great light shone through the aura of her tenderness. There were moments in which she transcended both her beauty and her beauty's weaknesses.

As the flower to the sun, naturally, quietly, inevitably, she had expanded under the breath of life. With the fullness of a rich nature she had responded to the touch of the spirit of living. Love loved her for what she had been able to take.

And in the year which had passed, life, with tender rather than defacing lines, had put upon her face the touch of sorrow. Europe meant more to her than an Old World civilisation, more than tradition, beauty or art. It even meant more than the place where she had spent those first dear months of her love. It meant to her the place where she had hoped with woman's dearest hope, and where she had given up the child which should have been hers. Her tenderest, deepest thoughts were not of the wonders and beauties she had seen; they were of the dreams within, of the holy happiness of first knowledge, and then the grief in giving up the much desired, which she had known only in anticipation. The most cherished memories of their love were memories of those days in which he had comforted her, of the tenderness with which he had consoled, the strength with which he had upheld. Those hours had reached far into her soul, deepening it, giving her, as if in compensation, new channels for love, new understanding of those innermost things of life. But in those first days, even while the soul of the woman was deepening, the bruised heart was as the heart of a child. It was as a child she had been to him in those days, and he had comforted her as one would comfort an idolised child, whose hurt one strove to take wholly unto one's self. The memory of those hours knit them together as no other thing could have done.

Looking down at her face now he saw that look he had come to know—that far-away, frightened, wistful look. Very gently he laid his hand upon her knee.

"I am going to make you so happy. Life is going to be so beautiful," he said.

She smiled at him, but the tears were in it.

"Yes, Karl—I know. But now that we are coming home—together—alone, doesn't it seem—"

He turned away. The man had suffered too.

"And we are leaving it over there—over there, alone—away from us—the life that should have been—"

With that he turned resolutely back to her.

"Ernestine, isn't there another way to look at it? It came of our love, and now, dear, it has gone back into our love. It isn't something apart from us,—something gone. We have taken it back unto ourselves. It is here with us. The greater love we have—that is it, dear."

The flame of understanding leaped quickly to her eyes.

"Oh, I like that Karl," she whispered. "I like that better than anything you ever said."

She turned then and looked from the window. Across the fields, over near the horizon, she could see a little house. The smoke was curling from the chimney. The autumn twilight had come on and they had lighted the lamp. A bit of home! The tears came to her eyes—tears of tender anticipation. She too was to make a home. And was it not good to think that smoke was coming from many chimneys and many lamps were being lighted? Was it not good to feel that the dear world was full of homes?

To the man this coming back to Chicago, returning to his work after the year and a half he had been away, was charged with a happy significance. As they drew nearer and nearer, an impatience possessed him to begin at once; that desire of the worker to start in immediately. He had worked some over there, had done a few things which were most satisfactory, but he wanted now to settle down to actual work in

his old place, 'with his own things. He fell to wondering if they had changed the laboratory, resentful at the possibility.

"Why look here, Ernestine," he suddenly burst forth, turning to her eagerly, "to-morrow's a school day, we're late getting home, everything is in swing—they're waiting for me, and, by Jove, I can just as well as not begin to-morrow!"

A woman who never made one feel things in one's backbone might have resented the quick, eager plunge into work, but Ernestine knew the love of work herself, and her eyes brightened to his spirit.

"But dear me, Karl," after a second's hesitation, "it seems you should take a day or two first."

"Why?" he demanded.

"Well,"—vaguely—"to get rested up."

"Rested up!" He stretched forth his arm and then doubled it back, and they both laughed. "That's a joke—my getting rested up. Why I feel like a fighting cock!"

"And crazy to get to work?"

"Getting that way. Oh, I tell you, Ernestine, there's nothing like it."

Again she did not mind; she understood. She looked at his glowing face, all alight with enthusiasm for the work to which he was going back. She was never tired of thinking how Karl's face was just what Karl's face should be—reflective of a clear-cut, far-seeing, deeply comprehending mind. It seemed all written there—all those things of mind and character, and something too of those other things—the things which were for her alone. Ernestine held that one could tell by looking at Karl that he was doing some great thing.

"But see here, Dr. Hubers, a nice way you have of shirking your domestic duties! Who is going to help me settle this famous house Georgia tells about?"

"I'll do it at night," he protested eagerly. "I'll work every night until the house is

spick and span."

Ernestine sighed. "I have a sad feeling that our house never will be spick and span. But we'll have some fun,"—eagerly—"fixing it up."

"Of course we'll have fun fixing it up! Georgia's sure to be on hand, and I'll make old Parkman get busy too—do him good."

"I don't care about knowing a lot of men—"

"Well I should hope not"

"You didn't let me finish. I was going to say that Dr. Parkman is one man I do want to know."

"You'll like Parkman; and he'll like you. By Jove, he's got to! You mustn't mind if he snaps your head off occasionally. His life's made him savage, but even his life—he's had an awful one, Ernestine—couldn't make him vicious. He's the gruffest, snarliest, biggest man I ever knew—meaner than the devil, and the best friend on top of earth. And Lord, how he works! I don't know any other three men could swing the same load. And I tell you, Ernestine, he's great. There's not a better surgeon in all Europe. Parkman's a tremendous help to me. Oh, it's going to be great to get back!"

"We have some really nice things for our house," mused Ernestine. "I'm glad we decided to take that rug for the library. Of course it seemed pretty high, but a library without a nice rug wouldn't do at all—not for us."

"No—that's right—library without a rug—now I wonder if I am to have my old eight o'clock lecture hour? I want that hour! I want to get all the school business out of the way in the morning. I must have plenty of uninterrupted time for myself. I tell you what it is, Ernestine, I'm going to get it! What I saw over there of the other fellows makes me all the more sure of myself. And coming back now after being made all over new—you see there's such a thing as inspiration in my work, just as there is in yours. Of course it's work—work—work, work your way through this and that, but there's something or other that leads you on—and I know I'm going to do

something now!"

"I know it too, Karl," she responded, and the steadfastness shone strong through the tenderness now. "We all know it."

"I've got to," he murmured—"got to." And then his whole mind seized upon it; some suggestion had come to him, some of that inspiration of which he had spoken. He sat there looking straight ahead, brows drawn, eyes sometimes half closing, occasionally nodding his head as he saw a point more clearly. He looked in such moments as though indeed made for conquest,—indomitable. One could almost feel his mind at work, could fancy the skillful cutting away of error, the inevitable working ahead to truth.

At last he turned to her. "There's no reason for not beginning to-morrow," he said, with the eagerness of a boy who would try a new gun or fishing rod. "There are a whole lot of things I want to get right at now."

CHAPTER VI

"GLORIA VICTIS"

"We'll just put our Russian friend back here in the corner, where the shelf suppresses him," said Georgia, who seemed to have accepted the self-appointed position of head cataloguer. "Some of the students might happen to call."

"This," said Dr. Parkman, who was dusting Gibbon's Rome, "is the sort of thing that is called the backbone of a library."

"Consequently," replied Georgia glibly, "we will put it up here on the top shelf. Nobody wants a library's backbone. It's to be had, not read. Now the trimmings, like our friend Mr. Shaw here, must be given places of accessibility."

The host was picking his way around among the contents of a box which he had just emptied upon the floor. The hostess was yielding to the temptation of an interesting

bit which had caught her eye in dusting "An Attic Philosopher in Paris."

"Now here," said Dr. Hubers, picking up a thick, green book, "is Walt Whitman and that means trouble. No one is going to know whether he is prose or poetry."

"When art weds science," observed Georgia, "the resulting library is difficult to manage. Mr. Haeckel and Mr. Maeterlinck may not like being bumped up here together."

"Then put Haeckel somewhere else," said Ernestine, looking up from her book.

"No, fire Maeterlinck," commanded Karl.

"See," said Georgia—"it's begun. Strife and dissension have set in."

"I'm neither a literary man nor a librarian," ventured Dr. Parkman, "but it seems a slight oversight to complete the list of poets and leave Shakespeare lying out there on the floor."

"Got my Goethe in?" asked Karl, after Shakespeare had been left immersed in Georgia's vituperations.

"I think Browning and Keats are over there under the Encyclopedia Britannica," said Ernestine, roused to the necessity of securing a favourable position for her friends.

"Observe," said Georgia, "how they have begun insisting on their favourite authors. This is one of the early stages."

Ernestine, looking over their shoulders, made some critical remark about the place accorded Balzac's letters to Madam Hanska, which caused Georgia to retort that perhaps it would be better if people arranged their own libraries, and then they could put things where they wanted them. Then after she had given a resting place to what she denounced as some very disreputable French novels, she leaned against the shelves and declared it was time to rest.

"This function," she began, "will make a nice little item for our society girl. Usually she disdains people who do not live on the Lake Shore Drive, but she will have to

admit there is snap in this 'Dr. and Mrs. Karl Ludwig Hubers,'"—pounding it out on a copy of Walden as typewriter—"' but newly returned from foreign shores, entertained last night at a book dusting party. Those present were Dr. Murray Parkman, eminent surgeon, and Miss Georgia McCormick, well and unfavourably known in some parts of the city. Rug beating and other athletic games were indulged in. The hostess wore a beautifully ruffled apron of white and kindly presented her guest with a kitchen apron of blue. Beer was served freely during the evening.'"

"Is that last as close as your paper comes to the truth?" asked Ernestine, piling up Emerson that he might not be walked upon.

"That last, my dear, is a hint—a good, straight-from-the-shoulder hint. I did it for Dr. Parkman. He looks warm and unhappy."

Dr. Parkman protested that while a little warm, he was not at all unhappy, but upon further questioning as to thirst was led into damaging admissions. So the little party divided, Georgia calling back over her shoulder that as the host was of Teutonic origin, there need be no fear about the newly stocked larder.

Left alone a curious change came over the two men. They had entered with the heartiness of schoolboys into the raillery of a few minutes before, but all of that dropped from them now, and as they pulled up the big chairs and Dr. Parkman's "Well?" brought the light of a great enthusiasm to the face of his friend, drawing him into the things he had been so eager to reach, one would not readily have associated them with the flippant conversation from which they had just turned.

For here were men who in truth had little time for the lighter, gayer things of life. They stood well to the front in that proportionally small army of men who do the world's work. "Tommy-rot!" Dr. Parkman had responded a few days before to a beautiful tribute some one was seeking to pay "The Doctor"—"A doctor is a man who helps people make the best of their bad bargains—and damned sick he gets of his job. A man must make a living some way, so some of us earn our salt by bucking

up against the law of the survival of the fittest, thereby rendering humanity the beautiful service of encumbering the earth with the weak. If the medical profession would just quit its damn meddling, nature might manage, in time, to do something worth while."

But all the while, by day and by night, at the expense of leisure and pleasure,—often to the exclusion of sleep and food, he kept steadily at his "damn meddling,"—proving the most effective enemy nature had in that part of the country; and sadly enough—for his philosophy—he was even stripped of the vindication of earning his salt. In the one hour a day given to his business affairs, Dr. Parkman made more money than in the ten or twelve devoted to his profession. Men said he had financial genius, and he admitted that possibly he had, stipulating only that financial genius was an inflated name for devil's luck. He liked the money game better than poker, and played it as his pet dissipation, his one real diversion. But having more salt than he could use during the remainder of his days, did not tend toward an abatement of this war he waged against nature's ultimate design. He himself would analyse that as a species of stubbornness, an egotistic desire to see how good an interference he could establish, but he gave body and brain and soul to his meddling with a fire suspiciously like consecration.

They all knew that Dr. Parkman worked hard. Some few knew that he overworked, and a very few knew why. Of the personal things of his own life he never spoke, and though he was but fifty, his lined face and deep-set eyes made him seem much closer to sixty.

The two men were an interesting contrast; Dr. Parkman was singularly, conspicuously dark, while Karl Hubers was a true Teuton in colouring. Dr. Parkman was a large man, and all of him seemed to count for force. Something about him made people prefer not to get in his way. It was his hands spoke for his work—superbly the surgeon's hands, that magical union of power and skill, hands

for the strongest grip and the lightest touch, lithe, sure, relentless, fairly intuitive. His hands made one believe in him.

With Karl it was the eyes told most. They seemed to be looking such a long way ahead, and yet not missing the smallest thing close at hand. As he talked now, his face lighted with enthusiasm, it occurred to Dr. Parkman that Hubers was a curious blending of the two kinds of men there were behind him. Some of those men had been fighters and some had been thinkers, but Karl was the thinker who fights. He had drawn from both of them, and that gave him peculiar fitness for the work he was doing. It was work for the thinker, the scholar, but work which must have the fighting blood. Even his appearance bore the mark of the two kinds of things bequeathed him. He had the well-knit body of the soldier, the face of the student. He was not a large man, but he gave the sense of large things. He had the slight stoop of the laboratory, but when interested, aflame, he straightened up and was then in every line the man who fights. His eyes, to the understanding observer, told the story of much work with the microscope. They were curiously, though not unattractively, unlike. The left he used for observations, the right for making the accompanying drawings. That gave them a peculiarity only the man of science would understand.

The things which the two men radiated were different things. One felt their different adjustment toward life. Dr. Parkman had turned to hard work as some men turn to strong drink, to submerge himself, to take him out of himself, to make life possible; while with Karl Hubers, work and life and love were all one great force. Dr. Parkman worked in order that he might not remember; Karl in order that he might fulfill.

Their friendship had begun ten years before in Vienna, one of those rare friendships which seem all the more intimate because formed in a foreign land; a friendship taking root in the rich soil of kindred interests,—comradeship which drew from the deep springs of understanding. To come close to Karl's work had been one of the

real joys of Dr. Parkman's very active but very barren life.—He loved Karl; his own heart was wrapped up in the work his friend was doing. And the doctor meant much to Karl; had done much for him. The one was the man of affairs; the other the man of thought; they supplemented and helped each other. As the practicing physician, Dr. Parkman could see many things from which the laboratory man would be shut out. He was Karl's channel of communication with the human side of the work. And Karl gave Parkman his complete confidence; that was why there was so much to tell now. He must go over the story of his year's work, touch upon his plans, his new ideas. And the doctor had something to say of the observations he had made for Karl; he told of an operation day after to-morrow he must see and said he had several cases worth watching.

"You will have to come out to the laboratory," Karl finally urged. "We can't begin to get at it here."

"We're forgetting the hungry and thirsty men," said Georgia, after they had been eagerly chatting across the kitchen table for ten or fifteen minutes. But Ernestine said it did not matter. She knew what was going on in the library and how glad they were of their chance. She and Georgia too had much to discuss: the work done in Europe, Georgia's work here, how splendid Karl was, what a glorious time they had had, something of the good times they would all have together here, and then this house which Georgia had found for them and into which they had gone at once.

"I knew well enough," she said, buttering a sandwich in order to stay her conscience, "that you and Karl didn't belong in a flat. There couldn't be a studio and a laboratory and library and various other exotic things in a flat. But only old settlers and millionaires live in detached houses here, so please appreciate my efforts. I thought this place looked like you—not that you're exactly old-fashioned and irregular."

"I liked it at once. Big enough and interestingly queer, and not savouring of Chicago enterprise."

"Not that there is anything the matter with Chicago enterprise," insisted Georgia.

"You like Chicago, don't you, Georgia?"

"Love it! I know one doesn't usually associate love with Chicago, but I love even its abominations. You know I had a tough time here, but I won out, and most of us are vain enough to be awfully fond of the place where we've been up against it and come out on top. I haven't forgotten the days when I edited farm journals and wrote thirty-cent lives of great men and peddled feature stories from office to office, standing with my hand on door knobs fighting for nerve to go in, but now that it is all safely tucked away in the past, I'm not sorry I had to do it. It helps one understand a few things, and when new girls come to me I don't tell them, as I was told, that they'd better learn the millinery trade or do honest work in somebody's kitchen. None of that kind of talk do they get from me!"

It was always absorbing to see Georgia very much in earnest. Her alert face kept pace with her words, and her emphatic little nods seemed to be clinching her thought. People who had good cause to know, said it was just as well not to turn the full tide of her emotions to wrath. She was a little taller than Ernestine, very quick in her movements, and if one insisted on an adverse criticism it might be admitted she was rather lacking in repose. The people who liked her, put it the other way. They said she was so breezy and delightful. But even friendship could not deny her freckles, nor claim beauty for her bright, quick face.

They seemed to fall naturally into more serious things when they met over what Georgia called the evening bite. Although differing so widely, they were homogeneous in that all were workers; they touched many things, their talk live with differences.

"How do you like it?" asked Ernestine, following Dr. Parkman's eyes to her favourite bronze, a copy of Mercie's Gloria Victis, which she had unpacked just that day and given a place of honour on the mantel.

"It's so Christian," he objected laughingly.

"Oh, but is it?"

"A defeated man being borne aloft? I call it the very essence of Christianity. I can see submission and renunciation and other objectionable virtues in every line of it."

"Go after it, Parkman," laughed Karl. "Ernestine and I all but came to blows over it. I wanted her to buy a Napoleon instead. I tell her there is no glory in defeat."

"I don't think of it as the glory of defeat," said Ernestine. "I think of it as the glory of the conquered."

"But even so, Ernestine," said Georgia, who had been looking it over carefully, "there's no real glory. When I fall down on an assignment, I fall down, and that's all there is to it—at least my city editor thinks so. If Dr. Parkman doesn't win a case, he loses it. His efforts may have been very worthy—but gloria's surely not the word for them. Or take a football game," she laughed. "Sometimes the defeated team really does better work than the winners—but wouldn't we rather our fellows would win on a fluke than go down to defeat putting up a good, steady fight? The thing is to get there!"

"In football or in life," laughed Karl. "Defeat furnishes good material to the poets and the artists, but none of us care to have the glory of the conquered apply to us."

They were all looking at the bronze and Ernestine looked from one face to another, trying to understand why it moved none of them as it had her. Karl's face was very purposeful tonight, reflecting the stimulus of his talk with his friend. Filled with enthusiasm for this fight he was making, he had no eye in this hour for the triumph of the vanquished.

"Why I don't want to submit," he laughed just then. "I want to win!"

"An idea which has done a great deal of harm," observed Dr. Parkman. "That 'you'll-get-your-reward-somewhere-else' doctrine is the worst possible armour for

life. The poets, of course, have always coddled the weak, but I see more poetry in the to-hell-with-defeat spirit myself."

That too she could understand—a simple matter of the arrogance of the successful.

And with Georgia it was that thing of "getting there"—the world's hard and fast standards of success and failure.

She too turned to the statue. Were they right, and she wrong? Was it just the art of it, the effectiveness, which moved her, and was the thought back of it indeed weakening sentimentality?

"Defend it, Ernestine," laughed Karl; and then, affectionately, seeing her seriousness, "Tell us what you see in it."

Dr. Parkman turned from the statue to her. He never forgot her face as it was then.

He had decided during the evening that her great charm was her exquisite femininity; she seemed to have all those graces of both mind and body which make for perfect loving. It was the world force of love, splendidly manifest in gentleness, he had felt in her first. But now something new flamed up within her. Here was power—power moving in the waves of passion through the channel of understanding. Her face had grown fairly stern in its insistence.

"But don't you see The keynote of it is that stubborn grip on the broken sword. I should think every fighter would love it for that. And it is more than the glory of the good fight. It is the glory of the unconquerable will. Look at the woman's face! The world calls him beaten. She knows that he has won. I see behind it the world's battlefields—'way back from the first I see them all, and I see that the thing which has shaped the world is not the success or failure of individual battles one-half so much as it is this wresting of victory from defeat by simply breathing victory even after the sword has been broken in the hand. What we call victory and defeat are incidents—things individual and temporal. The thing universal and eternal is this immortality of the spirit of victory. Why, every time I look at that grip on the broken

sword,"—laughing now, but eyes shining—"I can feel the world take a bound ahead!"

CHAPTER VII

ERNESTINE IN HER STUDIO

The next morning she went to work. She had never wanted anything with quite the eagerness that she wanted to work that morning.

"What I want to know is," Georgia had demanded the night before, "did either of you do any work? I hear a great deal about quaint little villages and festive cafes, but what did you actually do?"

Now if Georgia were only here to repeat the question, she could answer jubilantly: "What did I do? Why, I got ready for this morning! Wasn't that a fine year's work?"

It had seemed queer at first. "Why don't I work," she would ask Karl, "now that I am here where I always wanted to be?" But Karl would only laugh, and say that was too obvious to explain. Once he had talked a little about it. "I wouldn't worry, liebchen. Isn't it possible that the creative instinct is being all used up? It's your dream time, sweetheart. It's your time to do nothing but love. After a while you'll turn to the work, and you'll do things easily then that were hard to do before."

How had he known? For nothing had ever been more true than that. She knew this morning that she could do things easily now which had been hard to do before.

One of the very best things about this curious, old-fashioned house was that it had an attic which had all the possibilities of a studio. Just a little remodeling—and Paris itself could do no better.

To that attic she turned just as soon as Karl had gone over to the university. Her things had been carried up; now for a fine morning of sorting them out! But instead of attacking the unpacking and sorting and arranging she got no farther than a book

of her sketches. Sitting down on the floor she spread them all around her.

Despite the fact that she had not at once settled down to serious work, she made sketches everywhere, just rough, hasty little things—"bubbles of joy" she called them to Karl. It seemed now that these were counting for more than she had thought. Everything was counting for more than she had thought!

Something of the joy of it carried her back to the days when she was a little girl and had had such happy times with her blackboard. The thought came that now, out of her great happiness, she must pay back to the blackboard all that it had given her in those less happy days. Work was but the overflow of love!

During the last five months, when Karl had been working in Paris, she had studied with Laplace. He had taken her in at once, rejoiced in her and scolded her. One day in an unguarded moment he said she knew something about colour. No one remembered his ever having said a thing like that before. And Ernestine had seen a teardrop on his face when he stood before her picture of rain in the autumn woods. That teardrop was very precious to her. It seemed she could work years on just the memory of it.

So there were many reasons why she felt like working this morning. All the loving and the living and the dreaming and the thinking and the working of a lifetime! Karl had understood. Her dream time! She loved that way of putting it. Beautiful days to be cherished forever! How rich she was in the things she had known! How unstinted love had been with her! She wanted now to give with that same largeness, that same overwhelming richness, with which she had received. Enthusiasm and desire and joy settled to fixed purpose. She began upon actual work.

She kept at it until late in the afternoon. She had never had such a day, and the great thing about it was that it seemed a mere beginning, just an opening up. A new day had dawned; a day which meant, not the death of the dream days, but their reincarnation into life. Those hours when she sat idly beneath blue skies, looking

dreamily out upon beautiful vistas it seemed she should have been painting—how well, after all, they had done their work! Dreams which she had not understood were making themselves plain to her now. The love days were translating themselves in terms of life and work. She wanted to glorify the world until it should be to all eyes as the eyes of love had made it to her.

Laplace had said once it was too bad she had married. She thought of that now, and smiled. She was sorry for any one who thought it too bad she had married!

And then Karl telephoned. Would she come over to the university? He had been wanting to show her around, and this would be a good time. She dressed hurriedly, humming a little song they had heard often in Paris.

CHAPTER VIII

SCIENCE, ART, AND LOVE

From his window in the laboratory he saw her as she was coming across the campus, and waved. She waved back, and then wondered if it were proper to wave at learned professors who were looking from their windows. In one sense it was hard to comprehend that it was her Karl who was such an important man about this great university. Karl was so completely just her Karl, so human and dear, and a great scientist seemed a remote abstraction. She must tell that to Karl. He would enjoy himself as a remote abstraction.

She was still smiling about Karl's remoteness as she came into the building. He had come down to meet her. "You see I thought you might get lost," he explained.

"I might have," she responded, and then laughed, for when people are very happy it is not at all difficult to laugh.

"Do you know what you look like?" he said. "You look like a kind of spiritualised rainbow—or like the flowers after the rain."

"I dressed in five minutes," said Ernestine, smoothing down her gown with the complacency of a woman who knows she has nothing to fear from scrutiny.

"As if that had anything to do with it! You dress as the birds and flowers dress—by just being yourself."

She let that bit of masculine ignorance pass with a wise little smile.

They were in the laboratory now. "I came," said Ernestine severely, "to listen to an elucidation of the mysteries of science."

"Then you had no business to come looking like this," he responded promptly.

She was looking around the room. "And this is where all those great things are done?"

"Um—well this is where we make attempts at things."

He was not quite through, and Ernestine sat down by the window to wait for him. It seemed surprising, somehow, that it should be such a simple looking room. Karl was doing something with some tubes, writing something on a chart-like thing. Something in the expression of his face as he bent over the work carried her back to other days.

"Karl," she said abruptly, "why don't you and I have any quarrels about which is greater—science or art?"

He looked up at her in such absolute astonishment that she laughed.

"Liebchen," he said, "don't you think that would be going a long way out of our road to hunt a quarrel? Now I can think up much better subjects for a quarrel than that. For instance: Do I love you more than you love me, or do you love me more than I love you? Your subject makes me think of our old debating society. We used to get up and argue in thunderous tones something about which was worse—fire or water!"

"But Karl—it isn't logical that you and I should love each other this way!"

He pushed back his work and turned squarely around to her. He was smiling in his

tenderly humorous way. "Well, sweetheart," he said, "would you rather be logical, or would you rather be happy?"

"Oh, I'm not insisting upon the logic. I'm just wondering about it."

"Isn't love greater than either a test tube or a paint brush?" Karl asked softly.

She nodded, smiling at him lovingly.

He sat there looking a long way ahead. She knew he was thinking something out. "Ernestine," he began, "do you ever think much about the oneness of the world?"

"Why, yes—I do, but I didn't suppose you did."

"But, liebchen—who would be more apt to think about it than I? Doesn't my work teach oneness more than it teaches anything else? All the quarrelling comes through a failure to recognise the oneness. I often think of the different ways Goethe and Darwin got at evolution. Goethe had the poetic conception of it all right; Darwin worked it out step by step. Who's ahead? And which has any business scoffing at the other?"

He went back to his notes, and her thoughts returned to the battles she had heard fought in the name of science. She looked about the room, out at the great buildings all around, and then back to Karl, who seemed soul of it all. How different all this was! What would her father think to hear a man like Karl Hubers giving to a poet place in the developing of the theory of evolution? What was the difference between Karl and her father? Was it that the school to which they belonged was itself changing, or was it just a difference in type? Or, perhaps, most of all, was it not a difference in degree? Her father had only seen a little way, and that down a narrow path bounded by high walls of bigotry. Karl had reached the heights from which he could see the oneness! And was it not love had helped him to those heights?

A little later, when Karl was seeking to explain what he evidently regarded as a very simple little thing, and just as a few glimmers of light were beginning to penetrate her darkness, she looked up and at the half open door saw a boy whose consternation

at sight of her made it difficult for Ernestine to repress a smile.

"Come in, Beason," said Karl, who had just noticed him. "I want you to meet Mrs. Hubers." Ernestine looked at Karl suspiciously—something in his voice signified he was enjoying something.

But there was nothing about Mr. Beason which signified any kind of enjoyment. He advanced to meet her sturdily, as one determined to do his duty at any cost. The boy was rendered peculiar in appearance by an abnormally long, heavy jaw, which gave his face a heavy, stolid appearance which might or might not be characteristic. He had small, sharp eyes, and Ernestine was quite sure from one look at his face that he did not laugh often, or see many things to laugh about.

He was not impenetrable to graciousness, however, for within five minutes he had told her that he was born in southern Indiana, that he lived in Minneapolis now, and that he had come to Chicago to get some work with Dr. Hubers. Upon hearing that Ernestine immediately noticed what a remarkably intelligent face he had, and felt sure that that heavy jaw gave him a phlegmatic look which was most misleading.

Karl laughed as the boy went away. "Funny fellow—Beason. He'll have to cut away a lot of the trees before he gets a good look at the woods. Never in his life has one gleam of humour penetrated him. In fact if a few humour cells were to creep in by mistake, they'd be so alien as to make a tremendous disturbance."

"He seems to think a great deal of you," said Ernestine, a little reproachfully.

"Oh, yes; and I like him. I like the fellow first rate. He's a splendid worker—conscientious, absolutely to be depended upon. 'Way ahead of lots of these fellows around here who think they know it all. But he has those uncompromising ideas about science; ready to fight for it at the drop of the hat. Oh, Beason's all right. We need his sort. I'll tell you whom I do want you to meet, Ernestine, and that's Hastings. You'll like him. He's such a success as a human being. He's more like the old-time professor of the small college, has a fatherly, benevolent feeling toward all

the students. You see we're so big here that we haven't many of the small college characteristics about us. It's each fellow doing his own work, and not that close comradeship that there is in the small school. But Hastings is a connecting link. Then, on the other hand, there's Lane. You must meet him too, for he's a rare specimen: pedantic, academic; I don't know just why they have him, he doesn't represent the spirit of the place at all. He's entirely too erudite to be of much use. But I'll let Parkman tell you about Lane. Oh, but he hates him! They met here in the laboratory one day and upon my soul I thought Parkman was going to pick him up and throw him out the window."

As they were looking through the general laboratory they met Professor Hastings, and she could see at once what Karl meant. He was apparently a man of about sixty, and kindness was written large upon him. Ernestine could fancy his looking after students who were ill, and trying to devise some way of helping the poverty-stricken boy through another year in college.

They left the building and sauntered slowly across the campus. Almost in the centre of the quadrangle Ernestine stopped and looked all around. She was beginning to feel what it was for which the University of Chicago stood. It was not "college life," all those things vital to the undergraduate heart, which this university suggested. She fancied there might be things the undergraduate would miss here; she was even a little glad her own college days had been spent at the smaller school. As she stood looking about at building upon building she had visions, not of boys and girls singing their college songs, but of men and women working their way toward truth. She looked from one red roof to another, and each building seemed to her a separate channel through which men were working ahead to the light. It was a place for research, for striving for new knowledge, for clearing the way. She turned her face for the moment to the north; there was great Chicago, where men fought for wealth and power, Chicago, with all the enthusiasm of youth, and the arrogance of youthful success, with all the strength of youthful muscle, all the power and possibility of

young brain and heart. This seemed far away from the Board of Trade, from State Street and Michigan Avenue. But was not the spirit of it all one? This, too, was Chicago, the Chicago which had fought its way through criticism, indifference and jeers to a place in the world of scholarship. People who knew what they were talking about did not laugh at the University of Chicago any more. It had too much to its credit to be passed over lightly. Men were doing things here; she felt all about her the ideas here in embryo. How would they develop? Where would they strike? What things now slumbering here would step, robust and mighty, into the next generation?

And greatest of all these was Karl! She turned to him with flushed, glowing face. He had been watching her, following much of her thought. "I like this place," she said—her eyes telling all the rest. "I was not sure I was going to, but I do."

CHAPTER IX

AS THE SURGEON SAW IT

"But, Karl, you must!"

"I tell you, my dear, I can't!"

"Well, I think it's just—"

"Now, Ernestine,"—in tones maddeningly calm and conciliatory—"you go on down to Parkman's office and I'll come just as soon as I can. Now be sensible—there's a good girl."

"Well, I call it mean!"—this after hanging up the receiver. "I don't care,"—still talking into the telephone, as if there were satisfaction in having something understand—"it's not nice of Karl."

They had an engagement with Dr. Parkman for dinner at his club, to meet some people he wanted her to know, and now Karl had telephoned from the laboratory at the last minute that he was not ready to leave and for her to go on down alone.

"And he'll come late—and not dressed—and they'll think,"—she went over and sat down by the window to enjoy the mournful luxury of contemplating just what they would think.

Couldn't he go over to the laboratory a little earlier in the morning and finish up this terribly important thing? Was it nice of a man to have people being sorry for his wife? Was it considerate of Karl to ask her to put on this pearl-coloured dress and then let her go down in the train all alone?

She would telephone Dr. Parkman that they could not come. Then Karl would be sorry! But no—severely and with dignity—she would show that one member of the family had some sense of the conventions. Oh, yes—this in long-suffering vein—she would do her part, and would also do her best to make up for Karl. No doubt she might as well become accustomed to that first as last.

Going down in the train she had a very clear picture of herself as the poor, neglected wife of the man absorbed in his work. She saw so many reasons for being unhappy. Was it kind the way Karl had told her in that first letter about some other woman in his life, and then had never so much as revealed to her that other woman's name? Where did this woman live? When had Karl known her? How well had he known her? And all the while her sense of humour was striving to make attacks upon her and the consciousness in her inmost heart that all this was absurd and most unworthy only made her the more persistently forlorn.

She had never been to Dr. Parkman's office, and she was not very familiar with Chicago—had it never occurred to Karl she might get lost and have some unfortunate experience? But fate did not favour her mood, and she reached the office in safety. Dr. Parkman did not seem at all surprised at seeing her alone, which flamed the fire anew.

"He hasn't backed out?" he demanded, laughing a little.

She explained with considerable dignity that her husband had been detained at the

laboratory, that he regretted it exceedingly, but would be with them just as soon as circumstances permitted.

He took her into his private office, and Ernestine was too sincere a lover of beautiful things to be wholly miserable in a room like that.

"Why, this doesn't look like an office," she exclaimed. "It's more like a pet room in a beautiful home."

He laughed, not mirthfully.

"I hardly think you could call it that, but this is where I spend a good deal of my time, so I tried to make it livable."

He was busy at his desk, and she watched his hands. She was thinking that she would like to paint a picture and call it "The Surgeon." She would leave the man's face and figure in shadow, concentrating the light upon those hands, letting them tell their own story.

The whole man stood for force. She was sure that he always had his way about things, that he simply took for granted having his own way. Yet there was something in which he had not had his way. Karl had told her a little about that; she must ask him more about it. It seemed suddenly that there was something pathetic about this beautiful room. Did it not reflect a man trying to make up to himself for the things he did not have? It was a room which suggested pleasant hours and fine, quiet enjoyment. The deep, leather chairs seemed made for long, intimate conversations. The dark red tapestry, the oak panelling, this richly toned rug, the few real pictures, the little odds and ends suggestive of remote corners of the world—it seemed a setting for some beautiful companionship, some close sympathy, a place where one would like to sit for hours and be just one's self. But was not Dr. Parkman's life lacking in the very things of which this bespoke an appreciation? There was a subtle pathos in a beautiful room which breathed loneliness. She thought of their own library at home, quick to sense the difference.

The doctor went into an adjoining room, and her thoughts were broken by the low murmur of voices. Then the inner door opened; he was showing a man through to the outer office. The man stumbled over the rug, and at his exclamation Ernestine looked up. Her own face paled; she half rose from her chair;—the native impulse to do something. She looked at Dr. Parkman. His face was entirely masked. The man passed into the outer room, leaving behind him something which caused Ernestine's heart to beat fast.

The doctor walked slowly over to his chair and sat down. He seemed unconscious of her for a moment, and then he looked at her and saw that she had seen and that she wanted to know.

"You'd think a man would get used to it," he said in his short, gruff way. "You'd think it would become a matter of course, but it doesn't. That man's wife is dying of cancer. It's not an operable case. I told him that to-day. He asked for the truth and I gave it. I even gave my estimate of the time." He swung his chair around and looked out at the roof of the building below, and then turned sharply back to her. "You said a while ago that this looked like a home. Well, it's not. It's like a good many other things—empty show. Where that man lives, it's not much for looks, but it is a home, and this means—breaking it up. In there a minute ago, I told him he had to lose the only thing in life he cares anything about. He—oh, well!" and with one of his abrupt changes, he turned away.

But Ernestine was leaning forward in her chair. Her lips were parted. Her eyes were very dark.

"Cancer—you say, doctor?"—her voice was so low he could barely catch it. "Cancer?"

He nodded, looking at her intently.

"But that's what Karl's working on! That's what Karl's doing this very minute!"

"Yes, and do you ever think of it like that? Do you ever think of the lives and homes

he is going to save; the tragedies and heartbreaks he is going to avert; the children he is going to keep from being motherless or fatherless if he does do this thing?—and I believe with all my heart he will! I tell you, Mrs. Hubers, you want to help him! I'm not sorry you saw that little thing just now. It will show you the other side of it—the human side. And there wasn't anything unusual in it. All over the world, physicians are doing this same thing every day—telling people it's hopeless, admitting there's nothing to be done. Then think of the tremendousness of this work Karl Hubers is doing!—where it strikes—the hearts breaking for it—the thousands praying for it! Is it any wonder we're watching it? Interested? I tell you we know what it means."

She was unconscious of the tear on her cheek, of the quivering of her face.

"And Karl is doing that? That is what Karl's work means?"

"Karl's work simply means giving into our hands the power to save more lives. Now we're doing the best we can with what we have—but God knows we're short on power! We're groping around in the dark. Karl's work means letting in the light."

His voice had grown warm. Something had fallen from him—leaving him himself. In his eyes was a wealth of unspeakable feeling.

"Doctor, I want to thank you!"—but it was her face thanked him most eloquently.

She was glad when he left her for a minute before they finally went away. Her heart was very full. This was Karl! This the real meaning of Karl's work! To think she had looked at it in that small, paltry way—that even in her thoughts she had put the slightest stumbling block in his path. This very afternoon had come new inspiration and she had resented it, had said small, mean things in her heart because he stayed to work out his precious thoughts. Why, it would have been fairly criminal for Karl to run away from that call of his work!

She wanted to tell him all about it; she yearned to "make it up to him," make him more happy than he had ever been before. She dwelt upon it all until, when Dr. Parkman came in for her, he was startled at the light shining from her face.

CHAPTER X

KARL IN HIS LABORATORY

One of their favourite speculations, as the days went on, was as to whether any one had ever been so happy before. They argued it from all sides, in a purely unprejudiced and dispassionate manner, and always arrived at the conclusion that of course no one ever had. "Because," Ernestine would say, "no one ever had so many reasons for being happy." "And if they had," he would respond, "they would have said something about it."

Ernestine worked that winter as she had never worked before. That first day had not been a deceptive one. She had done some of the things which something within her heart assured her that day she could do. The best thing she had done she sent to Laplace, as he had asked her to. "It's considered rather superior to disdain the Salon," she said to Karl, the day they packed the canvas, "but Paris seems the only way of proving to Americans that good can come out of America."

She had heard from Laplace that the picture would be hung. His brief comment had been that America could not be so bad as was sometimes said. She was eager now to hear more about it. She would surely have a letter very soon. And she and Karl were so happy! It had been such a glorious, wholesome, splendidly worth while winter.

It was one afternoon in early spring that over in the laboratory John Beason and Professor Hastings were talking of Dr. Hubers. "But that isn't all of it," said Professor Hastings in the midst of a discussion. "This fanaticism for veracity Huxley talks about isn't all of it by any means. Any of us can get together a lot of facts. It takes the big man to know what the facts mean."

"Somebody said that truth was the soul of facts," said Beason, in the uncertain way he talked of anything outside tabulated knowledge. "But I suppose that's just one of those things people say."

"Yes—but is it? Isn't it true? Why is Hubers greater than the rest of us? It isn't that he works harder. We all work. It isn't that he's more exact. We're all exact. Isn't it that very thing of having a genius for getting the soul out of his facts? That man looks a long way ahead—smells truth away off, as it were. I tell you, Mr. Beason, scientific training kills many men for research work. They're afraid to move more than inch by inch. They won't take any jumps. Now Dr. Hubers jumps; I've seen him do it. Of course, after he's made his jump he goes back and sees that there aren't any ditches in between, but he's not afraid of a leap in the dark. That's his own peculiar gift. Most of us are not made for jumping."

"But that doesn't sound like the scientific method," said Beason, brows knitted.

"I'll admit it wouldn't do for general practice," replied the older man, a twinkle in his eye. "The spirit has to move you, or you wouldn't gain anything but a broken neck."

"Yes, but that thing of a spirit moving you," said Beason, more sure of himself here, "that does not belong in science at all; that is a part of religion."

"And to a man like Dr. Hubers"—very quietly and firmly—"science is religion."

Beason pondered that a minute. "They're entirely distinct," was his conclusion.

"So it seems to you; but I'm a year or two older than you are, Mr. Beason, and the longer I live the more firmly I believe that there is such a thing as an intuitive sense of truth. If there isn't, why is Dr. Hubers a greater man than I am?"—and with that he left him, smiling a little at how it had never occurred to Beason to say anything polite.

Beason was in truth much perturbed. It was not pleasing to have the greatness of his idol explained on unscientific principles. He did not like that idea of the jumps. Jumping sounded unscientific, and what could be worse than to say of a man that he was not scientific? Preposterous to say the greatest things of science were achieved by unscientific methods!

To-day Dr. Hubers had been all afternoon alone in his laboratory. Some one had

brought him in some luncheon at noon, but since one o'clock the door had not opened, and now it was almost five. What was going on in there? Even Beason had the imagination to wonder.

Could he have seen he would not have been much enlightened. The man was sitting before a table, his arms reaching out in front of him—some tubes, his microscope, other things he had been working with within reach, but unheeded now. For he was not seeing now the detail, the immediate. This was not one of those moments of advancing step by step. The light in those eyes of wonderful sight was the light from a farther distance. A way had opened ahead; far out across dim places he could see it now. The afternoon had been a momentous one. He had taken a step leading to a greater height, and with the greater height came a wider vision. A few of those minutes such as he was living now fires a man for months—yes, years, of work. Ahead were days when the fires of inspiration would be in abeyance, when the work would be only a working of step by step—detail, some would call it drudgery. But it is in these moments of inspiration man qualifies for the fight. In the hours of working onward toward the light he may grow very weary, but he can never forget that one day, for just a moment, the light opened to him. Moments such as Karl Hubers was living now mark the great man from the small.

And his glowing moment was more than a promise; it was also a reward. It was spring now, and all through the winter he had worked hard. He had come back in the fall determining in the gratitude of his great happiness to do the best work of his life. He pulled his microscope over in front of him and looked over it after the manner of one dreaming. How many days he had come to it eager to note the slightest significance in its variations of colour, for the staining of the slides made colour count in his work almost as it did in Ernestine's, only to be met with the non-essential, more of the husk and no sight of the kernel. He smiled a little to think what a bulky and stupid volume it would make were he to write down all he had done. If each hope, each possibility, each experiment and verification were to be put

down, he could quite rival in bulk a government report. And if added to that should be a report of the cases he had watched, the operations he had attended, the attempts at getting living matter and of working with dead, how large and how useless that volume would be were it to contain it all! He had done days and days of useless work to get the slightest thing that was significant.

Only the week before Ernestine had laughingly read him an article one of the popular magazines printed on cancer research. The whole thing is becoming a farce—so said the popular magazine. Every once in a while some man issues a report saying the germ is in sight. Then another man appears with a still more learned report saying it is not a germ at all. All doing different things, and all sure they are on the right track! Meanwhile the disease is on the increase, surgery cannot meet it satisfactorily, and while laboratories pursue the peaceful tenor of their way, men and women are dying hard deaths which no one seems able to stay. Truly, the man behind the microscope is a very slow man the article had concluded.

No doubt that seemed true. He could see the writer's point of view well enough. The things the man behind the microscope did accomplish sounded so very easy that the on-looker could give only indolence and stupidity as the reason for not accomplishing a great deal more.

And even from his own point of view, with his own knowledge of all the facts in the case, he had no doubt that once done it would sound so easy that he would stand amazed to think it had not been done before. Let the unknown become the known, and even the trained worker cannot look upon it as other than a matter of course. It was so easy now to meet diphtheria. Strange they had let so many children die of it! It was so very easy now to give a man an anesthetic. Fearful how they had let a man suffer through every stroke of the knife, or die for need of it! Should he blame the man outside for looking at it that way when even to him things accomplished took on that matter of course aspect?

He began putting away his things. It was Ernestine's birthday, and he had promised to be home early, for they were going to the theatre. "It will be like all the rest," he mused. "Once done, it will seem so easy that we will wonder why it was not done long before." Again the fire leaped high within him. To do it! Perhaps after all he did see it too complexly. He must not let the husk dull his eye to the kernel. A man building a beautiful tower must erect a scaffold. But the scaffolding should not make him forget the tower! Some way in this last hour his mind had seemed to clear. His immense amount of useless work was not hanging about his neck like a millstone. Something had cut that away. He was free from it all. He could feel within himself that his approach to his problem was better than it had been before. Perhaps he had made the mistake of the others of looking at it as something fearfully complex, something it would be the hardest thing in all the world for any man to do. It all looked more simple now. It was as if muscles strained to the point of tenseness had relaxed, and in an easy and natural way he foresaw victory as a logical part of his work.

He was happy to-night, light-hearted. The windows of the laboratory were open to the soft air of that glorious day of early spring, and his spirit was open too, open to the soul of the world, taking unto itself the sweet and simple spirit of the men who have done the greatest things. From his window he could see one of the tennis courts. Some of the students were playing. "Good!" he exclaimed enthusiastically to himself, as he watched a return that had looked impossible. He was glad they were playing tennis. Why shouldn't they?

Professor Hastings heard him whistling softly to himself—a German love song—as he walked through the big laboratory, and catching a glimpse of the younger man's face, he nodded his head and smiled. It had been a good afternoon—that was plain. Now let there be more afternoons like this—and then—to think it should be done right here under his very eyes! Was not that joy enough for any man?

On the steps of the building Karl stopped suddenly, put his hand in his inner pocket and drew out a small box. Yes, it was there all right, and a girl passing up the steps just then was amazed and much fluttered to think Dr. Hubers should be smiling so beautifully at her. In fact, Dr. Hubers did not know that the girl was passing. She had simply been in the direction of his smile; and he was smiling because it was Ernestine's birthday, and because he had so beautiful a present for her. He walked along very fast. He could scarcely wait to see her face when he gave it to her. Too bad he had kept her waiting so long!

CHAPTER XI

PICTURES IN THE EMBERS

They were back home now.

"Why, Mary has intuitions," laughed Ernestine, when she saw that a fire had been lighted in the library, and was in just the proper state for seeing pictures. "A girl who knew we would want a fire has either been in love or ought to be. At any rate, she knows we are."

"This is the kind of a night when a fire serves artistic purposes only. You don't need it, so you have to enjoy it all the more."

"Still, these spring evenings are damp," she insisted, defending the fire. "It doesn't feel at all uncomfortable."

"And looks immense," he added, turning down the gas and pulling up a seat just right for sitting before the fire.

She leaned over, holding her hand so close to the flame that he wondered at first what she was doing.

"See!" she cried, "see my ruby in the firelight, Karl! It's just a piece of it right up here on my hand!"

"And I suppose,"—seeming to be injured—"that during the remainder of my life, I may play second fiddle to that ring. Oh, Ernestine—you're a woman! I was mortified to death at the theatre. You didn't look at the play at all. You just sat and looked down at that ring. Oh, I saw through that thing of not being able to fasten your glove!"

She was twisting her hand about to show off the stone—any woman of any land who has ever owned a ring knows just how to do it.

"See, dear!" she laughed exultantly, "it is fire! You can see things in it just as you can in the coals."

But he was not looking at the ring. There were things to be seen in her face and he was looking at them. He loved this child in her. Was it in all women when they love, he wondered, as many other men have wondered of other women, or was it just Ernestine?

"It was a dreadful thing for you to get it," she scolded,—these affectionate scoldings were a great joy to him. "It's a ridiculous thing for a poor college professor—that's you—to buy a ruby ring. Why, rubies exist just to show millionaires how rich they are! And it's a scandalous thing for a poor man's wife—that's I—to be wearing a real ruby!" Then her other hand went over the ring, and clasping both to her breast she laughed gleefully: "But it's mine! They'll not get it now!"

"Who wants it, foolish child?" he asked, pressing her head to his shoulder and holding the ring hand in his.

She moved a little nearer to him.

"See some pictures for me in the fire," she commanded. "See something nice."

"I see a beautiful lady wearing a beautiful ring. See?—right under that top piece of coal. The ring is growing larger and larger and larger. Now it is so large you can't see the lady at all, just nothing but the ring."

She laughed. "Now see one that isn't silly. See a beautiful one."

"Liebchen, I see two people who are growing old. See?—right down here. One of them must be sixty now, and one about seventy, but they're smiling just as they did when they were young. And they're whispering that they love each other a great deal better now than they did in those days of long ago; that it has grown and grown until it is a bigger thing than the love of youth ever dreamed of."

"That is nice," she murmured happily. "That would be a nice picture to paint." They were silent for a time, perhaps both seeing pictures of their own. "It's growing late," said Ernestine, a little drowsily, "but then, I'll never have this birthday again."

"And it was happy?" he asked tenderly. "Just as happy as you wanted it to be?"

"So happy that I hate to see it go. It was—just right."

"Weren't any of the others happy, dear?"—he was stroking her hair, thinking that it too had caught little touches of the fire-light.

"None of the others were perfect. Of course, last year was our first one together, and"—a shudder ran through her.

"I know, dear," he hastened; "I know that wasn't a perfect day."

"Before that," she went on, after a minute of looking a long way into the fire, "something always happened. My birthday seemed ill-fated. That was why I wanted a happy one so much—to make up for all the others. This day began right by the work going so splendidly. Is there anything much more satisfying than the feeling which comes at the close of a good day's work? It puts you on such good terms with yourself, convinces you that you have a perfect right to be alive. Then this afternoon I read some things which I had read long ago and didn't understand then as I do now. You see, there was a great deal I didn't know before I loved you, Karl; and books are just human enough to want to be met half way."

"Like men," he commented, meeting her then a trifle more than half way.

"Yes, they have to be petted and fussed over, just like men. Now, Karl, are you listening or are you not?"

He assured her that he was listening.

"Then, this afternoon, Georgia came out and we went for a row on the lagoon in Jackson Park. Did you happen to look out and see how beautiful it was this afternoon, Karl? I wish you would do that once in a while. Germs and cells and things aren't so very aesthetic, you know, and I don't like to have you miss things. I was thinking about you as we passed the university. It seemed such a big, wonderful place, and I love to think of what it is your work really means. I am so proud of you, Karl!"

"And was it nice down there?" he asked, just to bring her back to her story of the day.

"So beautiful! You and I must go often now that the spring evenings have come. There is one place where you come out from a bridge, and can see the German building, left from the World's Fair, across a great sweep of lights and shadows. People who want to go to Europe and can't, should go down there and look at that. It's so old-worldish.

"Then Georgia and I had a fine talk,"—after another warm, happy silence. "Georgia never was so nice. She was telling me all about a man. I shouldn't wonder; but I mustn't tell even you—not yet. Then I came home and here were the beautiful flowers from Dr. Parkman. Karl—you did tell him! Honest now—you did—and it was awful. Why didn't you put it in the university paper so that all the students could send me things? That nice boy, Harry Wyman, wrote a poem about me—'To the Lovely Lady'—now you needn't laugh! And oh, I don't know, but it all seemed so beautiful and right when I came home this afternoon. I love our house more and more. I love those funny knobs on the doors, and this library seems just us! I was so happy I couldn't keep from singing, and you know I can't sing at all. Then you came

home! You had the box out in your hand—I saw it clear across the street. You were smiling just like a boy. I shall never forget how you looked as you gave me the ring. I think, after all, that look was my real birthday gift.—Now, Karl, don't you know you shouldn't have bought such a ring? But, oh!—I, am so happy, sweetheart."

He kissed her. His heart was very full. There was nothing he could say, so he kissed her again and laid his cheek upon her hair.

He knew she was growing sleepy. Sleep was coming to her as it does to the child who has had its long, happy day. But like the child, she would not give up until the last. It was true, he was sure, that she was loath to let the day go.

"The play to-night was very nice," she said, rousing a little, "but so short-sighted."

"Short-sighted, liebchen? How?"

"So many things in literature stop short when the people are married. I think that's such an immature point of view—just as if that were the end of the story. And when they write stories about married people they usually have them terribly unhappy about having to live together, and wishing they could live with some one else. It seems to me they leave out the best part."

"The best part, I suppose, meaning us?"

"Yes!"

"But, dear, if you and I were written up, just as we are, we'd be called two idiots."

"Would we?"—her head was caressing his coat.

"Have you ever thought how a stenographic or phonographic report of some of our conversations would sound?"

"Beautiful," she murmured.

"Crazy!" he insisted.

"Perhaps the world didn't mean people to be so happy as we are,"—her words stumbled drowsily.

"The world isn't as good to many people as it is to us. Oh, sweetheart—why,"—he held her closely but very tenderly, for he knew she was going to sleep—"why are we so happy?"

"Because I'm the—lovely—lady,"—it came from just outside the land of dreams.

It was sweet to have her go to sleep in his arms like this. He trembled with the joy of holding her, looking at her face with eyes of tenderest love, rejoicing in her, worshipping her. He went over the things she had said, his whole being mellowed, divinely exultant, at thought of her going to sleep just because she was tired from her day of happiness. Long ago his mother had taught him to pray, and he prayed now that he might keep her always as she was to-day, that he might guard her ever as she had that sense now of being guarded, that her only weariness might come as this had come, because she was so happy. How beautiful she was as she slept! The Lovely Lady—that boy had said it right, after all. And she was his!—his treasure—his joy—his sweetest thing in life! He had heard a discussion over at the university a few days before about the equality of man and woman. How foolish that seemed in this divine moment! God in His great far-sightedness had given to the world a masculine and a feminine soul. How insane to talk of their being alike, when the highest happiness in life came through their being so entirely different! And she was his! Other men could send her flowers—write poems about her loveliness—but she was his, all his. His to love and cherish and protect—to work for—live for!

He kissed her, and her eyes opened. "Poor little girl's so tired; but she'll have to wake up enough to go to bed."

She smiled, murmured something that sounded like "Happy day," and went to sleep again.

The fire had died low. He sat there a minute longer dreaming before it, thanking God for a home, for work and love and happiness. Then he picked Ernestine up in his arms as one would pick up the little child too tired to walk to bed. "Oh,

liebchen," he breathed in tender passion, as she nestled close to him,—"ich liebe dich!"

CHAPTER XII

A WARNING AND A PREMONITION

It put him very much out of patience to have his eyes bothering him just when he was so anxious to work. What in the world was the matter with them, he wondered, as he directed a couple of students on some work they were helping him with. It seemed that yesterday afternoon he had taken a new start; now he was eager to work things out while he felt like this. This was a very inopportune time for a cold, or whatever it was, to settle in his eyes. Perhaps the lights at the theatre last night, and then the wind coming home—but he smiled an intimate little smile with himself at thought of last night and forgot all about that sandy feeling in his eyes.

During the morning it almost passed away. When he thought of it at all, it was only to be thankful it was not amounting to anything, for he was anxious to do a good day's work. He would hate it if anything were to happen to his eyes and he had to wear glasses! He had never had the slightest trouble with them; in fact they had served him so well that he never gave them any thought. The idea came now of how impossible it would be to do anything without them. His work depended entirely on seeing things right; it was the appearance of things in their different stages which told the story.

Dr. Hubers had a queer little trick with his eyes; the students who worked with him had often noticed it. He had a way of resting his finger in the corner of his eye when thinking. Sometimes it would rest in one eye for awhile, and then if he became a little restless, moved under a new thought, he would slip his finger meditatively over his nose to the corner of the other eye. It did not signify anything in particular, merely an unconscious mannerism. Some men pull their hair, others gnaw their

under lip, and with him it was a queer little way of rubbing his finger in his eye.

It was Saturday, and that was always a good day for him as he could give all of his time to the laboratory. He was especially anxious to have things go well this morning, as he wanted to stop at two o'clock and go down to one of Dr. Parkman's operations. That end of it was very important and this was to be an especially good operation.

He was thinking about Dr. Parkman on the way down;—of the man's splendid surgery. It was a real joy to see him work. He did big things so very easily and quietly; not at all as though they were overwhelming him. Poor Parkman—things should have gone differently with him. If it had been almost any other man, it would have mattered less, but it seemed a matter of a lifetime with Parkman. He could understand that better now than he once had. To have found Ernestine and then—then to have found she was not Ernestine! But of course in the case of Ernestine that could not be. Now if Parkman had only found an Ernestine—but then he couldn't very well, for there was only one! Since the first of time, there had been only one—and she was his! He fell to dreaming of how she had looked last night in the fire-light, and almost forgot the station at which he was to get off.

He was in very jubilant mood when they went down to Dr. Parkman's office after the operation. It had verified some of his own conclusions; seemed fairly to stand as an endorsement of what he held. He had never felt more sure of himself, had never seen his way more clearly. It was a great thing to have facts bear one out, to see made real what one had believed to be true. He went over it all with Parkman, putting his case clearly, convincingly, his points standing out true and unassailable; throwing away all the irrelevant, picking out unerringly, the little kernel of truth;—a big mind this, a mind qualified to cope with big problems. Dr. Parkman had never seen so clearly as he did to-day how absolutely his friend possessed those peculiar qualities the work demanded. He had never felt more sure of Karl's power; and power did not cover

it—not quite.

"Something in your eye?" he asked when, just as Karl was about to leave, he seemed to be bothered with his eye, and was rubbing it a little.

"I don't know. It's felt off and on all day as though something was the matter with them both."

"Want me to take a look at them?"

"Oh no—no, it's nothing."

"By the way, you have a bad trick with your eyes. I've noticed it several times lately and intended to tell you about it. You have a way of rubbing them;—not rubbing them exactly, but pressing your finger in them. I'd quit that if I were you. If you must put your finger somewhere, put it on your nose. A man dealing with the stuff you do can't be too careful."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Simply what I say. One drop of some of those things you have out there would be—a drop too much."

"Now, look here, you don't think I'm any such a bungler as that, do you?"

"Hum! You ought to know your medical history well enough to know that all the victims haven't been bunglers, by a long sight."

Karl's hand was on the knob. "Well, don't worry about me; I'm not built for a victim. I may be run over by an automobile—anybody is liable to be run over by yours, the way you run that thing—but I'm not liable to be killed by my own sword. That's not the way I work."

"Just the same, you'd better keep your hands out of your eyes!"

"All right," he agreed laughingly. "It does sound like a fool's trick. It's new to me;—didn't know that I did it."

When he was making some calls late that evening, Dr. Parkman passed the

university and for some reason recalled what Karl had said that afternoon about his eyes bothering him. Why hadn't he examined them; or better still, one of the best oculists in the city was right there in the building—why hadn't he made Karl go in to see him? It was criminal for a man like that to neglect his eyes! He was near the Hubers now; he had an impulse to run over and make sure that everything was all right. He slowed up the machine and looked at his watch. No, it was almost eleven; he would not go now. After all he was silly to be attaching any weight to such a thing as a man's rubbing his eyes. He smiled a little as he thought of it that way. Karl wasn't bothering about it; so why should he?

But he had it on his mind, thinking of it frequently until he went to bed. And the thing which worried him most was that he was worrying a great deal more than the facts in the case warranted. He was not given to taking notions, and that was just what this seemed. One would suppose that a man like Hubers would be able to look out for himself,—"but for a fool, give me a great man!" was the thought with which the doctor went to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII

AN UNCROSSED BRIDGE

Karl awoke next morning with the sense of something wrong. Something was making him uncomfortable, but he was not wide enough awake at first to locate the trouble. He lay there dozing for a few minutes and when he roused again he knew that his eyes were hurting badly. He awakened instantly then. His eyes? Why, they had bothered him a little all day yesterday. Was there something the matter with them?

He got up, raised the shade and looked in the glass. They looked badly irritated, both of them. They felt wretchedly; he could scarcely keep looking into the glass. Then leaning over the dressing table, he looked more closely. He thought he saw

something he did not like. He took a hand mirror and went to the window. He could see better now, and the better light verified the other one. It was true that in the corner of one eye there was a drop of pus. In the other there was a suggestion of the same thing.

He began to dress, proceeding slowly, his brows knitted, evidently thinking about something, and worried. Then he opened a drawer, took out a handkerchief, got the drop of pus from his eye and arranged the handkerchief for preserving it.

He would find out about that, and the sooner the better! He did not like it. He would see an oculist, too, this morning. It was plain he was going to have some trouble with his eyes.

Ernestine noticed them at once. What made them so red?—she wanted to know. Did they hurt? And wasn't there something he could put in them? He told her he was going to look after them at once. He could not afford to lose any time, and of course he could do nothing without his eyes.

Immediately after breakfast he started over to the laboratory.

It was Sunday morning and there would be no one there, which was so much the better. He wanted to get this straightened out.

He had his head down all the way over to the university, partly because his eyes bothered him and partly because he was thinking hard. The trouble had evidently been coming on yesterday. He stopped short. That trick Parkman told him about! But of course—moving on a little—that could not have anything to do with this. He had no recollection—he was very sure—then he walked faster, and the lines of his mouth told that he was troubled.

When he reached the laboratory he began immediately upon the microscopic examination. He hoped he could get at it through that, for the culture process meant a long wait. But after fifteen minutes of careful work the "smear" proved negative. There remained then only the longer route of the culture.

He did not begin upon that immediately. He sat there trying to think back to just what it was he had been doing Friday afternoon. The latter part of the afternoon he had been sitting here by this table. That was the time he was so buoyed up—getting so fine a light on the thing. It was the cancer problem then—but in the nature of things nothing could have happened with that. But there were always other things—all those things known to the pathological laboratory.

He turned around toward the culture oven, opened the outer door and through the inner door of glass looked in at the row of tubes. He was trying to recall what it was he had been working with the earlier part of Friday afternoon.

He knew now; one of the tubes had brought it to him. Yes, he knew now, and within him there was a pause, and a stillness. Right over there was where he sat preparing some cultures. There were two things with which he had been working;—again a pause, and a stillness. One of them could not make any serious difference; he went that far firmly, and then his heart seemed to stand quite still, waiting for his thought to go on. But he did not go on; there was a little convulsive clutching of his consciousness, and a return, with acclaim, to the fact that that could not make any serious difference. He clung there; he would not leave that; doggedly, defiantly, insistently, all-embracingly he affirmed that that could not make any serious difference. It was without opening his thought to anything further that he got out his things and began preparing the culture.

He was so accustomed to this that it went very mechanically and quickly. He took one of the test tubes arranged for the process in the culture oven and with the small wire instrument he had there, lifted the drop of pus on the handkerchief into the bullion of the tube. He did it all very carefully, very exactly, just as he always did. Then he put the tuft of cotton over the top and placed the tube in that strange-looking box commonly called a culture oven. In twenty-four hours he would know the truth. He adjusted the gas with a firm hand, arranging with his usual

precision this thing which outwardly was like any of his experiments and which in reality—but he would not go into that.

Now for an oculist. His eyes were hurting badly; it was time to do whatever there was to be done. After all he was rather jumping at conclusions. There was a big chance that this was just something characteristic to eyes and had no relation to the things of his work. He seized upon that, ridiculing himself for having looked right over the most simple and natural explanation of all. Did not a great many people have trouble with their eyes?

That nerved him up all the way down town. He was almost ready to think it a great joke, the way he had hurried over to the laboratory and had gone at it in that life-and-death fashion.

He knew that the oculist in Dr. Parkman's building was a good one, and so he went there. It was a little disconcerting when he stepped into the elevator to meet Dr. Parkman himself. He had not thought of trying especially to avoid the doctor, but he had wanted to see the oculist first and get the thing straightened out. He was counting a great deal now on the oculist.

"Hello!" said the doctor, seeming startled at first, and then after one sharp glance: "Going up to see me?"

"Well, yes, after a little. Fact of the matter is I thought I'd run in and let this eye fellow take a look at me."

"Eyes bothering you?"

"Somewhat." He said it shortly, almost curtly.

When they reached the fifth floor, Dr. Parkman stepped out with him, although he himself belonged farther up.

"I know him pretty well," he explained, "I'll go with you."

He could not very well say: "I would rather you would not," although for some

reason he felt that way.

It was soon clear to their initiated minds that the oculist did not know the exact nature of the trouble. He admitted that the case perplexed him. He, too, must make an examination of the pus. He treated Karl's eyes, and advised that they begin upon an immediate and aggressive course of treatment. Dr. Parkman, observing Karl's growing irritability, said that he would look after all that, see that the right thing was done.

As he walked out of that office Karl was a little dizzy. His avenue of hope had grown narrower. It was not, then, some affection characteristic of eyes. It was, after all, something from without. It was, in all probability, one of two things,—it was either—but again he did not go beyond the first, telling himself with nervous buoyancy that that would not make any serious difference.

They stepped into an elevator and went up. He knew Parkman would ask him questions now, but it seemed he could not get away from the doctor if he tried. He felt just at present as though he had not strength to resist any one. That oculist, he admitted to himself, had taken a good deal of starch out of him.

When they reached the office, Dr. Parkman offered him a drink; that irritated him considerably.

"Why no," he said, fretfully, "No—I don't want a drink. Why should I take a drink? Did you think I was all shot to pieces about something?"

The doctor was looking over his mail, fingering it a great deal, but not seeming to accomplish much of anything with it. At last he wheeled around toward him.

"What's the matter with your eyes?" he asked with disconcerting directness.

"How should I know?" retorted Karl, heatedly, almost angrily. "What do I know about it? If an oculist can't tell—you say he is a good one—why should you expect me to?" And then he added with a touch of eagerness, as if seizing upon a possibility: "I don't believe that fellow amounts to much. I think I'll go out now and

hunt up somebody who knows something."

"The man's all right," said Dr. Parkman shortly. His own foot was tapping the floor nervously. "You ought to have some idea," he added, with what he felt to be brutal insistence, "as to whether or not you got anything in your eyes."

"Well, I haven't! I don't know anything about it."

But he was breathing hard. His whole manner told of fears and possibilities he was not willing to state. He would tell what he thought now in just a minute; the doctor knew that.

He began with insisting, elaborately, that he never got things on his hands—that was not his way; and even if he did get something on his hands, he wouldn't get it in his eyes; even if he did rub his eyes sometimes—he didn't admit it—but even if he did, would he be such a fool as to rub them when he had something on his hands? But if, in spite of all those impossibilities, just admitting for the sake of argument, and because Parkman insisted on being ominous, that it was something like that, there were two things it might be. It might be—he named the first with emphasis, and Dr. Parkman, after a minute's thought, heaved a big sigh of unmistakable relief.

"Now you see that couldn't make any vital difference," Karl added, with a debonair manner, a thin veneer of aggressiveness.

The doctor was leaning forward in his chair. He was beginning to grow fearful of the emphasis put upon this thing which could make no vital difference.

Karl stopped as though he had reached the end of his story. But the silence was wearing on him. His eyes had a hunted look.

"Why, you can see for yourself," he said—and this was the note of appeal—"that that could not make any vital difference."

Dr. Parkman was looking at him narrowly. His own breath was coming hard. He saw at last that he would have to ask.

"The—other?" he said, succeeding fairly well in gaining a tone of indifference.

"Heavens—how you fellows nag for details! How you drag at a man! Well, the other—if you're so anxious to know"—the doctor's heart sank before the defiance of that—"the other is"—he looked all about him as one hunted, desperate, and then snapped it out and turned away, and instantly the room grew frightfully still.

It struck Dr. Parkman like a blow from which one must have time to recover. Steeled though he was to the hearing of tragic facts, he was helpless for the minute before this. And then, refusing to let it close in upon him, it was he who turned recklessly assertive, defiantly insistent.

"Any fool would know it's not that," he said, his gruff voice touched with bravado.

There was one of those strange changes then. Karl turned and faced him.

"How do you know?" he asked, with a calm not to be thrust aside. "How do you know it's not that? You can't be sure," he pursued, and there was fairly cunning in forcing his friend upon it, cutting off all escape, "but there are just fifty chances out of a hundred that it is that. And if it is," with a cold, impersonal sort of smile—"would you give very much for my chances of sight?"

"You're talking like a fool!"—but beads of perspiration were on the doctor's forehead. And then, the professional man getting himself in hand: "You're overworked, Karl. You're nervous. Why I can fix this up for you. I'll just—" but before that steady, understanding gaze he could not go on.

"Not on me, Parkman—," slowly and very quietly—"not on me. I know the ropes. Don't try those little tricks on me. I don't need professional coddling, and I don't need professional lies. You see I happen to know just a little about the action of germs. We'll do the usual things, of course—that's mere scientific decency, but if this thing has really gotten in its work—oh I've studied these things a little too long, old man, I've watched them too many times, to be able to fool myself now."

"Well you will at least admit," said Parkman—brusque because he was afraid to let

himself be anything else—"that there are fifty chances out of a hundred in your favour?"

Karl nodded; he had leaned back in his chair; he seemed terribly tired.

"Come now, old chap—it isn't like you to surrender before the battle. We'll prepare to meet the foe—though I give you my word of honour I don't expect the enemy to show up. This isn't in the cards. I know it."

Karl roused a little. There was a bracing note in that vehemence. "Well, don't ask me to do any crossing of a bridge before I come to it. I think our friend down stairs is thinking of hospitals and nurses and all kinds of quirks that would drive me crazy. Tell him I know what I'm about. Tell him to let me alone!"

"All right," laughed the doctor, knowing Karl too well to press the matter further just then, "though, of course, common-sense demands quiet and a dark room."

"Ernestine will darken our rooms at home," said Karl stubbornly.

It was strange how quickly they could turn to the refuge of everyday phrases, could hide their innermost selves within their average selves as the only shelter which opened to them. There was something Dr. Parkman wanted to do for him, and they went into the treatment room. In there they spoke about meeting for dinner,—Ernestine had asked the doctor to come out. Georgia and her mother were coming too, Karl told him, and the interview closed with some light word about not being late for dinner.

CHAPTER XIV

"TO THE GREAT UNWHIMPERING!"

"Tell me some good stories about doctors," said Georgia; "I want to use them in something I'm going to write."

"Isn't it dreadful?" said Mrs. McCormick, turning to Dr. Parkman, "she even

interviews people while they eat!" Mrs. McCormick had that manner of some mothers of seeming to be constantly disapproving, while not in the least concealing her unqualified admiration.

"I'm not interviewing them, Mother. Skillful interviewers never interview. They just get people to talk."

"But what is it you're going to write," asked the doctor, "a eulogy or denunciation?"

"Both; something characteristic."

"Meaning that something characteristic about doctors would include both good and bad?"

"Well, they're pretty human, aren't they?" laughed Georgia.

"And think how grateful we should be," ventured Karl, "for the inference of something good."

Dr. Parkman looked over at him with a hearty: "That's right," relieved that his friend could enter into things at all.

In the library before they came in, things had gone badly. Mrs. McCormick held persistently to the topic of Karl's eyes, putting forth all sorts of "home remedies" which would cure them in a night. He had grown nervous and irritable under it, and Mrs. Hubers several times had come to the rescue with her graciousness. She was worried herself; the doctor could see that in the way she looked from her husband to him, scenting something not on the surface. He was just beginning to fear the dinner was going to be miserable for them all, when Miss McCormick broke the tension by asking for stories.

"Tell us what you're going to write, Georgia," said Ernestine, she too seizing at it gratefully, "and then our doctors will have a better idea of what you want."

"Well, I was talking to Judge Lee the other day, and he told me some good stories about lawyers—characteristic stories, you know. So I thought I would work up a

little series—lawyers, doctors, ministers and so on, and see how nearly I could reach the characteristics of the professions through the stories I tell of them; not much of an idea, perhaps—but I know a man who will buy the stuff."

Ernestine was smiling in a knowing little way. "Do you want to begin with something really characteristic?" she asked.

"That's it. Something to strike the nail on the head, first blow."

"Then lead off with the story of Pasteur's forgetting to go to his own wedding. There's the most characteristic doctor story I know of."

"That's a direct insult," laughed Karl.

"Why, not at all, Karl," protested Mrs. McCormick, "every one knows you were on hand for your wedding."

"Yes, and a good thing he was," declared Ernestine. "I don't think I should have been as meek and gentle about it as the bride of Pasteur. I fancy I would have said: 'Oh, really now—if it's so much trouble, we'll just let it go.'"

"No, Ernestine," said Mrs. McCormick, seriously, after the laugh, "I don't believe you would have said that,"—and then they laughed again.

"Well, it's a good story," she insisted; "and characteristic. I believe after all that Pasteur was a chemist and not a doctor, but the doctors have appropriated him, so the story will be all right."

"If you want to tell some stories about Pasteur," said Karl, "tell about his refusing the royal decoration. He told the Emperor that the honour and pleasure of doing such work as his was its own reward, and that no decoration was needed. That story made a great hit in the scientific world."

"But is it characteristic?" asked Georgia, slyly.

"Well," he laughed, "it ought to be."

"Another one of the independent kind," said Parkman, "is on Bilroth. He was

summoned to appear at a certain hour before the Emperor of Austria. Bilroth was with a very sick patient until the eleventh hour and arrived a little late in business clothes. The scandalised chamberlain protested, telling him he could not go in like that. Whereupon Bilroth blustered out: 'I have no time to spare. Tell His Majesty if he wishes to see me, I am here. If he wants my dress suit, I will have a boy bring it around.'"

"Did he get in?" asked Mrs. McCormick, anxiously.

"I think he did, although undoubtedly Miss McCormick will be too modern to say so."

"There was a story I always liked about a Vienna doctor," he continued; he was anxious to guide the stories, for Karl had seemed suddenly to sink within himself. He understood why—he might have foreseen where this would lead. For there were other stories of medical men, stories which fitted a little too closely just now; he was especially sorry he had mentioned Bilroth. "This shows another side of the doctor," he went on, after a minute, "and as you are going to give good as well as bad, this may help out on the good side—there's where you will be short. A woman came to see this doctor regarding her consumptive son. He told her there was nothing he could do for him, adding: 'If you want him to live, you must take him to Italy.' The woman broke down and told him she could not do that, that she had no money. The doctor sat there thinking a moment, and then sent over to the bank and got her a letter of credit covering the amount involved. Another doctor, who happened to be near, asked why he did that. 'You can't possibly support all your needy patients,' he said; 'why did you choose this particular case? Of course,' he added, 'it was very good of you.' 'No,' said the doctor, 'it was not good of me. There was nothing good about it. But I was guilty of proposing to her something I knew she could not do. After opening up that possibility it was my obligation to see that she could fulfill it. I suggested what I knew to be the impossible; after I suggested it, it was my business

to make it possible.' Don't you think that a pretty good sense of justice?" he asked of Ernestine.

"What might be called an inner squareness," said Georgia, as Ernestine responded only with the fine lights the story had brought to her eyes.

Karl did not seem to have heard the story. Ernestine looked toward him anxiously.

"Now I'm going to tell a story," she said, with a gaiety thrown out for rousing him, "a very fine story;—every one must listen." He looked over at her and smiled at that, listening for her story.

"This man's name can't be printed, because he lives in Chicago and it might embarrass him,"—Karl and Dr. Parkman exchanged glances with a smile. "This is a characteristic story, as it shows a doctor's tyranny. There was a boy taken ill at a little town near Chicago. The country doctor telephoned up to the boy's father, and the father telephoned the family physician who, from the meagre facts, scented appendicitis. I don't know how he knew it was bad, but I believe a good doctor is a pretty good guesser. At any rate he suspected this was serious, and told the father they would have to go down there at once. The father said there was no Sunday train. 'Then get a special,' said the doctor. 'We'll probably have to bring him up to the hospital to operate, and can't do it in the automobile.' The father protested against the special, saying it would be very expensive and that he did not think it necessary. The doctor said he did think it necessary or he would not have suggested it. The father demurred still more and the doctor rang off. Then you called up the railroad office, yourself—wasn't that it?" turning to Dr. Parkman, who grew red and looked genuinely embarrassed. "Oh dear,"—in mock dismay—"now I've mixed it up, haven't I? Well, this doctor—I'm not saying anything about who he is—called up the railroad office and calmly ordered the special. I must not forget to say that the man who did not want to spend the money had an abundance of money to spend. Then he called the boy's father and said, 'Be at the station in twenty minutes. The

special will be waiting. You will have nothing to do but sign the check.'"

"Well," said Mrs. McCormick, when Ernestine stopped as though through, "would the father pay for it, and did the boy have to have an operation, and did he get well?"

"Mother doesn't like this new way of telling a story," said Georgia; "she likes to hear the got-married-and-lived-happily-ever-after part."

"I'm sure no one said anything about getting married in this," said Mrs. McCormick, serenely.

"But don't you think that a fine doctor story?" Ernestine asked smilingly of Dr. Parkman.

"A very bad story to tell. Miss McCormick's general reader will say—: 'Oh yes, of course, he was just bound to have an operation.'"

"Georgia,"—this was from the man at the head of the table, and there was something in his voice to arrest them all—"if you are in earnest about wanting stories of doctors, why don't you tell some of the big ones? Some of the stories medical men have a right to be proud of?"

"What are they?" she asked, promptly. "Tell me some of them."

Dr. Parkman's eyes were on his plate. He was handling his fork a little nervously.

"If I were going to tell any stories about medical men," Karl went on, and in his quiet voice there was still that compelling note, "it seems to me I should want to say something about the doctors who died game—just a little something about the men who took their medicine and said nothing; men with the nerve to face even their own understanding—cut off, you see, from the refuge of fooling themselves. Ask Dr. Parkman about the surgeons who lost their hands or their lives through infection. Those are the stories he knows that are worth while. He's only giving you the surface of it, Georgia. Tell him you'd like a little of the real thing. Ask him about the men who died slow deaths, looking a fatal future in the face from a long way off. He

mentioned Bilroth just now, telling a funny story about him. There's a better story than that to tell about Bilroth. You know he was the man who knew so much about the heart; he probably understood the heart better than any other man. And by one of those leering tricks of fate, he had heart disease himself. He watched his own case and made notes on it, that his profession might profit by his destruction. There you have something worth writing about! In his last letter home, he said he had ten days to live—and he missed it by just one; he lived eleven. If you're going to tell any stories about Bilroth, tell that one, Georgia. And then a story or two showing that while many men take chances, it's the doctor who takes them most understandingly. Why medical science is full of an almost grotesque courage! Don't you begin to see how the doctor's been trifling with you, Georgia?"

He paused, but no one felt the impulse to speak. His eyes were hidden by the dark glasses he was wearing because of that cold, or whatever it was, in his eyes, but his face told the story of an alert mind, a heart responsive to the things of which he spoke. Then he went on and talked a little, quietly enough, but with a passionateness, a high note of understanding, of the men who had had the nerve—eyes open—to face the things fate handed them. It was as if he were looking back over the whole sweep of the world and picking from many times and many places the men whose souls had not flinched to the death. And at the last he said, smiling—the kind of smile one meets with a tear—"Let's have a little toast." He raised his glass of claret and for a minute looked at it in silence. And then he said slowly, his very quiet voice and that little smile tempering the words:

"Here's to all those fellows who went down without the banners or the trumpets!—To the boys who took the starch out of their own tragedies!—To those first class sports who made no fuss about their own funerals! Here's to the Great Unwhimpering!"

Dr. Parkman choked a little over his wine, the tightening in Ernestine's throat made

it hard for her with hers, Georgia's cheeks were burning with enthusiasm for the story she saw now she could write, and even Mrs. McCormick had no questions as to just what men had died that way. Then it was Karl himself who abruptly turned the conversation to the more shallow channels of dinner talk.

After that he was not unlike a man who had had a little too much champagne. He startled them with the nimbleness of his wit, the light play of his fancy. It was as though he had a new vocabulary, a lighter one than was commonly his. There was a sort of delicate frolicsomeness in his thought.

For a reason unknown to her, it troubled Ernestine. She looked from Karl to Dr. Parkman, but the doctor had that impenetrable look of his. What was the matter with him? He had talked so freely during the early part of the dinner, and now he seemed to have dropped out of it entirely. She caught him looking at Karl once; the keen, narrow gaze of physician to patient. Then she saw, distinctly, that his face darkened, and after that, when he smiled at the things which were being tossed back and forth between Karl and Georgia, it was what she called to herself a "made-up smile"; and once or twice when Karl said something especially funny, she was quite sure she saw Dr. Parkman wince.

A lump rose in Ernestine's throat; Karl seemed to have slipped away from her. This was a mood to which she could not respond and it seemed he did not expect her to. Almost all of his talk was directed to Georgia, who, with her quick wit and inherent high spirits, was enjoying the pace he set her. It seemed to resolve itself into a duel of quick, easy play of thought and words between those two. But the things they said did not make Ernestine laugh. She smiled, as Dr. Parkman did, a "made-up" smile.

She had always enjoyed Karl's humour immensely, but now, though she had never seen him as brilliant, something about him pulled at her heart. She could not restrain a resentfulness at Georgia for encouraging him. For she could not get away from the feeling that all of this was not grounded on the thing which was Karl himself. It was

like nothing in the world so much as the breeziness of a mind which had let itself go. She was glad when at last she could rise from the table.

In the library it was as though he were holding on to Georgia, determined not to let her out of the mood into which he had brought her. The things of which he talked were things having no bearing whatever upon himself. If she had not been there, had simply heard of the things said, she would not have recognised Karl at all. For the first time since they had known one another, Ernestine felt left out,—alone.

Mrs. McCormick said that they must go, but Karl protested. "We're having such a good time," he said, "don't think of going."

But Georgia had an engagement. She insisted at last that they must go. Dr. Parkman had remained too, although Ernestine was satisfied he was not enjoying things.

"Why, what in the world have you done to Karl?" laughed Georgia, pinning on her hat. "I haven't had such good fun for months. I had no idea he was such a gem of a dinner man."

"I do not think Karl is very well," said Ernestine, a little coolly.

"Well? Why, bless you, I never saw him in such exuberant mood."

"Didn't they make the words fly?" laughed Mrs. McCormick. "My dear, you and the doctor and I were quite left behind."

"It seemed that way," said Ernestine, trying to keep her chin from quivering.

When she returned to the library, Dr. Parkman and Karl were evidently just closing a discussion for Karl was saying, heatedly: "Now just let me manage things in my own way!"

The doctor seemed reluctant to leave. Ernestine was alone with him for a minute in the hall, and she was sure he started to say something once and then changed it to something else. But when he did leave, it was with merely the conventional goodbye.

She walked slowly back to the library. Karl was sitting in the Morris chair, his elbow upon one arm of it, his hand to his forehead. His whole bearing had changed; it was as though he had let down. Again it seemed as though in the last hour he had been intoxicated, and this the depression to follow that kind of exuberance. But he looked up as he heard her, and smiled a little, a wan, tired smile. She was beside him in an instant.

"You seemed so happy this afternoon, dear," she said, stroking his hair, "and now you seem so tired. Aren't you well, Karl?" she asked, a little timidly.

His face then mirrored a dissatisfaction, a sort of resentment.

"I talked like a fool this afternoon!" he said gruffly.

"Why, no, dear, only—not quite like yourself."

"Well, the fact of the matter is"—this after a minute's thought—"I have a frightful headache. I suppose it comes from this trouble with my eyes. I thought I wasn't going to be able to keep up, and in my efforts to do it, I"—he paused and then laughed rather harshly—"overdid it."

He seemed anxious for her reply to that.

"I knew it was something like that," she said simply. Then, after a minute: "Is there anything I can do for the head?"

He told her no, but that he believed he would turn the chair around with his back to the light.

"And I won't talk, dear," he said gently; "I'll just rest a little."

She helped him with the chair and for a minute sat there on a low seat beside him.

"You know, sweetheart," resting her cheek upon his hand, "I don't like those dark glasses at all. I'll be so glad when you don't have to wear them."

"Why?" he asked, his voice a little muffled.

"Because they shut me out. I always seem closer to you when I can look into your

eyes.—Oh—does it pain so?" as he drew sharply away.

"That did hurt," he admitted, his voice low. "I—I'd better not talk for a little, dear."

So she said if there was nothing she could do for his head, she would leave him while she wrote a couple of letters.

For a long time he sat there without moving. It was the exhaustion which follows intoxication, for he had indeed intoxicated himself that afternoon, and with an idea. It had come about so strangely. After they sat down to dinner, he had been on the point a half a dozen times, of excusing himself on the plea of a bad headache. Then when they began to talk about doctors, those other things had come to him, and it was as though the spirit of all those men who had gone down that way entered into him, came so close, possessed him so completely, that he could not hold back those words about them. A spirit quite beyond his control had moved him to that little toast. After that, something—perhaps a spark from the nerve of those men of whom he had spoken—brought his mind firmly into possession of the feeling that everything was all right. It was not that he argued himself out of his fears, but rather that something brought the assurance of its being all right, and after that there came a number of arguments sustaining the conviction. Just before dinner he had gone over to the laboratory and looked at the culture. It had not shown anything at all. At the time he accepted that as a matter of course—it was not time for it to show anything. But looking back on it after this conviction came to him, he took the very fact of its not showing anything as proof that there was nothing there to show. His mind only grasped one side of it—that it showed nothing at all. Brightening under that he began to talk lightly, to joke with Georgia, and talking that way seemed to enable him to keep hold of the conviction that everything was all right. The more he talked, the more sure he was of it, the gayer he felt, the more disposed to let his mind run wild. He was a little afraid if he stopped talking, this beautiful conviction of its being all right would leave him. So he made Georgia keep at it, Georgia was

the one could play that sort of game.

As he talked, new arguments came to him. The oculist! At first he had thought it a bad thing that the oculist could not tell what was the matter. Now he seized upon that as proving there was nothing the matter at all. And Dr. Parkman had said, at the last, that it did not amount to anything. At the time that had been a mere conventional phrase, but now, in his exhilaration, he seized upon it as indisputable truth. But always there was the feeling that he must keep on feeling this way, or the conviction, and all that it meant, would go. That was why he clung to Georgia. Finally he reached the point where he could distinctly remember getting the other stuff—the stuff which did not make any difference—on his hands. He could fairly see it on his hands, could remember distinctly getting it in his eye. And then Georgia had said something about going, and he had begged her not to go. But she insisted, and he began to feel then that the exhilaration was wearing off, that he was coming back to face things; to the doubt, the uncertainty, the suffering. And now that he had come back to things as they were, he felt inexpressibly tired.

He went over it again and again, trying to gain something now, not from any form of excitement, but from things as they were. Suddenly his face brightened. He sat there in deep thought, and then at last he smiled a little. Whatever happened must have occurred Friday afternoon. But he had never in all his life felt as happy about his work as he did before he left the laboratory Friday afternoon. Could a man feel like that, would it be in the heart of things to let a man feel that way, if he had already entered upon the road of his destruction? It had been more than a happiness of the mind; it was a happiness of the soul, and would not a man's soul send out some note of warning? And then that same evening when he and Ernestine sat before the fire! If already this grim fate had entered into their lives, would not their love, would not her love, all intuition, deep-seeing, feeling that which it could not understand, have felt in that moment of supreme happiness, some token of what was ahead? It could not be that the world jeered at men like that. Their love would have told them

something was wrong.

Ernestine came in just then and he called her to him.

"Liebchen," he said, "I've been thinking about that evening of your birthday, about how beautiful it was. Weren't you happy, dear, as we sat there before the fire?"

"So happy, Karl," she murmured, warmly glad to have her own Karl again. "Everything seemed so beautiful; everything seemed so perfectly right."

He drew her to him with a passion she did not understand. His Ernestine! His wife! She who communed with love, whose harmony with the great soul of things was perfect—they could not have deceived her like that! Ernestine and love dwelt too closely together. She would have received some sign.

For a time that calmed and sustained him; he believed in it; it was his weapon to use against the doubts and terrors which preyed upon him. But the gloom of his soul seemed to thicken with the deepening of the night. His heart grew cold with the coming of the shadows. The passing of day inspired in him fears not to be reasoned away.

He grew very nervous during the evening and finally said he must go over to the laboratory and arrange some things for morning. Ernestine protested against it—and if he must go would he not let her go with him? But he told her he believed it would be better for his head if he walked alone for just a little while. He did not have a headache more than once in five years, he assured her, laughing a little, and when he did, it was apt to upset him.

When he came back at last—it seemed to her a very long time—she saw, watching from the window, that he was walking very slowly, almost as if exhausted She could not hold back her alarm at his white, worn face. Something in it gripped at her heart.

"Is it worse, dear?" she asked anxiously.

"It's a little bad—just now. I'll go to bed. It will be better then." He spoke slowly, as

though very tired.

"Won't you take something for it, Karl?" she persisted. "Won't you?"

"I do not know of anything to take that would do any good, Ernestine,"—and he could not quite keep the quiver out of those words.

"But other people take things. There are things. Let me go out and get you something."

He shook his head.

"Doctors don't take much stock in medicine," he said, with a touch of his usual humour.

She wanted to stay with him until he went to sleep. She wanted to put cold cloths on his head. It was hard to avoid Ernestine's tenderness.

"It did not show anything," he assured himself, pleadingly, when alone. "It only showed that it was going to show in the morning. I knew that. I knew all the time I was going to know in the morning. I'll not go to pieces. I'll not be a fool about it," he kept repeating.

But a little later Ernestine was sure she heard him groan. She could not keep away from that.

"Oh, sweetheart," she murmured, kneeling by his bed, "I can't bear it not to help you. Let me do just some little thing," she pleaded.

He put his hand over in hers. "Hold it, dear; if you aren't too tired. I don't want to talk,—but hold on to my hand."

His grip grew very tight after a minute. She was sure his head must be paining terribly. If only he would take something for it!

In a little while he grew very quiet. Soon she was sure that he was asleep. But after she had at last stolen away he turned and buried his face in his arms.

CHAPTER XV

THE VERDICT

It was Monday morning now. The hours of that night had been hours of torture. Sleep had come once or twice, but sleep meant only the surrender of his mind to the horrors which preyed upon it. He could, in some measure, exert a mastery when awake, but no man is master of his dreams. His dreams put before him all those things his thoughts fought away. In his dreams, there was a fearful thing pursuing him, reaching out for him, gaining upon him with each step. Or sometimes, it stalked beside him, not retreating, not advancing, but waiting, standing there beside him with grim, inexorable smile. It was after waking from such dreams that he breathed his prayer that this night pass. No matter what be ahead, he asked that this night pass away.

After he was up he found himself able to go on in much the usual way. When Ernestine came in and asked about his head, he told her it was better; when she wanted to know about his eyes, he said they were not any better yet, but that that was something which would simply have to run its course. She begged him not to go over to the university, but he told her it was especially important to go this morning. He added that he might not be there very long.

He ate his usual breakfast. A truth that would shake the foundations of his life might be waiting for him just ahead, and yet he could make his usual laughing plea for a second cup of coffee. Undoubtedly it was so with many men; beneath a mail of conventions and pleasantries they lived through their fears and sorrows alone.

Something clutched at his heart as he kissed Ernestine good-bye and there was a momentary temptation. Could he face it alone, if he had to face it? To have her with him! But he put that aside; not alone for her sake, but because he felt that after all there were things through which one must pass alone. But after he had reached the door, he came back and kissed her again. What if he were to go down into a place

too deep for his voice to reach her?

There was some solace, assurance, in the naturalness of things about him. Everything else was just the same; it did not seem that it could be part of natural law then for his own life to be entirely overturned.

And the world was so beautiful! It was a buoyant spring morning. There was assurance in the song of the birds, in the perfume of flowers and trees. The air upon his face was soft and reassuring. This seemed far away from the hideous phantoms of the night. Why the world did not feel like tragedy this morning!

He had a lecture at eight o'clock, and he made up his mind he would give it. In the night he had thought of going first of all to the laboratory. The truth would be waiting for him there. But it was his business to give the lecture and he could not be sure of giving it if he went to the laboratory first. A man had no right to let his own affairs interfere with his work. Oh yes—by all means, he would give the lecture. In spite of his prayer that the uncertainty should end, he reached out for another hour of holding it off.

He knew as the hour advanced that he had never done better work in the lecture room. He pinned his mind to it with a rigidity which prompted him to put the subject as though it were the most vital thing in all the world. He threw the whole force of his will to filling his mind with the things of which he spoke that he might not yield so much as an inch to the things which waited just outside.

He talked until the last minute; in fact, he went so much over his time that another class was waiting at the door. He clung to those last moments with the desperation of the drowning man to the splintered piece of board. After it was over, just as he was yielding the desk to the man who followed him, one of his students approached him with a question and the thankfulness, the appeal, almost, in the smile with which he received him, mystified the student until he stammered out his question bewilderedly.

He could wait no longer now. That room belonged to others. The next period was his usual hour in the laboratory. It was an hour which on Monday morning he could, if he wished, spend alone.

His temples were beating, thundering. His hands were so cold that they seemed things apart from him. But his mouth—how parched it was!—was set very hard, and his steps, though slow, was firm.

In the outer laboratory, Professor Hastings stopped him, remonstrating against his working when he was having trouble with his eyes. He assured him, elaborately, that he was taking care of them, that probably he would not be in there long.

He opened the door of his laboratory and passed in. He closed it behind him, and stood there leaning against it. He was all alone now. There was nothing in the room but himself and the truth which was waiting for him.

He put his book down upon the table. He walked over and sat down before the culture oven. He must get this over with! He was getting sick. He could not stand much more.

With firm, quick hand he wrenched open the doors. He put his hand upon what he knew to be the tube. He pulled it out, turned around to the light and held it up between him and the window. For one moment he looked away;—how parched his mouth was! And then, a mighty will turning his eyes upon it, in one long gaze he read the plain, unmistakable, unalterable truth. He had never seen a better culture. Science would perhaps commit itself no further than to say his eyes had become inoculated with the most virulent germ known to pathology. But out beyond the efforts which would be made to save him, he read—written large—the truth.

He was going blind.

CHAPTER XVI

"GOOD LUCK, BEASON!"

Minutes passed and nothing happened. There was no sound of splintering glass. The tube did not fall from his hands. Not so much as gasp or groan broke the stillness of the laboratory. He did not seem to have moved even the muscle of a finger.

He faced it. He understood it. He faced it and understood it as he had no other truth in all his life. No merciful, mitigating force caused his mind to totter. With fairly cosmic regularity, cosmic inevitability, comprehension struck blow after blow.

He was going blind. He had spent his life studying the action of such forces as this. He knew them! A man who knew less would have hoped more. Some idle dreamer might attempt to push one star closer to another. An astronomer would not do that.

He was going blind. He could no more do his work without his eyes than the daylight could come without the sun. Fate jeered at him: "Your eyes are gone, but your life will remain." It was like saying to the sun: "You are not to give any more light, but you are to go on shining just the same."

He was going blind. The world which had just opened to him—the world of sunsets and forests and mountains and seas gulped to black nothingness!

Blind! Swept under by a trick he would not have believed possible from his most careless student! Mastered by the things he had believed he controlled! Meeting his life's destruction from the things which were to bring his life's triumph! In that moment of understanding's throwing wide her gates to torture, fate stood out as the master dramatist. Making him do it himself! Working it out of a mere fool's trick!

Blind?—Blind? But his eyes fitted his brain so perfectly it was through them all knowledge came to him. They were the world's great channel to his mind. It was through his eyes he knew his fellow beings. The lifting of an eyebrow, a queer twist to a smile—those things always told him more than words. And—but here he staggered. The mind could get this, as it had all else, but on this the heart broke. Ernestine!—that smile—the love lights in her eyes—the glints of her dear, dear

hair—The tube fell from his hand. His head sank to the table. He was buried now under an agony beyond all power to lift.

Whether it was minutes or hours which passed then, he never knew in the days which followed. Time is not measured by common reckoning on the hill of Calvary.

The thing which brought him from under the blow at last was a blinding rage. He wanted to take a revolver and blow his brains out, then and there. He—a man supposed to have a mind! He—counted a master of those very things! And now, what? Manhood, power, himself gone. Stumbling through his days! Useless!—a curse to himself and everyone else. Groping about in the dark—a thing to be pitied and treated well for pity's sake! Cared for—looked after—helped! That beat down the bounds of control. He did things then which he never remembered and would not have believed.

It all rushed upon him—the birthday night—the crafty, insidious mockery through every bit of it, until everything to which he had held tottered about him, and goaded beyond all power to bear there came a slow, comprehending, soul-deep curse on the world and all that the world had done. And then, out of the darkness, through the blackened, dizzying, tottering mass—a voice, a face, a smile, a touch, a kiss, and the curses gave way to a sob and things steadied a little. No, not the world and everything it had done, for it was a world which held Ernestine, a world which had given Ernestine to him for his.

He fought for it then: for his faith in the world, his belief in the things of love. It was the fight of his life, the fight for his own soul. Come what might in the future, it was this hour which held the decisive battle. For if he could not master those things which were surging upon him, then the things which made him himself were gone for all time. And when sense of the underlying cunning of the blow brought the surrendering laugh close to his parched lips it was held back, held under, by that ever recurring memory of a touch, a voice, a face. It was Ernestine, their love,

fighting against the powers of damnation for the rescue of his soul.

Even in the battle's heat, he had full grasp of the battle's significance, knew that all the future hung upon making it right this hour with his own soul. His face grew grey and old, he concentrated days of force into minutes, but little by little, through a strength greater than that strength with which men conquer worlds, a force greater than the force with which the mind's big battles are won, by a force not given many since the first of time, he held away, beat back, the black tides ready to carry him over into that sea of bitterness from which lost souls send out their curses and their jeers and their unmeetable silences.

He tried to see a way. He tried to reach out to something which should help him. Standing there amid the wreck of his life, he tried to think, even while the ruins were still falling about him, of some plan of reconstruction. It was like rebuilding a great city destroyed by fire; the brave heart begins before the smoke has cleared away. But that task is a simple one. The city destroyed by fire may be rebuilded as before. But with him the master builder was gone. Out of those poor, scarred, ungeneraled forces which remained, could he hope to bring anything to which the world would care to give place?

He could see no way yet. All was chaos. And just then there came a knock at the door.

He paid no heed at first. What right had the world to come knocking at his door? What could he do for any one now?

The knock was repeated. But he would not go. If it were some student, what could he do for him? He could only say: "I can do nothing for you. Go to some one else." And should it be one of his fellow professors, come to counsel with him, he could only say to him: "I have dropped out. Go on without me. I wish you good luck."

That message he had thought to give!—and now—

Again the knock, timidly this time, fearing a too great persistency, but reluctant to

go away. He would go in just a minute now. There would not come another knock. Well, let him go. When all the powers of fate had gathered round to mock and jeer was it too much to ask that there be no other spectators? Was not a man entitled to one hour alone among the ruins of his life?

He who would gain entrance was starting, very slowly, to walk away. He listened to him take a few steps, and then suddenly rose and hurried to the door. He was not used to turning away his students unanswered.

It was Beason who turned eagerly around at sound of the opening door. Beason—of all people—that boy who never in the world would understand!

He was accustomed to reading faces quickly and even through his dark glasses his worried eyes read that Beason was in trouble, moved by something from the path in which he was wont to go.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you," stammered the boy, as he motioned him to a chair.

"Oh—that's all right; I wasn't doing anything, very important. Just—finishing up something," he added, glad, when he heard his own voice, that it was only Beason.

"I'm in trouble," blurted out Beason, "and I—I wanted to see you."

The man was sitting close to a table, and he rested his elbow upon it, and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"Trouble?" his voice was kind, though a little unsteady. "Why, what's the trouble?"

"I've got to stop school! I've got to give up my work for a whole year!"

The hand still shaded his darkened eyes. His mouth was twitching a little.

"A year, Beason?" he said—any one else would have been struck with the note in it—"You say—a year?"

"Yes," said Beason, "a whole year. My father has had some hard luck and can't keep me here. I'd try to get work in Chicago, and stay on, but I not only have to make my own way, but I must help my mother and sister. Next year another deal my father's

in will probably straighten things out, and then I suppose I can come back."

The man very slowly nodded his head. "I see," he said, his voice coming from 'way off somewhere, "I see."

"It's tough!" exclaimed Beason bitterly—"pretty tough!"

Dr. Hubers had turned his chair away from Beason, and with closed eyes was facing the light from without. There was a long pause. Beason waited patiently, supposing the man to be thinking what to say about so great a difficulty.

"As I understand it," he said, turning around at last, "it's like this. You are to give up your work at the university for a year—just one short little year—and do something else; something not so much in your line, perhaps, but something which will be helping those you care for—making it easier for some one else. It's to be your privilege, as I understand it, to fill a man's place. That's about it, isn't it?"

"But that's not the point! I thought,"—in an injured, almost tearful voice—"that you would understand."

"Oh, I do. I see the other point. You hate to stop work for,"—he cleared his throat—"for a year."

"A year," said Beason dismally, "is such a long time to lose."

The man had nothing to say to that. His head sank a little. He seemed to be thinking.

Finally he came out of his reverie; seemed to come from a long way off. "And where are you going, my boy?" he asked kindly. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going clear out West," said Beason gloomily. "Father has something for me with a company in the Northwest."

"Out there!"—an eager voice rang out, a voice which rested on a smothered sob. "Great heavens, man, you're going out there? Out there to the mountains and the forests? Out there where you can see the sun come up and go down, can see—can see—" but his voice trailed off to a strange silence.

"I never cared much for scenery," said Beason bluntly, "and I care a lot for—all this I'm leaving."

"We don't really leave a thing," said the man—his voice was low and tired—"when we're coming back to it. The only real leave-takings are the final ones."

Beason shifted in his chair. Some of these things were not just what he had expected.

"Beason,"—something in his voice now made the boy move a little nearer—"I'm sorry for your disappointment, but I wish I could make you see how much you have to live for. Get in the habit of looking at the sunsets, Beason. Take a good many long looks at the mountains and the rivers. It's not unscientific. You know,"—with a little whimsical toss of his head—"we only have so many looks to take in this world, and when we're about through we'd hate to think they'd all been into microscopes and culture ovens. And don't worry too much, Beason, about things running into your plans and knocking them over. You know what that wise old Omar had to say about it all." He paused, and then quoted, very slowly, each word seeming to stand for many things:

And fear not lest Existence closing your Account, and mine, shall know the like no more; The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has pour'd Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

"And—will—pour,"—he repeated the three words. And then his head drooped, his hands fell laxly at his sides. It seemed it was not of Beason he had been thinking as he looked Fate in the face with that taunt of the old Persian poet.

But he looked at him after a moment, came back to him. He saw that the boy was disappointed. The gloom with which he had come had not lifted from his face. That would not do. He was not going to fail his student like that.

"Why, look here, Beason," he said in a new tone, all enthusiasm now, "maybe you'll shoot a bear. I have a presentiment, Beason, that you will, and when you're

eighty-five and have your great grandchild on your knee, you'll think a great deal more about that bear than you will about the year you missed here at school. Now brace up! Hard knocks wake a fellow up. You'll come back here and do better work for your year of roughing it—take my word for it, you will."

Beason had brightened. "And you think,"—he grew a little red—"that when I come back I can have my old place here with you?"

The man drew in his breath, drew it in rather hard; something had taken the enthusiasm away.

"I'll do my little part, Beason," he said, exceedingly quietly, "to see that you are not overlooked when you come back."

The boy rose to go. "I do feel better," he said clumsily, but with heartiness.

He looked around the room. "I hate to leave it. I've had some good times here, and I'm—fond of it." The man was leaning against the wall. He did not say anything at all.

Then Beason held out his hand. "Good-bye," he said, "and—thank you."

For a minute there was no reply, nothing save the very cold hand given in response to Beason's. But that was only for the instant. And then the man in him, those things which made him more than a great scientist, things more than mind, not even to be comprehended under soul, those fundamental things which made him a man, rose up and conquered. He straightened up, smiled a little, and then heartily, quite sunnily, came the words: "Take a brace, Beason—take a good brace. And good luck to you, boy—good luck."

The door had closed. At last he was alone again. Dizzy with the strain he staggered to a chair. For a long time he sat there, many emotions struggling in his face. He could not see it yet—not quite. It was all very new, and uncertain. But 'way out there in the darkness it seemed there was perhaps something waiting for him to grasp. He would never give that other message, but it might be, if he worked hard enough, and

never faltered, he could learn to say to the world which had given him this, say heartily, quite sunnily: "Good luck to you. Good luck."

CHAPTER XVII

DISTANT STRAINS OF TRIUMPH

It worried Ernestine when she saw Dr. Parkman's motor car stopping before the house early Tuesday morning. He had been there the afternoon before, and then again late in the evening, bringing another doctor with him. He said that they simply came to help keep Karl amused; but surely he would not be coming again this morning if there were not something more serious than she knew. Karl had come home from the university about noon the day before, saying that his head was bad and he was going to consider himself "all in" for the day. Something about him had frightened her, but he insisted that it only showed what a headache could do to a fellow who was not accustomed to it. He had remained in his darkened room all day, not even turning his face from the wall when she came in to do things for him. That worried her, and even the doctor's assurance that he was not going to be ill had not sufficed. In fact, she thought Dr. Parkman was acting strangely himself.

"I was out in this part of town and thought I'd drop in," he told her, as she opened the door for him.

"You're not worried about Karl?" she demanded.

He was hanging up his cap. "You see, I don't want him to get up and go over to the university," he said, after a minute's pause, in which she thought he had not heard her question. "That wouldn't be good for his eyes."

"Well, doctor, what is it about his eyes? Is it just—something that must run its course?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, and she was a little hurt by the short way he said it. Was it

not the most natural thing in the world she should want to know? Really, doctors might be a little more satisfactory, she thought, as she told him he would find Karl in his room.

She herself went into the library. Down in the next block she saw the postman, and thought she would wait for him. She felt all unnerved this morning. Things were happening which she did not understand, and then she felt so "left out of things." She wanted to do things for Karl; she would love to hover over him while he was not well, but he seemed to prefer being let alone; and as for Dr. Parkman, there was no sense in his adopting so short and professional a manner with her.

But as she stood there by the window, the bright morning sunlight fell upon her ruby, and she smiled. She loved her ring so! It was so dear of Karl to get it for her. The warm, deep lights in it seemed to symbolise their love, and it would always be associated with that first night she had worn it, that beautiful hour when they sat together before the fire. That had been its baptism in love.

The postman was at the door now, and she hurried to meet him. She was much interested in the mail these days, for surely she would hear any time now regarding her picture in Paris.

It had come! The topmost letter had a foreign stamp, and she recognised the writing of Laplace.

Heart beating very fast, she started up to her studio. She wanted to be up there, all by herself, when she read this letter. As she passed Karl's door she heard Dr. Parkman telling about having punctured a tire on his machine the night before. Of course then everything really was all right, or he would not have talked about trivial things like that.

Her fingers fumbled so that she could scarcely open the envelope. And then she tried to laugh herself out of that, prepare for disappointment. Why, what in the world did she expect?

As she read the letter her face went very white, her fingers trembled more and more. Then she had to go back and read it sentence by sentence. It was too much to take in all at once.

It was not so much that it had been awarded a medal; not so much that a great London collector—Laplace said he was the most discriminating collector he knew—wanted to buy it. The overwhelming thing was that the critics of Paris treated it as something entitled to their very best consideration. The medal and the sale might have come by chance, but something about these clippings he had enclosed seemed to stand for achievement. They said that "The Hidden Waterfall," by a young American artist, was one of the most live and individual things of the exhibition. They mentioned things in her work which were poor—but not one of them passed her over lightly!

She grew very quiet as she sat there thinking about it. The consciousness of it surged through and through her, but she sat quite motionless. It seemed too big a thing for mere rejoicing. For what it meant Was that the years had not played her false. It meant the justification—exaltation—of something her inmost self.

And it meant that the future was hers to take! She leaned forward as if looking into the coming years, eyes shining with aspiration, cheeks flushed with triumph. She quivered with desire—the desire to express what she knew was within her.

It was while lost to her joy and her dreaming that she heard a step upon the stairs. She started up—instantly broken from the magic of the moment. Perhaps Karl needed her. And then before she reached the door she knew that it was Karl himself. How very strange!

"Oh, Karl!"—not able to contain it a minute—"I want to tell you—" and then, startled as he stumbled a little, and going down a few steps to meet him—"but isn't there too much light up here? Shouldn't you stay down in the dark?"

"I don't want to stay down in the dark!"—he said it with a low intensity which

startled her, and then she laughed.

"I've always heard there was nothing so perverse as a sick man. I'll tell you what's the matter with you. You're lonesome. You're tired of getting along without me—now aren't you? But we'll go down to the library, and down there I'll tell you—oh, what I'll tell you! I thought Dr. Parkman was going to stay with you a while,"—as he did not speak—"or I shouldn't have come away."

He had seated himself, and was rubbing his head, as though it pained him. His eyes were hidden, but his face, in this bright light, made her want to cry, it told so plainly of his suffering. He reached out his hand for hers. "I didn't want him any longer, liebchen,"—he said it much like a little child—"I want—you."

"Of course you do,"—tenderly—"and I'm the one for you to have. But not up here. The light is too bright up here."

She pulled at his hand as if to induce him to rise. But he made no movement to do so, and he did not seem to have heard what she said. "Ernestine," he said, in a low voice—there was something not just natural in Karl's voice, a tiredness, a something gone from it—"will you do something for me?"

She sat down on the arm of his chair, her arm about him with her warm impulsiveness. "Why Karl, dear"—a light kiss upon his hair—"you know I would do anything in the world for you."

"I want you to show me your pictures,"—he said it abruptly, shortly. "I want to look at them this morning;—all of them."

"But—but Karl," she gasped, rising in her astonishment—"not now!"

"Yes—now. You promised. You said you'd do anything in the world for me."

"But not something that will hurt you!"

"It won't hurt me,"—still abruptly, shortly.

"But I know better than that! Why any one knows that eyes in bad condition mustn't

be used. And looking at pictures—up here in this bright light—so needless—so crazy,"—she laughed, though she was puzzled and worried.

He was silent, and something in his bearing went to her heart. His head, his shoulders, his whole being seemed bowed. It was so far from Karl's real self. "Any other time, dear," she said, very gently. "You know I would love to do it, but some time when you are better able to look at them."

"I'm just as able to look at them now as I will ever be," he said, slowly. "Ernestine—please."

"But Karl,"—her voice quivering—"I just can't bear to do a thing that will do you harm."

"It won't do me harm. I give you my word of honour it won't make any serious difference."

"But Dr. Parkman said—"

"I give you my word of honour," he repeated, a little sharply.

"All right, then," she relented, reluctantly, and darkened the room a little.

"Dear,"—sitting on a stool beside him—"you're perfectly sure this trouble with your eyes isn't any more serious than you think?"

"Yes," he answered, firmly enough, but something in his voice sounded queer, "I'm perfectly sure of that."

"Show me your pictures, Ernestine," laying his hand upon her hair; "I've taken a particular notion that I want to see them."

"But first"—carried back to it—"I want to tell you something." She laughed, excitedly. "I was coming down to tell you as soon as the doctor left. Oh Karl—my picture in Paris—I heard from it this morning, and its success has been—tremendous!" She laughed happily over the word and did not think why it was Karl's hand gripped her shoulder in that quick, tight way. "Shall I read you all

about it, dear? And then will you promise to cheer right up?"

Still that tight grip upon her shoulder! It hurt a little, but she did not mind—it just showed how much Karl cared. The hand was still there as she read the letter, and then the clippings which told of the rare quality of her work, predicted the great things she was sure to do,—sometimes it tightened a little, and sometimes it relaxed, and once, with a quick movement he stooped down and turned her ring around, turning the stone to the inside of her hand.

When she had finished he was quite still for a long minute. He was breathing hard;—Karl was excited about it too! And then he stooped over and kissed her forehead, and it startled her to feel that his lips were very cold.

"Liebchen," he said, his voice trembling a bit—Karl did care so much!—"I am glad." For a minute he was very still again, and then he added, seeming to mean a different thing by it—"I am very glad."

"It's gone to my head a little, Karl! Oh I'm perfectly willing to admit it has. I don't think I should appreciate the Gloria Victis very much myself this morning," she laughed, happily.

She was too absorbed to notice the quick little drawing in of his breath, or his silence. "After all, it would be a sorry thing if I didn't succeed," she pursued, gayly, "for you stand so for success that we couldn't be so close together—could we, dear—if I were a dismal failure?"

"You think not?" he asked—and she wondered if he had taken a little cold; his voice sounded that way.

"Oh I don't mean that too literally. But I like the idea of our going through the same experiences—both succeeding. It seems to me I can understand you better this morning than I ever did before. I read a little poem last night, and at the time I liked it so much. It is about success, or rather about not succeeding. But I'm afraid it wouldn't appeal to me very much just now,"—again she laughed, happily, and it was

well for the happiness that she was not looking at him then.

"What was it?" he asked, as he saw she was going to turn around to him. "Say it."

"Part of it was like this":

'Not one of all the purple host Who took the flag to-day Can tell the definition So clear, of victory,

As he, defeated, dying, On whose forbidden ear The distant strains of triumph Break agonized and clear.'

"Say that last verse again," he said, his voice thick and low;—Karl was so different when he was sick!

"As he, defeated, dying, On whose forbidden ear The distant strains of triumph Break agonized and clear."

"It is beautiful, isn't it?" she said, as he did not speak.

"Beautiful? I don't know. I suppose it is. I was thinking that quite likely it is true."

"But I didn't suppose you would care about it, Karl. I supposed you would feel about it as you did about the statue."

"I wonder," he began, slowly, not seeming sure of what he wanted to say—"how much the comprehension, the understanding of things, that the loss would bring, would make up for the success taken away? I wonder just what the defeated fellow could work out of that?"

"But dearie, is it true? Why can failure comprehend success any more than success can comprehend failure?"

"It's different," he said, shortly.

"How do you know?" she asked banteringly. "What do you know about it? You don't even know how to spell the word failure!"

He started to say something, but stopped, and then he stooped over and rested his head for a minute upon her hair. "Tell me about your picture, Ernestine," he said,

quietly, after that. "Tell me just what it is."

"The Hidden Waterfall? Why you know it, Karl."

"Yes, but I want to hear you talk about it. I want to hear you tell just what it means."

"Well, you remember it is a child standing in a beautiful part of the woods. It is spring-time, as it seems best it should be when you are painting a child in the woods. I tried to make the picture breathe spring, and you know one of the writers said that the delicious thing about it was the way you got the smell of the woods;—that pleased me. Behind the child, visible in the picture, but invisible to the child, is a waterfall. The most vital thing in the universe to me was to have that waterfall make a sound. I think it does, or the picture wouldn't mean anything at all. And then of course the heart of the picture is in the child's face—the puzzled surprise, the glad wonder, and then deeper than that the response to something which cannot be understood. It might have been called 'Wondering,' or even 'Mystery,' but I liked the simpler title better. And I like that idea of painting, not just nature, but what nature means to man. I want to get at the response—the thing awakened—the things given back. Don't you see how that translates the spirit there is between nature and man—stands for the oneness?"

He nodded, seeming to be thinking. "I see," he said at last. "I wonder if you know all that means?"

"Why, yes, I think I do. My next picture will get at it in a—um—a more mature way."

"Tell me about it."

"I don't know that I can, very well. It's hard to put pictures into words. I fear it will sound very conventional as I tell it, but of course it is what one puts into it that makes for individuality. It is in the woods, too. You know, Karl, how I love the woods. And I know them! It is not spring now, but middle summer; no suggestion of fall, but mature summer. A girl—just about such a girl as I was before you came that

day and changed everything—had gone into the woods with a couple of books. She had been sitting under a tree, reading. But in the picture she is standing up very straight, leaning against the tree, the books overturned and forgotten at her feet—drawn into the bigger book—see? It is not that she has consciously yielded herself. It is not that she is consciously doing anything. She is listening—oh how she listens and longs! For what, none of us know—she least of all. Perhaps to the far off call of life and love speaking through the tender spirit of the woods. Oh how I love that girl!—and believe in her—and hope for her. In her eyes are the dreams of centuries. And don't you see that it is the same idea—the oneness—the openness of nature to the soul open to it?"

"And you are going to make the woods very beautiful?" he asked, after a little thought. "More than just the beauty of trees and grass and colour?"

"Yes, the beauty that calls to one.

"Then," he said this a little timidly—"might it not be striking to have your girl, not really seeing it with the eyes at all? Have her eyes—closed, perhaps, but she feeling it, knowing it, in the higher sense really seeing it, just the same?"

She thought about that a minute. "N—o, Karl; I think not. It seems to me she must be open to it in every way to make it stand for life, in the sense I want it to."

"Perhaps," he said, his voice drooping a little. And then, abruptly: "Have you done any of that?"

"Oh, just some little sketches."

"Show me the little sketches," he begged. "I want to see them all."

"Oh, but Karl, they wouldn't convey the idea at all. Wait until it is farther along."

"No, please show them this morning,"—softly, persuasively.

She was puzzled, and reluctant, but she got them out, and with them other things to show him. He asked many questions. In the sketches she was going to develop he

would know just how she was going to elaborate them. He asked her to tell just how they would look when worked out. "I'm a sick boy home from school," he said, "and I must be amused." And then he looked at her finished pictures; she protested against the intentness with which he looked at some of them, insisting they were not worth the strain she could see it was on his eyes. "It's queer about finished pictures," she laughed; "they're not half so great and satisfying as the pictures you are going to do next." It went through her with a sharp pain to see Karl hurting his eyes as she knew he was hurting them. She could not understand his insistence; it was not like him to be so unreasonable. And he looked so terribly—so worn and ill; if only he would go to bed and let her take care of him! But he seemed intent on knowing all there was to know about the pictures. A strange whim for him to cling to this way! As he looked he wanted her to talk about them—tell just what this and that meant, insisting upon getting the full significance of it all.

He had never before appreciated her firm grasp. Her work in these different stages of evolution gave him a clearer idea of how much she had worked and studied, how seriously and intelligently she had set out for the mastery of her craft. He had always known that the poetic impulses were there, the desire to express, the ideas, the delight in colour, but he saw now the other things; this was letting him into the workman's side of her work.

He spoke of that, and she laughed. "Yes, this is what they don't see. This is what they never know. Poetic impulses don't paint pictures, Karl. That's the incentive; the thing that keeps one at it, but you can't do it without these tricks of the trade which mean just downright work. I've never worked on a picture yet in which I wasn't almost fatally handicapped by this thing of not knowing enough. The bigger your idea, the more skill, cunning, fairly, you must have to force it into life."

She told him at last that they were through. They had even looked at rude little sketches she had made of places they had cared for in Europe. Indeed he looked very

long at some of those little sketches of places they had loved.

"One thing more," he said; "you told me once you had some water colour daubs you did when a little girl. Let me look at them. I just want to see," he laughed, "how they compare."

And so she got them out, and they looked them over, laughing at them. "You've gone a long way," he said, pushing them aside, as if suddenly tired.

He leaned back in his chair, his hand above his eyes, as she began gathering up the things. "And so here I am," she said, waving her hand to include the things about her, "surrounded by the things I've done. Not a vast array, and some of it not amounting to much, but it's I, dear. It reflects me all through these years."

"I know," he said—"that's just it,"—and at the way he said it she looked up quickly. "You're tired, Karl. It's been too much. We'll go down stairs now, and rest."

He watched her as she gathered the things together. It seemed he had never really known this Ernestine before. Here was indeed the atmosphere of work, the joy of working, all the earnestness and enthusiasm of the real worker. And then, with masterful effort, he roused himself. He had not yet touched what he had come to know.

"I have been thinking," he began, "a little about the psychology of all this. You'll think I'm developing a wonderful interest in art, but you see I'm laid up and can't do my own work, so I'm entitled to some thoughts about art. Now these things you paint grow out of a mental image—don't they, dear? The things you paint the mind sees first, so that the mental image is the true one, and then you—approximate. I should think then that it might help you to tell about pictures. For instance, if in painting a picture you had to tell about it to some one who did not look at it, wouldn't that make your own mental image more clear, and so help make it more real to you?'

"Why, Karl, I never thought of it, but,"—meditatively—"yes, I believe it would."

He turned away that she might not see the gladness in his face. "And it would be interesting—wouldn't it—to see just how good a conception you could give of the picture through words?"

"Yes," she said, interested now—"it would be a way of feeling one's own grip on it."

"Of course," he continued, "that couldn't be done except in a case, like yours and mine, where people were close together."

"Yes," she assented, "and that in itself would show that they were close together."

At that he laid a quick hand upon her hair, caressing it.

"Oh, after all, dear,"—gathering up the last of the sketches—"the greatest thing in the world is to do one's work—isn't it?"

"Yes," he said, and his voice was low and tired, "unless the greatest thing in the world is to submit to the inevitable."

She looked up quickly. "That doesn't sound like you."

"Doesn't it? Oh, well,"—with a little laugh—"you know a scientist is supposed to be capable of a good deal of change in the point of view."

He had risen, and was at the door. "It's been good of you to do all this, Ernestine."

"Why it has been a delight to me, dear; if only it hasn't hurt you. But it is time now to go down where it is dark."

"Yes," he assented wearily; "it is time now to go down where it is dark."

CHAPTER XVIII

TELLING ERNESTINE

He had thought to tell her on Tuesday, but after their talk, when he took his last look at her pictures—it had tortured both eyes and heart to do that, but he knew in the days ahead that he would be unsatisfied with having passed it by—he could not

bring himself then to do it. He could not keep it from her long now, but she was so happy that day in her triumph about the picture. He was going to darken all of her days to come; he would leave her this one more unclouded. But it was hard for him to go through with it. He longed for her so! He must have her help. He had asked for the pictures before telling her just because he knew it would be unbearable for them both, if she did know. It would need to be done in that casual way or not at all. It was strange how he felt he must see them. It was his longing to keep close to her. He could not bear the thought that his blindness might make him to her as something apart from life, even though the dearest thing of all. He must enter into every channel of her life.

It was Wednesday now, and he had told her. All the night before he had lain awake trying to think of words which would hurt her the least. He would put it very tenderly to his poor Ernestine. He would even pretend he saw some way ahead, something to do. Ernestine could not bear it unless he did that. It was the one thing which remained for him now—to make it easy for her.

This was firmly fixed in his mind when he told her that morning he wanted to talk to her about something and asked her to come into the library. He was sure he had himself well in hand; the words were upon his lips. And then when he said: "I want to tell you something, dear—something that will hurt you very much. I never wanted to hurt you; I can not help it now,"—when he had said that, and she, with quick response to the sorrow in his voice, had knelt beside him, her arms about his neck, something,—the feel of her arms, the knowing there was some one now to help him—swept away the words and his broken-hearted cry had been: "Oh, sweetheart—help me! I'm going blind!"

Those first moments took from her something of youth and gladness she would never regain. First frozen with horror, then clinging to him wildly, sobbing that it could not be so—that Dr. Parkman, some one, would do something about it;

protesting in a fierce outburst of the love which rose within her that it did not matter, that she would make it all up to him—their love make it right—in one moment stricken dumb as comprehension of it grew upon her, in another wildly defying fate, but always clinging to him, holding him so close, trying, though frightened and broken, to stand between him and the awful thing as the mother would stand between the child and its destroyer, Ernestine left with that hour things never to be claimed again. And when at last she began to sob—sobbing as he had never heard any one sob before—all his heart was roused for her, and he patted her head, kissed her hair, whispering: "Little one, little one, don't. We'll bear it together—some way."

During that hour she never loosened her arms about his neck. Deep in his despairing heart there glowed one warm spark. Ernestine would cling to him as she had never done before. God had not gone out of the world then. He had let fate strike a fearful blow, but He had left to the wounded heart such love as this.

"Dear," she said at last, her cheek against his, her dear, quivering voice trying so hard to be brave, "if you feel like telling me everything, I would like to know. I will be quiet. I will be good. But I want to bear every bit of it with you. Every bit of it, darling—now, and always. That is all I ask—that you let me bear it with you."

The love, the understanding, the longing to help, which were in her voice opened that innermost chamber of his heart to her. If she had not won this victory now, she could never have done so in the days ahead. This hour made possible the other hours of pouring out his heart to her, taking her into it all. He told her the story of how it happened, the long, hard story which only covered days, but seemed to extend through years. He told of those hours of the day and night on the rack of uncertainty, of trying with the force of mind and soul to banish that thing which had not claimed him then, but stood there beside him, not retreating,—waiting. He told her of that lecture hour Monday morning when he literally divided himself into two parts, one part of him giving the lecture, giving it just as well as he had ever done, the other

part battling with the phantom which he would vanquish or surrender to within an hour. And her only cry was: "You should have told me! You should have told me from the first!" And once he answered: "No, dear—no; before I knew I did not want to frighten you, and after—oh, Ernestine, believe me, sweetheart, I would have shielded you forever, no matter at what cost to myself—if only I could have done it!"

At last he had finished the story. He had told it all; of sitting there afraid to look, of looking and seeing and comprehending. Oh how he had comprehended! It was as if his mind too, his mind trained to grasp things, had turned against him, was stabbing him with its relentless clearness of vision. He told her of the merciless comprehension with which he saw the giving up of his work, the changing of his life, the giving up—the eternal giving up. He told her of how it had seemed to mean the making over of his soul. For his soul had always cried for conquest, for victory, for doing things. How would he turn it now to submission, to surrender, to relinquishment? Everything had been tumbling about him, he said, when that knock came at the door as the call from life, the intrusion of those everyday things which would not let him alone, even in an hour like that. And then of the boy with his paltry trouble which seemed great—the hurts—the final rising up of the instinct to help, despite it all. Then of sitting there alone and seeing a faint light in the distance, wondering if, in all new and different ways, he could not keep his place in the world.

"Oh help me to do that, sweetheart! Help me to keep right! Don't let me lose out with those other things of life!"

Her arms about his neck! He would never forget how she clung to him. There was a long silence when their souls reached one another as they had never done before. The quivering of her body, her breath upon his cheek—they told him all. But after that, the words did come to her; broken words struggling to tell of what her love would do to make it right; how she would be with him, so close, so unfailing, that

the darkness would never find him alone.

His arms about her tightened. Thank God—oh yes, a million times thank God for Ernestine!

Then he felt her start; there came a sound as though she would say something, but choked it back.

"Yes, dear?" he said gently.

"Oh, Karl, I shouldn't ask it. It will hurt you. I shouldn't ask."

"I would rather you did, dear. Ask anything. We are holding nothing from one another now."

"I just happened to think—I wanted to know—oh Karl, it wasn't in your eye on my birthday, was it? It hadn't happened—wasn't happening—when we sat there by the fire, happier than we had ever been before?"

His impulse was to hold that back. Why should he put that upon her, too, to hurt her as it had him, shake her faith as it had tried to shake his?

But his moment of silence could not be redeemed. "Karl,"—her voice was strangely quiet—"it wasn't, was it?"

He groaned, and she had her answer.

She sprang away from him, standing straight. "Then," she cried—he would never have dreamed Ernestine's voice could have sounded like that—"I hate the world! I despise it! I will not have anything to do with it! It fooled us—cheated us—made fun of us! I'll despise it—fight it"—the words became incoherent, the sobs grew very wild, she sank to the floor, crouching there, her hands clenched, sobbing: "I hate it! Oh how I want to pay it back!"

He was long in quieting her, but at last she would listen to him.

"Ernestine," he said, his voice almost stern, "if you start out like that you cannot help me. It is to you I look. If you love me, Ernestine, help me not to hate the world. If

we hate the world, we have given up. Sweetheart,"—the voice changed on that word—"even yet—even yet in a different way, I want to win. I cannot do it alone. I cannot do it at all, if you hate the world. You are to be my eyes, Ernestine. You are to see the beautiful things for me. You are to make me love them more than I ever did before. You are to be the light—don't you see, sweetheart? And you cannot do it, don't you see you cannot, if your own heart is not right with the world?"

She did not answer, but she came back to his arms. Her quick breath told him how hard she was trying.

"See your statue up there, liebchen? Remember how you always liked it? What you said about it that night? Oh, Ernestine"—crushing her to him—"help me to grip tight to my broken sword!"

CHAPTER XIX

INTO THE DARK

She was with him as he went then into the dark. She did not fail him in anything: the hand in his, the little strokes of genius in holding his mind, and when they went into the deeps where words were not fitted for utterance she did not fail him in those other things. He knew that as she clung to him with loving arms, so her spirit reached out to him in the demand that it be permitted to sustain.

Through the day and through the night she was with him now. There was no time when he could not reach out to find her, no bad dream from which he could not awaken to put his hand upon her and know that she was there. And when, time after time, bitterness rose up to submerge his soul, he could always finally shake it off by thanking God for Ernestine.

For a time the pain in his eyes served as a kindly antidote. The light was going out with so intense a suffering as to mitigate the suffering in the consciousness of its going. It was the pain in his temples helped him hold off the pain of giving up his

work. It was not a thing conquered; he knew that the deeper pain was waiting for him out there in the darkness when the pain of transition should have ceased, leaving only a blank, a darkness, no other thing to engage for him any part of his mind. There was blessedness in the temporary alleviation brought by the pain that was physical. There were many things for him to meet out there. They were willing to wait. Now his fighting powers were so well engaged as to take something from the reality of a future battlefield.

In many ways it was not as he would have imagined it had he known of such a thing. He would have thought of it as one long mood of despair, inflamed at times by the passion of rebellion. There were, in truth, many moods. In hours when he was quiet they spoke of the things they had seen and loved, of Italy and the Alps they spoke often, struggling for the words to paint a picture. Sometimes she read a little to him—there would be much of that now. Through it all, they seized upon anything which would sustain each other. Once when he saw her faltering he told her that he thought after awhile he would write a book. He did not call it a text-book; did not speak of it as the kind of work to which a man sometimes turns when his creative work is done. He had always thought that when he was sixty or seventy he might write a few books. He would write them now at forty.

And when there came times of its being utterly unbearable, they were either silent or trivial.

Bitter questionings filled Ernestine's heart in those days. How was she going to watch him suffer and not hate a universe permitting his sufferings? How care for a world of beauty he could not see? How watch his heart break for the work taken from him and keep her belief in an order of things under which that was enacted? How love a world that had turned upon him like that? That was what he asked her to do. It seemed to her, now, impossible.

With him, as the bearing of the physical pain grew mechanical and the other things

grew nearer, the worst of it was wondering what he should do with the days that were ahead. His spirit would not go with his sight. His desire to do was not to be crushed with his ability for doing. What then of the empty days to come? How smother the passion for his work? And if he did smother it, what remained? While he lived, how deafen himself to the call of life? Through what channel could he hope to work out the things that were in him? And how remain himself if constantly denying to himself the things which were his? It was that tormented him more than the relinquishing of the specific thing he had believed would crown the work of his life. His fight now would be a fight for clinging to that in him which was fundamental. But with what weapon should he fight?

Many times he failed to bear it in conformity with his ideal of bearing it. There were hours of not bearing it at all; hours of cursing his fate and damning the world. Then it was her touch upon his hand, her tear upon his cheek, her broken word which could bring him again into the sphere of what he desired to be. His desire to help her in bearing it, his thankfulness in having her,—those the factors in his control.

There were two weeks of that: weeks in which two frightened, baffled souls fought for strength to accept and power to readjust. Their failures, the doubts, the rage, they sought to keep from each other; their hard won victories, their fought for courage they gave to the uttermost. A failure of one was a failure for one; but a victory of one was a victory for two. It was through that method courage succeeded in some measure in holding its own against bitter abandonment to despair.

His last looks were at her face. It was that he would take with him into the darkness. As a man setting sail for a far country seeks to the last the face upon the shore, so his last seeing gaze rested yearningly upon the dear face that was to pass forever from his vision. And when the end had come, when hungering eyes turned to the face they could not see, and he knew with the certainty of encountered reality that he would never again see the love lights in her eyes, that others would respond to the smile

that was gone from him forever, others read in her face the things from which he was shut out, when he knew he would never again watch the laughter creep into her eyes and the firelight play upon her hair, it came upon him as immeasurably beyond all power to endure, and in that hour he broke down and in the refuge of her arms gave way to the utter anguish of his heart. And she, all of her soul roused in the passion to comfort him, whispered hotly, the fierce tenderness of the defending mother in her voice:

"You shall not suffer! You shall not! I will make it up to you! I will make it right!"

PART TWO

CHAPTER XX

MARRIAGE AND PAPER BAGS

It was evident that peace did not sit enthroned in Georgia's soul. Her movements were not calm and self-contained as one by one she removed the paper bags from her typewriter. "So silly!"—she sputtered to herself. What were the men in this office, anyway? College freshmen? Hanging paper bags all over her things every time she stepped out of the office—and just because one of her friends happened to be in the paper bag business! She'd like to know—as she pounded out her opening sentence with vindictiveness—if it wasn't just as good a business as newspaper reporting?

It was not a good day for teasing Georgia. She did not like the story she had been working on that morning. "Go out to the university," the city editor had said, "and get a good first-day-of-school story. Make the feature of it the reorganisation of Dr. Hubers' department, and use some human interest stuff about his old laboratory—the more of that the better."

She hated it! Were they never going to let Karl alone? Was it decent to put his own cousin on the story? Georgia's chin quivered as she wrote that part about Karl's laboratory. "If my own mother were killed in the street," she told herself, trying to blink back the tears, "I suppose they'd make me handle it because I know more about her than any one else in the office!"

Resentment grew with the turning of each sentence. They knew that Karl was her cousin, and almost as close to her as her own brother. She was sure they had seen the tear stains on some of that maudlin copy she had handed in about him. When she turned in her story she was unable to contain herself longer.

"Mr. Lewis," she said, voice quivering, "here is another one of those outrageous stories about my cousin, Dr. Hubers. When you ask me to write the next one, you may consider it an invitation for my resignation." And then, cheeks very red, she went back to her desk and began getting up some stuff for her column "Just Dogs," which they had been running on the editorial page.

When the city editor was passing her desk about half an hour later he stopped and asked, very respectfully and meekly—Georgia was far too good to lose: "Miss McCormick, will you see Dr. Parkman some time before to-morrow, and ask him about this hospital story? You know, Miss McCormick, you're the only reporter in town he'll see."

"Very well," said Georgia, with dignity.

All summer long the papers had been printing stories about Karl. It made her loathe newspaper work every time she thought about it. To think of their hacking at him like that—and he so quiet and dignified and brave! A picture printed the Sunday before, of Karl fumbling his way around, had made her more furious than she had ever been in all her life.

She turned just in time to see a grinning reporter writing on the bulletin board: "Miss G. McCormick—Human interest story about the inner life of a paper bag."

Sometimes it might have brought a smile, usually it would have fired her to the desired rage, but to-day it contributed to her tearfulness. "Oh they needn't worry," she murmured, bending her head over a drawer, and tossing things about furiously, "there's no getting married for me! This office has settled that!"

The city editor seemed to take special delight in sending her out on every story which would "give married life a black eye." When the father left the little children destitute, when the mother ran away with the other man, or the jealous wife shot the other woman, Georgia was always right on the spot because they said she was so clever at that sort of thing. "Oh it makes one just crazy to get married," she had said, witheringly, to Joe one night.

Why did he want to marry her, anyway? When she told him she didn't want to—wasn't that enough? Was it respectful to treat her refusal as though it were a subtle kind of joke? Various nice boys had wanted at various times to marry her, and she had always explained to them that it was impossible, and sent them, more or less cheerfully, on their various ways. But this man who made paper bags, this jolly, good-natured, seemingly easy-going fellow, who held that the most important thing in the world was for her, Georgia, to have a good time, only seemed much amused at the idea of her not having time to marry him, and when she told him, with just as much conviction as she had ever told any of the others, that he had better begin looking around for some one else, he would reply, "All right—sure," and would straightway ask where she wished to go for dinner that night or whether she preferred an automobile ride to a spin in his new motor boat. Now what was one to do with a man like that? A man who laughed at refusals and mellowed with each passing snub!

"Telephone, Miss McCormick,"—the boy sang out from the booth. The opening "Hello" was very short, but the voice changed oddly on the "Oh, Ernestine." Her whole face softened. It was another Georgia now. "Why certainly—I'll get them for

you; you know I love to do things for you down town, but my dear—what in the world do you want with flower seeds this time of year?"—"Oh—I see; planted in the fall—but the flowers that bloom in the spring—tra la."

They chatted for a little while and after Georgia had hung up the receiver she sat there looking straight into the phone—her face as dreamy as Georgia's freckled face well could be. "By Jinks,"—she was saying to herself—"it can be like that!" It was a most opportune time for the paper bag man to telephone. He wondered why her voice was so soft, and why there was not the usual plea about being too busy when he asked her to meet him at the little Japanese place for a cup of tea. "And it's positively heroic of Joe to drink that tea," she smiled to herself, as she wrestled with her shirt waist sleeves and her jacket.

But out on the street she grew stern with herself. "Now don't go and do any fool thing," she admonished. "Don't jump at conclusions. You aren't Ernestine, and he isn't Karl. He's Joseph Tank—of all abominable names! And he makes paper bags—of all ridiculous things! Tank's Paper Bags!" she guessed not! Suppose in some rash moment she did marry him. People would say: "What business is your husband in?" And she would choke down her rage and reply—"Why—why he makes paper bags!"

He was sitting there waiting for her, smiling. He was awfully good about waiting for her, and about smiling. It was nice to sit down in this cool, restful place and be looked after. He had a book which she had spoken about the week before, and he had a little pin, a dear little thing with a dog's head on it which he had seen in a window and thought should belong to her. And he was on track of the finest collie in the United States. After all, he thought it would be better for her to have a collie than a bulldog. She was losing ground! She was being very nice to him, and she had firmly intended telling him once for all that she could never marry a man whose name was Tank, and who contributed to the atrocities of fate by making paper bags.

And then she had a beautiful thought. Perhaps he would be willing to go away somewhere and live it down. He might go to Boston and go into the book publishing business. Surely publishing books in Boston would go a long way toward removing the stigma of having made paper bags in Chicago. And meanwhile, sighing contentedly, and fastening on her new pin, as long as she was here she might as well forget about things and enjoy herself.

CHAPTER XXI

FACTORY-MADE OPTIMISM

The usual congested conditions existed in Dr. Parkman's waiting room when Georgia arrived a little after five. An attendant who knew her, and who had great respect for any girl Dr. Parkman would see on non-professional business, took her into the inner of inners, where, comfortably installed, sat Professor Hastings.

"Glad to have you join me," he said; "I feel like an imposter, getting in ahead of these people."

"Oh, I'm used to side doors," laughed Georgia.

They chatted about how it had begun to rain, how easy it was for it to rain in Chicago, and in a few minutes the doctor came in.

He nodded to them, almost staggered to a chair, sank into it, and leaning back, said nothing at all.

"Why, doctor," gasped Georgia, after a minute, "can't you take something? Why you're simply all in!"

He roused up then. "I am—a—little fagged. Fearful day!"

"Well, for heaven's sake get up and take off that wet coat! Here,"—rising to help him—"I've always heard that doctors had absolutely no sense. Sitting around in a wet coat!"

"I wonder," he said, after another minute of resting, "why any man ever takes it into his head he wants to be a doctor?"

"And all day long," she laughed, "I've been wondering why any girl ever takes it into her head she wants to be a newspaper reporter."

"Speaking of the pleasant features of my business," she went on, "I may as well spring this first as last. Here am I, a more or less sensible young woman, come to ask you, a man whose time is worth—well, let's say a thousand dollars a second—what you intend doing about those hospital interns getting drunk last night!"

"My dear Miss Georgia,"—brushing out his hand in a characteristic way which seemed to be sweeping things aside—"go back to your paper and say that for all I care every intern in Chicago may get drunk every night in the week."

"Bully story!"

"And furthermore, every paper in Chicago may go to the devil, and every hospital may go trailing along for company. Oh Lord—I'm tired."

He looked it. It seemed to Georgia she had never understood what tiredness meant before.

"Such a hard day?" Professor Hastings asked.

"Oh—just one of the days when everything goes wrong. Rotten business—anyway. Eternally patching things up. I'd like to be a—well, a bridge builder for awhile, and see how it felt to get good stuff to start with."

"And now, to round out your day pleasantly," laughed Professor Hastings, "I've come to tell you about a boy out there at the university who is in very bad need of patching up."

"What about him?" and it was interesting to see that some of the tiredness seemed to fall from him as he straightened up to listen.

Georgia rose to go, but he told her to stay, he might feel more in the mood for drunken interns by and by.

He arranged with Professor Hastings about the student; and it was when the older man was about to leave that he asked, a little hesitatingly, about Dr. Hubers. "I have been away all summer," he told the doctor, "and have not seen him yet."

Georgia was watching Dr. Parkman. His face just then told many things.

"You will find him—quite natural," he answered, in a constrained voice.

"One hardly sees how that can be possible," said the professor sadly.

"Oh, his pleasantness and naturalness will not deceive you much. Your eyes can take in a few things, and then his voice—gives him away a little. But he won't have anything to say about—the change."

He shook his head. "I'm afraid that's so much the worse."

"Perhaps, but—"

"Karl never was one to get much satisfaction out of telling his troubles," Georgia finished for him.

"Hastings," said the doctor, jerkily, and he seemed almost like one speaking against his will—"what do you make out of it? Don't you think it—pretty wasteful?"

"Yes—wasteful!" he went on, in response to the inquiring look. "I mean just that. There are a lot of people," he spoke passionately now, "who seem to think there is some sort of great design in the world. What in heaven's name would they say about this? Do you see anything high and fine and harmonious about it?"

That last with a sneer, and he stopped with an ugly laugh. "They make me tired—those people who have so much to say about the world being so right and lovely. They might travel with me on my rounds for a day or two. One day would finish a good deal of this factory-made optimism."

"Does Dr. Hubers feel—as you do?" Hastings asked, not quite concealing the

anxiety in the question.

"How in God's name could he feel any other way?—though it's hard making him out,"—turning to Georgia, who nodded understandingly. "Just when he's ready to let himself go he'll pull himself together and say it's so nice to have plenty of time for reading, that Ernestine has been reading a lot of great things to him this summer, and he believes now he is really going to begin to get an education. But does that make you feel any better about it? God!—I was out there the other day, and when I saw the grey hairs in his head, the lines this summer has put in his face, when I saw he was digging his finger nails down into his hands to keep himself together while he talked to me about turning his cancer work over to some other man—I tell you it went just a little beyond my power to endure, and I turned in then and there and expressed my opinion of a God who would permit such things to happen! And then what did he do? Got a little white around the lips for a minute, looked for just a second as though he were going to turn in with me, and then he smiled a little and said in a quiet, rather humorous way that made me feel about ten years old: 'Oh, leave God out of it, Parkman. I don't think he had much of a hand in this piece of work. If you must damn something, damn my own carelessness.'"

"He said that? He can see it like that?"—there was no mistaking the approval in Professor Hastings' eager voice.

"Huh!"—the doctor was feeling too deeply to be conscious of the rudeness in the scoff. "So you figure it out like that—do you? And you get some satisfaction out of that way of looking at it? The scheme of things is very fine, but he must pay the penalty of his own oversight, weakness—carelessness—whatever you choose to call it. Well, I don't think I care much about a system that fixes its penalties in that particular way. When I see men every day who violate every natural law and don't pay any heavier penalty than an inconvenience, when I see useless pieces of flesh and bone slapping nature in the face and not getting more than a mild little slap in

return, and then when I see the biggest, most useful man I have ever known paying as a penalty his life's work—oh Lord—that's rot! I have some hymn singing ancestors myself, and they left me a tendency to want to believe in something or other, so I had fine notions about the economy of nature—poetry of science. But this makes rather a joke of that, too—don't you think?" He paused, and Georgia could see the hot beating in his temples and his throat. And then he added, with a quiet more unanswerable than the passion had been: "So the beautiful thing about having no gods at all is that you're so fixed you have no gods to lose."

The telephone rang then, and there was a sharp fire of questions ending with, "Yes—I'll see her before nine to-night." He hung up the receiver and sat there a minute in deep thought, seeming to concentrate his whole being upon this patient now commanding him. And then he turned to Hastings with something about the boy out at the university, telling him at the last not to worry about the financial end of it, that he liked to do things for students who amounted to something.

Professor Hastings was smiling a little as he walked down the corridor. He wondered why Dr. Parkman cared anything about slaving for so senseless and unsatisfying a world.

He loved the doctor for his inconsistencies.

CHAPTER XXII

A BLIND MAN'S TWILIGHT

"Ready?"

"All ready."

"Then, one—two—three—we're off!" A laugh and a scamper and one grand rush down to the back fence. "You go too fast," she laughed, gasping for breath.

"And you're not steady. You jerk."

"But this was a fine straight row. I can steer it just right when you don't push too hard. Now—back."

They always had a great deal of fun cutting the grass. Ernestine used to wish the grass had to be cut every day.

But Karl did not seem to be enjoying it as much as usual to-day. "I'm going to desert you," he said, after a little while.

"Lazy man!"

"Yes—lazy good for nothing man—leaves all the work for his wife."

She looked at him sharply. His voice sounded very tired. "I'll be in in just a few minutes, dear," she said.

She did not go with him. She knew Karl liked to find his own way just as much as he could. She understood far too well to do any unnecessary "helping."

But she stood there and looked after him—watched him with deep pain in her eyes. He stooped a little, and of course he walked slowly, and uncertainly. All that happy spring and assurance had gone from his walk.

She walked down to the rear of the yard, stood there leaning against the back fence. She had dropped more than one tear over that back fence.

She too had lost something during the summer. Struggle had sapped up some of the wine of youth. Her face was thinner, but that was not the vital difference. The real change lay in the determination with which she had learned to set her jaw, the defiance with which she held her head, and the wistfulness, the pleading, with which her eyes seemed to be looking out into the future. The combination of things about her was a strange one.

She looked to the west; the sun was low, the clouds very beautiful. For the minute she seemed to relax:—beauty always rested her. And then, with a sharp closing of her eyes, a bitter little shake of her head, she turned away. She could not look at

beautiful things now without the consciousness that Karl could not see them.

They always sat together in the library that hour before dinner—"our hour" they had come to call it. She wondered, with a hot rush of tears, if they did not care for it because it marked the close of another day. She turned to the house, kicking the newly cut grass with her foot, walking slowly. She was waiting for something—fighting for it. Karl needed her to-night, needed courage and cheer.

She came so quietly, or else he was so deep in thought, that he did not hear her. For a minute she stood there in the library door.

He was sitting in his Morris chair, his hands upon the arms of it, his head leaning back. His eyes were closed, one could not tell in that moment that he was blind, but it was more than the dimness, the blankness in his eyes, more than scarred eyeballs, made for the change in Karl's face. He and life did not dwell together as they had once; a freedom and a gladness and a sureness had gone. The loss of those things meant the loss of something fundamentally Karl. And the sadness—and the longing—and the marks of struggle which the light of courage could not hide!

She choked a little, and he heard her, and held out his hand, with a smile. It was the smile which came closest to bridging the change. He was very close to being Karl when he smiled at her like that.

She sat down on the low seat beside him, as was their fashion. "Lazy man,"—brushing his hand tenderly with her lips—"wouldn't help his wife cut the grass!"

She wondered, as they sat there in silence, how many lovers had loved that hour. It seemed mellowed with the dreams it had held from the first of time. Ever since the world was very young, children of love had crept into the twilight hour and claimed it as their own. Perhaps the lovers of to-day love it because unto it has been committed the soul of all love's yesterdays.

She and Karl had loved it from the very first: in those days when they were upon the

sea, those supreme days of uncomprehended happiness. They sat in the twilight then and watched day withdraw and night spread itself over the waters. They loved the mystery of it, for it was one with the mystery of their love; they loved it for reasons to be told only in great silences, knowing unreasoningly, that they were most close together then.

And after that they came to love the twilight for the things it bequeathed them. "Don't you remember," he would say, "we left it just as the sun was setting. Aren't you glad we can remember it so?" It was as if their love could take unto itself most readily that which came to it in the mystic hour of closing day.

And when they returned, during that first year of joy in their work, they loved the hour of transition as an hour of rest. Their day's work was done; in the evening they would study or read or in some way occupy themselves, but because they had worked all through the day they could rest for a short time in the twilight. And they would tell of what they had done; of what they hoped to do; if there had been discouragements they would tell of them, and with the telling they would draw away. In the light of closing day the future's picture was unblurred. They loved their hour then as true workers love it; it was good to sink with the day to the half lights of rest and peace.

Now it was all different, but they clung to their love for it still. Through the heart of the day, during those hours which from his early boyhood had been to him working hours, this removal from life brought to the man a poignancy of realisation which beat with undiminishing force against the wall of his endurance. It was when he finished his breakfast and the day's work would naturally begin that it came home to him the hardest. They would go into the library, and Ernestine would read to him—how she delved into the whole storehouse of literature for things to hold him best—and how great her joy when she found something to make the day pass a little less hard than was the day's wont! He would listen to her, loving her voice, and

trying to bring his mind to what she read, but all the while his thoughts reaching out to what he would be doing if his life as worker were not blotted out. The call of his work tormented him all through the day, and the twilight was the time most bearable because it was an hour which had never been filled with the things of his work. In that short hour he sometimes, in slight measure found, if not peace, cessation from struggle. "This is what I would be doing now," he told himself, and with that, when the day had not drawn too heavily upon him, he could rest a little, perhaps, in some rare moments, almost forget.

But to-night the spell of the hour was passing him by. Ernestine saw that in the restless way his hand moved away from hers, the nervous little cough, the fretted shaking of the head. She understood why it was; the fall quarter at the university opened that day. It would have marked the beginning of his new year's work. Very quietly she wiped the tears from her cheek. She tried never to let Karl know that they were there.

His head had fallen to his hand, and she moved closer to him and laid her face against the sleeve of his coat. She did not say anything, she did not touch him, or wind her arm, as she loved to do, about his neck. She had come to understand so well, and perhaps the greatest triumph of her love was in knowing when to say nothing at all.

At last he raised his head. His voice, like his face, was tensely drawn. "Ernestine, don't bother to stay. Probably you want to be seeing about dinner, and I—I don't feel like talking."

That too she understood. She only laid her hand for the moment upon his hair. Then: "Call me, dear, if you want me," and she slipped away, and in a little nook under the stairs sat looking out into their strange future with wondering, beseeching eyes—seeking passionately better resources, a more sustaining strength.

Left alone the man sat very still, his hands holding tight the arm of the chair. The

tide of despair was coming in, was washing over the sands of resignation, beating against the rocks of courage. Many times before it had come in, but there was something overwhelming in its volume to-night. It beat hard against the rocks. Was it within its power to loosen and carry them away? Carry them out with itself to be gone for all time?

He rose and felt his way to the window. He pressed his hot forehead against the pane. Outside was the dying light of day, but the glare of noonday, the quiet light of evening, the black of the night, were all one to him now. Was it going to be so with his mind, his spirit? Would all that other light, light of the mind and soul, be gulped into this black monotone, this nothingness?

He had heard of the beautiful spirit of the blind, of the mastery of fate achieved, the things they were able, in spite of it all, to gain from life. Ernestine had read him some of that; he had been glad to hear it, but it had not moved him much. Most of those people had been blind for a long time. He too, in the course of ten or twenty years, when the best of his life was gone, would become accustomed to groping his way about, reading from those books, and having other people tell him how things looked. But so long as he remained himself at all how accustom himself to doing without his work? In the records and stories of the blind, it seemed if they had a work it was something which they could continue. But with him, the work which made his life was gone.

Over there was the university. It had been a busy day at the university—old faces and new faces, all the exuberance of a new start, the enthusiasm for a clean slate—students anxious to make some particular class—how well he knew it all! Who was in his laboratory? Who working with his old things? To whom was coming the joy he had thought would be his? What man of all the world's men would achieve the things he had believed would crown his own life?

Some day Ernestine would read it to him. He had made her promise to do that, if it

came. He would see it all—just how it had been worked out, and the momentary joy of the revelation would sweep him back into it and he would forget how completely it was a thing apart from him. And then Ernestine would ask him if he wanted his chair a little higher or lower, or whether she should shut the window; and he would pick up one of his embossed books and try to read something, and he would know, as he had never known before, how the great world which did things was going right on without him.

There were a few little petitions he sent out every once in a while. "I want to remain a man! I want to keep my nerve. I don't want to whine. I don't want to get sorry for myself. For God's sake help me to be a good fellow—a half way decent sort of chap!"

And he had not tried in vain. His success, as to exteriors, had been good. Mrs. McCormick said it was indeed surprising how well one could get along without one's sight.

But within himself he had not gone far. Ernestine knew something of that—though he had tried his best with Ernestine, and Parkman knew, for Parkman had a way of knowing everything.

And yet they did not know it all. The waking up in the night and knowing it would not be any more light in the morning! Hearing the clock strike four or five, and thinking that in a little while he would be getting up and going to work, only to remember he would never be going to work in that old way again! The waking in the morning feeling like his old self, strength within him, his mind beseeching him to start in! No man had ever suffered with the craving for strong drink as he suffered for the work taken from him.

He had, by what grit he could summon, gone along for five months. But ahead were five years, ten years, thirty years, perhaps, and what of them? Each day was a struggle; the living of each day a triumph. Through thousands of days should it be

the same?

It was the future which took hold of him then—smothered him. He went down before the vision of those unlived days, the grim vision of those relentless, inevitable days, standing there waiting to be lived. It was desolation. The surrender of a strong man who had tried to the uttermost.

Whether it was because he upset a chair, whether she heard him groan, or whether she just knew in that way of hers that it was time for her to be there, he did not know. But he felt her at the door, and held out beseeching arms.

He crushed her to him very close. He wanted to bring her more close than she had ever come before. For he needed her as he had not needed her until this hour. "Ernestine! Ernestine!"—the sob in his voice was not to be denied—"What am I going to do?"

"Karl,"—after her moment of passionate silence—"tell me this. Doesn't it get any better? One bit easier?"

"No!"—that would have no denying; and then: "Oh but I'm the brute to talk to you like this, after you've been"—again he swept her into his arms—"what you have been to me this summer."

She guided him to a chair and knelt beside him. She held his hand for a minute as the mother holds the hand of the child in pain. And then she began, her voice tender, but quietly determined: "Karl dear—let's be honest. Let's not do so much pretending with each other. For just this once let's look it right in the face. I want to understand—oh how I want to! What's the very worst of it, dear? Is it—the work?"

"Yes!"—the word leaped out as though let loose from a long bondage. "Ernestine—no one but a man can quite see that. What is a man without a man's work? What is there for him to do but sit around in namby-pamby fashion and be fussed over and coddled and cheered up! Lord"—he threw away her hands and turned his face from her—"I'd rather be dead!"

Her utter silence recalled him to a sense of how she must be hurt. Could he have looked into her eyes just then he would never have ceased to regret those words.

There was contrition in his face as he turned back. He reached out for her hands—those faithful, loving hands he had thrust away. For just a minute she did not give them, but that was only for the minute—so quick was she to forgive, so eager to understand.

"Forget that, sweetheart—quick. I didn't know what I was saying. Why, liebchen—it's only you makes it bearable at all. If I did not have you I should—choose the other way."

"Karl!"—in an instant clinging to him wildly—"you hadn't thought—you couldn't think—"

"Oh, sweetheart—you've misunderstood. Now, dearie—don't—don't make me feel I've made you cry. All I meant, Ernestine, was that without you it would be so utterly unbearable."

He stroked her hair until she was quiet. "Why, liebchen—do you think anything under heaven could be so bad that I should want to leave you?"

"I should hope I had not failed—quite that completely," she whispered brokenly.

"Failed?—You? Come up here a little closer and I'll try to tell you just how far you've come from having failed."

At first he could tell her best in the passionate kiss, the gentle stroking of her face, the tenderness with which his hands rested upon her eyes. And then words added a little. "Everything, liebchen; everything of joy and comfort and beauty and light—light, sweetheart—everything of light and hope and consolation that comes to me now is through you. You've done more than I would have believed in human power. You have actually made me forget, and can you fancy how supreme a thing it is to make a man forget that he is blind? You've put the beautiful things before me in their most beautiful way. Do you suppose that alone, or with any one else, I could

see any beauty in anything? You've made me laugh! How did you ever do that—you wonderful little Ernestine? And, sweetheart, you've helped me with my self-respect. You've saved me in a thousand little ways from the humiliations of being blind. Why you actually must have some idea of what it is like yourself!"

"I have, Karl. I have imagined and thought about it and tried to—well, just trained myself, until I believe I do know something of what it is like."

"You love me!" he murmured, carried with that from despair to exultation.

"But if you could only know how much."

"I do know. I do know, dear. I wish that all the world—I'd hate to have them know, for it's just ours—but for the sake of faltering faith they ought to know what you've been to me this summer."

"Then, Karl,"—this after one of their precious silences—"I want to ask you something. It is hard to say it just right, but I'll try. You know that I love you—that we have one of those supreme loves which come at rare times—perhaps for the sake of what you call faltering faith. But, Karl—this will sound hard—but after all, doesn't it fail? Fail of being supreme? Doesn't it fail if it is not—satisfying? I don't mean that it should make up to one for such a thing as being blind, but if in spite of love like ours life seems unbearable to you without your work—why then, dear, doesn't it fail?"

He was long in answering, and then he only said, slowly: "I see. I see how you have reasoned it out. I wonder if I can make you understand?"

"Ernestine,"—the old enthusiasm had kindled in his face with the summoning of the thoughts—"no painter or sculptor ever loved his work more than I loved mine. And I had that same kind of joy in it; that delight in it as a beautiful thing to achieve. That may seem strange to you. But the working out of something I was able to do brought me the same delight the working out of a picture brings to you. Dear, it was my very soul. And so, instead of there being two forces in my life after I had you, it was just

the one big thing. You made me bigger and because I was bigger I wanted to do bigger things. Don't you see that?"

She held his hand a little more closely in response. He knew that she understood.

"Don't think I have given up—why of course I haven't. I will adjust myself in a little time—do what there is for me to do. I am going to see immediately about a secretary, a stenographer—no, Ernestine, I don't want you to do that. It's merely routine work, and I want you to do your own work. One of us must do the work it was intended we should. I could have gone on with some lecture work at the university, but I—this year I couldn't quite do that. I'll be more used to handling myself by next year, have myself better in hand in every way. I couldn't quite stand the smell from the laboratory just now. This year I shall work on those books I've told you about; just class-room books—I never could write anything that would be literature—I'm not built for that; but these things will be useful, I've felt the need of something of the sort in my own classes. I'll always make a living, Ernestine—don't you ever worry about that! And the world won't know—why should we let it know we're not satisfied? But I can't hide from you that it is the other, the creative work—the—oh, I tell you, Ernestine, the fellows up there in the far north don't have all the fun! It may be great to push one's way through icebergs—but I know something that is greater than that! They say there is a joy in standing where no man ever stood before, and I can see that, for I too have stood where no man ever stood before! But I'm ahead of them—mine's the greater joy—for I knew that my territory was worth something—that the world would follow where I had led!"—The old force, fire, joyous enthusiasm had bounded into his voice. But it died away, and it was with a settling to sadness he said, "You see, little girl, if there was a wonderful picture you had conceived—your masterpiece, something you had reason to feel would stand as one of the world's great pictures, if you had begun on it, were in the heat of it, and then had to give it up, it would not quite satisfy you, would it, dear, to settle down and write some textbooks on art?"

"Karl—it's I who have been blind! I tried so hard to understand—but I—oh, Karl—can't we do something? Can't we do something about it?"

"I was selfish to tell you—but it is good to have you understand."

But she had not let go that idea of something being done. "Karl, couldn't you go on with it? Isn't there some way? Can't we find a way?"

He shook his head. "I have thought of it by the hour—gone over every side of it. But work like that takes a man's whole being. It takes more than mere eyes and hands—more than just mind. You must have the spirit right for it—all things must work together. It's not the sort of work to do under a handicap. God knows I'd start in if I could see my way—but neither the world nor myself would have anything to gain. Some one would have to be eyes for me—and so much more than eyes. It's all in how things look, dear—their appearance tells the story. An assistant could tell me what he saw—but he could not bring to me what would be conveyed if I saw it myself. All that was individual in my work would be gone. Minds do not work together like that. I should be too much in the dark," he concluded, sadly.

For a long time her head was on his shoulder. She was giving him of that silent sympathy which came with an eternal freshness from her heart.

"We'll manage pretty well," he went on, in a lighter tone which did not quite deceive her. "Our life is not going to be one long spell of moping. It's time now for the year's work to begin. You must get at your pictures, and I'll get at the books. Oh, I'll get interested in them, all right—and oh, liebchen"—with a tenderness which swept all else aside—"I have you!"

CHAPTER XXIII

HER VISION

Some of the university people came over that night to see Karl. Ernestine was glad

of that, for she had been dreading the evening. Their talk of the afternoon had made it more clear and more hard than it had ever been before.

Her mothering instinct had been supreme that summer. It had dominated her so completely as to blur slightly the clearness of her intellectual vision. To be doing things for him, making him as comfortable as possible, to find occupation for him as one does for the convalescent, to hover about him, showering him with manifestations of her love and woman's protectiveness—it had stirred the mother in her, and in the depths of her sorrow there had been a sublime joy.

Now she could not see her way ahead. It was her constant doing things to "make it up to him" had made the summer bearable at all. With the clearing of her vision her sustaining power seemed taken from her.

"And how has it gone with you this summer?" Professor Hastings asked, holding both of her hands for a minute in fatherly fashion as she met him in the hall.

He scarcely heard her reply, for the thought came to him: "If he could only see her now!"

It was her pride and her wistfulness, her courage and her appeal, the union of defiance and tenderness which held one strangely in the face of Ernestine. She was as the figure of love standing there wounded but unvanquished before the blows of fate.

"Professor Hastings has come to see you, Karl," she said, as they entered the library; and as he rose she laid her hand very gently upon his arm, a touch which seemed more like an unconscious little movement of affection than an assistance.

"Good for Hastings!" said Karl, with genuine heartiness.

"And have a good many thought waves from me come to you this summer?" he asked, shaking Karl's hand with a warmth which conveyed the things he left unsaid.

"Yes, they've come," Karl replied. "Oh, we knew our friends were with us,"—a little

hastily. "But we've had a pretty good summer—haven't we, Ernestine?" turning his face to her.

"In many ways it has been a delightful summer,"—her voice now had that blending of defiance and appeal, and as she looked at her husband and smiled it flashed through Professor Hastings' mind—"He knew she did that!"

"You see,"—after they were seated—"I was really very uneducated. Isn't it surprising, Hastings, how much some of us don't know? Now what do you know about the history of art? Could you pass a sophomore examination in it? Well, I couldn't until Ernestine began coaching me up this summer. Now I'm quite fit to appear before women's clubs as a lecturer on art. Literature, too, I'm getting on with; I'm getting acquainted with all the Swedes and the Irishmen and the Poles who ever put pen to paper."

"Karl," she protested—"Swedes and Irishmen and Poles!"

"Isn't that what they are?" he demanded, innocently.

"Well they're not exactly a lot of immigrants."

"Yes they are; immigrants into the domain of my—shall I say intellectuality?"

They laughed a little, and there was a moment's pause. "Tell me about school," he said, abruptly, his voice all changed.

Professor Hastings felt the censorship of Ernestine's eyes upon him as he talked; they travelled with a frightened eagerness from the face of the man who spoke to him who listened. He could see them deepen as they touched dangerous ground, and he wondered how she could go on living with that intensity of feeling.

"Beason is back," he said, in telling of the returnings and the changes.

"Beason!"—Dr. Hubers' voice rang out charged with a significance the older man could not understand. "You say Beason is back?"—the voice then was as if something had broken.

"Yes, it was unexpected. He had thought he would be West this year, but things turned out better than he had expected."

"Yes, he told me—in April, that he would be West this year." As he sank back, his face in repose, Professor Hastings saw something of what the summer had done.

Ernestine's eyes were upon him, a little reproachful, and beseeching. But before he could think of anything redeeming to say two other university men had been admitted.

It was hard at first. Dr. Hubers did not rouse himself to more than the merest conventionality, and all the rest of it was left to his wife, who, however, rose to the situation with a superb graciousness. Finally they touched a topic which roused Karl. His mind reached out to it with his old eagerness and virility, and they were soon in the heat of one of those discussions which wage when men of active mind and kindred interest are brought together.

Ernestine sat for a little time listening to them, grateful for the relaxation of the tension, more grateful still for this touch of Karl's old-time self. But following upon that the very consciousness that they saw the real Karl so seldom now brought added pain. What would the future hold? What could it hold? Must he not go farther and farther from this real self as he adjusted himself more and more fully to the new order of things?

Watching him then, as he talked and listened, she could appreciate anew what Karl's eyes had meant to his personality. It almost broke her heart to see him lean forward and look in that half-eager, half-fretted way toward the man who was speaking, as though his blindness were a barrier between their minds, a barrier he instinctively tried to beat down.

She wanted to get away, and she felt they would get along better now without her. So she left them, laughingly, to their cigars and their discussion.

She wandered about the house listlessly, mechanically doing a few things here and

there. And then, still aimlessly, she went up to her studio. She sat down on the floor, leaning her head against the couch. Just then she looked like a very tired, disappointed child.

And it was with something of a child's simplicity she saw things then. Was it right to treat Karl that way—Karl who was so great and good—could do such big things? Was it fair or right that Karl should be unhappy—Karl who did so much for other people, and who had all this sweetness and tenderness with the greatness?

What could she do for Karl? She loved him enough to lay down her life for him. Then was there not some way she could use her life to make things better for him?

And so she sat there, her thoughts brooding over him, too tired for anything but very simple thinking, too worn for passion, but filled with the sadness of a grieving child. It was after she had been looking straight at it for a long time that she realised she Was looking at a picture on her easel.

Dimly, uncaringly, she knew what the picture was. But she was thinking only of Karl. It was a long time before her mind really followed her eyes to the picture.

It was a sketch of a woman's face. She remembered what a splendid model she had had for it. And then suddenly her mind went full upon it; her whole bearing changed; she leaned forward with a passionate intentness.

Unsatisfied longing, disappointed motherhood, deep, deep things stirred only to be denied! Yes, the model had been a good one, but it was from her own soul the life things in that face had come.

It brought them all back now—all those things she had put into it. A great wave of passion and yearning swept through her;—new questionings, sorrow touched with resentment, longing mingled with defiance. Why could not this have gone right with them? What it would have meant to Karl in these days!—sustained, comforted, kept strong.

The pain of those first days was translated by the deeper understanding of these. Her

eyes were very deep, about her mouth an infinite yearning as she asked some of those questions for which God had no answer.

But there was something about the picture she did not like. She looked at it with a growing dissatisfaction. And then she saw what it was. The woman was sinking to melancholy. She bowed under the hand of fate. She did not know why, this night of all others, she should resent that. What did she want? What could she expect?

She stirred restlessly under the dissatisfaction. It seemed too much fate's triumph to leave it like this. Not this surrender, but a little of the Spartan, a touch of sternness, a little defiance in the hunger, an understanding—that was it!—a submission in which there was the dignity of understanding. Ah—here it was!—a knowing that thousands had endured and must endure, but as an echo from the Stoics—"Well?"

The idea fascinated her—swept through her with a strange, wild passion. She scarcely knew what she was doing, when, after a long time of looking at the picture, she began getting out her things. Her face had wholly changed. She too had now the understanding, stern, all-comprehending—"Well?"—for fate.

She could work! That was the thing remained. She would not bow down under it and submit. She would work! She would erect something to stand for their love—something so great, so universal and eternal that it would make up for all taken away. She would crystallise their lives into something so big and supreme that Karl himself, feeling, understanding that which he could not see, would come at the end into all the satisfaction of the victor! Could she do greater things for him than that?

She glowed under the idea. It filled, thrilled, intoxicated her. And she could do it! As she saw that a few master strokes were visualising her idea she came into greater consciousness of her power than she had ever had before.

It all flowed into big new impetus for her work. A year before she had wanted to work because she was so happy, now with a fierce passion she turned to her work as

the thing to make it right for their lives. Out of all this she would rise to so great an understanding, so supreme a power that they too could hurl their defiant—"Well?"—at the fate which had believed them conquered. In the glow and the passion and the exaltation of it she felt that nothing in the world, no trick of fate, no onslaught of God or man, could keep her from the work that was hers. She had a vision of hosts of men, all powers of fate, marching against her, and she, unfaltering, serene, confident, just doing her work! It was one of the perfect moments of the divine intoxication.

It was in the very glow of it that the strange thing happened. The lights from her ruby, caught in a shaft of light, blurred her vision for an instant, and in that same instant, as if borne with the lights of the stone, there penetrated her glowing, exuberant mood—quick, piercing, like an arrow shot in with strong, true hand—"He loves his work just like this. You know now. You understand."

Her mood fell away like a pricked bubble. The divine glow, that passionate throbbing of conscious power, made way for the comprehension of that thing shot in upon her like a shaft.—"He loves his work just like this. You know now. You understand."

She had been standing, and she sank to a chair. Like all great changes it sapped up strength. The blood had cooled too suddenly, and she was weak and trembling—but, oh, how she understood! He himself did not understand it as she understood it now.

Pushing upon him—dominating him—clamouring—crowding for outlet when outlet had been closed—gathering, growing, and unable to find its valve of escape—why it would crowd upon him—kill him! Beat it down? But it was the deathless in him. With human strength put out a fire that was divine?

She covered her face with her hands to shut it out. But she could not shut it out; it was there—a thing to be faced, not evaded—a thing which would grow, not draw away. And she loved him so! In this moment of perfect understanding, this divine

camaraderie of the soul—knowing that they were touched with the same touch—drew from a common fount—she felt within her a love for him, an understanding, which all of the centuries behind her, the eternity out of which she had come—had gone to make.

And then, grim, stern, she put her intellect upon it. She went over everything he had said that afternoon. Each thought of it opened up new channels, and she followed them all to their uttermost. And in that getting of it in hand there was more than insight, knowledge, conviction. There was a complete sensing of the truth, a comprehending of things just without the pale of reason.

Her face pale, her eyes looking into that far distance, she sat there for more than an hour, oblivious for the first time since his blindness to the thought that Karl might be needing her, lost to all conventional instincts as hostess. Hard and fast the thoughts beat upon her, and then at last in the wake of those thoughts, out beyond, there was born a great light. It staggered her at first; it seemed a light too great for human mind to bear. But time passed, and the light burned on, steady, fixed, not to pass away. And in that momentous hour which words are quite powerless to record, something was buried, and something born.

CHAPTER XXIV

LOVE CHALLENGES FATE

The doctor hung up the receiver slowly and with meditation. And when he turned from the telephone his thoughts did not leave the channel to which it had directed them. What was it Mrs. Hubers wanted? Why was she coming to the office at four that afternoon? Something in her voice made him wonder.

He had offered to go out, but she preferred coming to the office. Evidently then she wished to see him alone; and she had specified that she come when he could give her the most time. Then there was something to talk over. He had asked for Karl,

and she answered, cheerfully, that he was well. "And you?" he pursued, and she had laughed with that—an underlying significance in that laugh perplexed him as he recalled it, and had answered buoyantly: "I? Oh, splendid!"

It did not leave his mind all day; he thought about it a great deal as he drove his car from place to place. It even came to him in the operating room, and it was not usual for anything to intrude there.

He reached the office a few minutes ahead of the hour, but she was waiting for him. She rose as she saw him at the door and took an eager step forward. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes very bright, and her smile, as she held out her hand, had that same quality as her voice of the morning.

She was so far removed from usual things that she resorted to no conventional pleasantries after they had entered the doctor's inner office, and she waited for him to attend to a few little things before giving her his attention. He knew by the way her eyes followed him about that she was eager to begin, and while there was a little timidity about her it seemed just a timidity of manner, of things exterior, while back of that he felt the force of her poise.

He had never seen her so beautiful. She was wearing a brown velvet suit, a golden brown like some of the glints in her hair and some of the lights in her eyes. Her eyes, too, held that something which puzzled him. It was a windy day, and her hair was a little disarranged, which made her look very young, and her veil was thrown back from her face just right to make a frame for it. Why could not all women manage those big veils the way some women did, he wondered.

He sat down in the chair before his desk, and swung it around facing her. Then he waited for her to speak.

That little timidity was upon her for the second, but she broke through it, seeming to shake it off with a little shake of her head. "Dr. Parkman," she said—her voice was low and well controlled—"I have come to you because I want you to help me."

He liked that. Very few people came out with the truth at the start that way.

"I wonder if you know," she went on, looking at him with a very sweet seriousness, "that Karl is very unhappy?"

His face showed that that was unexpected. "Why, yes," he assented, "I know that his heart has not been as philosophical as some of his words; but"—gently—"what can you expect?"

She did not answer that, but pondered something a minute. "Dr. Parkman," she began abruptly, "just why do you think it is Karl cannot go on with his work? I do not mean his lectures, but his own work in the laboratory, the research?"

Again he showed that she was surprising him. "Why surely you understand that. It is self-evident, is it not? He cannot do his laboratory work because he has lost his eyes."

"Eyes—yes. But the eye is only an instrument; he has not lost his brain." The flush in her cheeks deepened. Her eyes met his in challenge. Her voice on that had been very firm.

He was quick to read beyond the words. "You are asking, intending to ask, why he could not go on, working through some assistant?"

"I want to know just what is your idea of why he cannot. All the things of mind and temperament—things which make him Karl—are there as before. Are we not letting a very little thing hold us back?"—there was much repression now, as though she must hold herself in check, and wait.

"I've thought about it too!" he exclaimed. "Heaven knows I've tried to see it that way. But my conclusion has always been like Karl's: the handicap would be too great."

"Why?" she asked calmly.

"Why? Why—because," he replied, almost impatiently, and then laughed a little at

his woman's reason.

"I'll tell you why!"—her eyes deepening. "I'll tell you the secret of your conclusion. You concluded he could not go on with his work just because no assistant could be in close enough touch with Karl to make clear the things he saw."

He thought a minute. Then, "That's about it," he answered briefly.

"You concluded that two men's brains could not work together in close enough harmony for one man's eyes to fit the other man's brain."

"You put it very clearly," he assented.

She paused, as though to be very sure of herself here. "Then, doctor, looking a little farther into it, one sees something else. If there were some one close enough to Karl to bring to his brain, through some other medium than eyes, the things the eyes would naturally carry; if there were some one close enough to make things just as plain as though Karl were seeing them himself, then"—her voice gathered in intensity—"despite the loss of his eyes, he could go right on with his work."

"Um—well, yes, if such an impossible thing were possible."

"But it is possible! Oh if I can only make you see this now! Doctor, don't you see it? I am closer to him than any one in the world! I am the one to take up his work!"

He pushed back his chair and sat staring at her speechlessly.

"Dr. Parkman," she began—and it seemed now that he had never known her at all before—"most of the biggest things ever proposed in this world have sounded very ridiculous to the people who first heard of them. The unprecedented has usually been called the impossible. Now I ask you to do just one thing. Don't hold my idea at arm's length as an impossibility. Look it straight in the face without prejudice. Who would do more for Karl than any one else on earth? Who is closer to him than any one else in the world? Who can make him see without seeing?—yet, know without knowing? Dr. Parkman,"—voice eager, eyes very tender—"is there any

question in your mind as to who can come closest to Karl?"

"But—but—" he gasped.

"I know," she hastened—"much to talk over; so many things to overcome. But won't you be very fair to me and look at it first as a whole? The men in Karl's laboratory know more about science than I do. But they do not know as much about Karl. They have the science and I have the spirit. I can get the science but they could never get the spirit. After all, isn't there some meaning in that old phrase 'a labour of love'? Doctor"—her smile made it so much clearer than her words—"did you ever hear of knowledge and skill working a miracle? Do you know anything save love which can do the impossible?"

He did not speak at once. He did not find it easy to answer words like that. "But, my dear Mrs. Hubers," he finally began—"you are simply assuming—"

"Yes,"—and the tenderness leaped suddenly to passion and the passion intensified to sternness—"I am simply assuming that it can be done, and through obstacle and argument, from now until the end of my life, I am going on assuming that very thing, and furthermore, Dr. Parkman,"—relaxing a little and smiling at him under standingly—"just as soon as the light has fully dawned upon you, you are going to begin assuming that, and you are the very man—oh, I know—to keep on assuming it in the face of all the obstacles which the University of Chicago—yes, and all creation—may succeed in piling up. There is one thing on which you and I are going to stand very firmly together. That thing,"—with the deep quiet of finality—"is that Karl shall go on with his work."

Dr. Parkman had never been handled that way before; perhaps it was its newness which fascinated him; at any rate he seemed unable to say the things he felt he should be saying.

"Dr. Parkman, the only weak people in this world are the people who sit down and say that things are impossible. The only big people are the people who stand up and

declare in the face of whatsoever comes that nothing is impossible. For Karl there is some excuse; the shock has been too great—his blindness has shut him in. But you and I are out in the light of day, doctor, and I say that you and I have been weaklings long enough."

He had never been called a weakling before—he had never thought to be called a weakling, but the strangeness of that was less strange than something in her eyes, her voice, her spirit, which seemed drawing him on.

"Karl has lost his eyes. Has he lost his brain—any of those things which make him Karl? All that has been taken away is the channel of communication. I am not presuming to be his brain. All I ask is to carry things to the brain. Why, doctor,—I'm ashamed, mortified—that we hadn't thought of it before!"

"But—how?" he finally asked, weakly enough.

"I will go into Karl's laboratory and learn how to work—all that part of it I want you to arrange for me. After all, I have a good foundation. I think I told you about my father, and how hard he tried to make a scientist of me? And it was queer about my laboratory work. It was always easy for me. I could see it, all right—enough my father's child for that, but you see my working enthusiasm and ambition were given to other things. Now I'll make things within me join forces, for I will love the work now, because of what it can do for Karl. I need to be trained how to work, how to observe, and above all else learn to tell exactly what I see. I shall strive to become a perfectly constructed instrument—that's all. And I will be better than the usual laboratory assistant, for not having any ideas of my own I will not intrude my individuality upon Karl—to blur his vision. I shall not try to deduce—and mislead him with my wrong conclusions. I shall simply see. A man who knew more about it might not be able to separate what he saw from what he thought—and that would be standing between Karl and the facts."

He was looking at her strangely. "And your own work—what would be happening to

it, if you were to do—this?"

"I have given my own work up," she said, and she said it so simply that it might have seemed a very simply matter.

"You can't do that," he met her, sharply.

"Yes,"—slowly—"I can. I love it, but I love Karl more. If I have my work he cannot have his, and Karl has been deprived of his eyes—he is giving up the sunlight—the stars—the face he loves—many things. I thought it all out last night, and the very simple justice of it is that Karl is the one to have his work."

She was dwelling upon it,—a wonderful tenderness lighting her face; for the minute she had forgotten him.

Then suddenly she came sharply back to the practical, brought herself ruthlessly back to it, as if fearing it was her practicality he would question. "Besides, Karl's work is the more important. Nobody is going to die for a water colour or an oil painting; people are dying every day for the things Karl can give. But, doctor,"—far too feminine not to press the advantage—"if I can do that, don't you think you can afford to break through your conservatism and—you will, doctor, won't you?"

But Dr. Parkman had wheeled his chair about so that she could not see his face. His eyes had grown a little dim.

"You see, doctor,"—gently,—"what I am going to give to it? Not only the things any one else could give, but all my love for Karl, and added to that all those things within myself which have heretofore been poured into my own work. I can paint, doctor, you and I know that, and I think you know something of how I love it. Something inside of me has always been given to it—a great big something for which there is no name. Now I am going to just force all that into a new channel, and don't you see how much there will be to give? And in practical ways too I can make my own work count. I know how to use my hands—and there isn't a laboratory assistant in the whole University of Chicago knows as much about colour

as I do!"—she smiled like a pleased child.

He looked at her then—a long look. He had forgotten the moisture in his eyes,—he did not mind. And it was many years since any one had seen upon Dr. Parkman's face the look which Ernestine saw there now.

"Isn't it strange, doctor," she went on, after a pause, "how we think we understand, and then suddenly awake to find we have not been understanding at all? Karl and I had a long talk yesterday, and in that talk he seemed able to let me right into it all. All summer long I did my best, but I see now I had not been understanding. And understanding as I do now—caring as I care—do you think I can sit quietly by and see Karl make himself over to fit this miserable situation? Do you think I am going to help him adjust himself to giving up the great thing in him? No—he is not going to accept it! I tell you Karl is to be Karl—he is to do Karl's work—and find Karl's place. Why I tell you, Dr. Parkman, I will not have it any other way!"

It was a passionate tyranny of the spirit over which caution of mind seemed unable to prevail. His reason warned him—I cannot see how this and this and that are to be done, but the soul in her voice seemed drawing him to a light out beyond the darkness.

"Doctor,"—her eyes glowing with a tender pride—"think of it! Think of Karl doing his work in spite of his blindness! Won't it stand as one of the greatest things in the whole history of science?"

He nodded, the light of enthusiasm growing more steady in his own eye.

"But I have not finished telling you. After our talk yesterday it seemed to me I could not go on at all. I didn't know what to do. In the evening I was up in my studio—"—she paused, striving to formulate it,—"No, I see I can't tell it, but suddenly things came to me, and, doctor, I understand it now better than Karl understands it himself."

He felt the things which she did not say; indeed through it all it was the unspoken

drew him most irresistibly.

"I'll not try to tell you how it all worked itself out, but I saw things very clearly then, and all the facts and all the reason and all the logic in the world could not make me believe I did not see the truth. My idea of taking it up myself, of my being the one to bring Karl back to his work, seemed to come to me like some great divine light. I suppose," she concluded, simply, "that it was what you would call a moment of inspiration."

She leaned her head back as though very tired, but smiling a little. He did not speak; he had too much the understanding heart to intrude upon the things shining from her face.

"I could do good work, doctor. I've always felt it, and I have done just enough to justify me in knowing it. I don't believe any one ever loved his work more than I love mine, and last night when I saw things so clearly I saw how the longing for it would come to me—oh, I know. Don't think I do not know. But something will sustain me; something will keep my courage high, and that something is the look there will be on Karl's face when I tell him what I have done. You see we will not tell Karl at first; we will keep it a great secret. He will know I am working hard, but will think it is my own work. If we told him now he would say it was impossible. His blindness, the helplessness that goes with it, has taken away some of his confidence, and he would say it could not be done. But what will he say,"—she laughed, almost gleefully—"when he finds I have gone ahead and made myself ready for him? When you tell him I can do it—and the laboratory men tell him so? He will try it then, just out of gratitude to me. Oh, it will not go very well at first. It is going to take practice—days and weeks and months of it—to learn how to work together. But, little by little, he will gain confidence in himself and in me, he will begin getting back his grip—enthusiasm—all the things of the old-time Karl, and then some day when we have had a little success about something he will burst

forth—'By Jove—Ernestine—I believe we can make it go!'—and that," she concluded, softly, "will be worth it all to me."

Again a silence which sank deeper than words—a silence which sealed their compact.

She came from it with the vigorously practical, "Now, Dr. Parkman,"—sitting up very straight, with an assertive little gesture—"you go out to that university and fire their souls! Wake them up! Make them see it! And when do you think I can begin?"

That turned them to actual issues; he spoke freely of difficulties, and they discussed them together calmly. Her enthusiasm was not builded on dreams alone; it was not of that volatile stuff which must perish in detail and difficulty. She was ready to meet it all, to ponder and plan. And where he had been carried by her enthusiasm he was held by her resourcefulness.

"Are august dignitaries of reason and judgment likely to rise up and make it very unpleasant for you after I've gone?" she asked him, laughingly, when she had risen to go.

"Very likely to," he laughed.

"Tell them it's not their affair! Tell them to do what they're told and not ask too many questions!"

"I'll try to put them in their proper place," he assured her.

He watched her as she stood there buttoning her glove—slight, almost frail, scarcely one's idea of a "masterful woman." It struck him then as strange that she had not so much as asked for pledge of his allegiance. What was it about her—?

She was holding out her hand. Something in her eyes lighted and glorified her whole face. "Thank you, doctor," she said, very low.

For a long time he sat motionless before his desk. He was thinking of many things. "Nothing in which to believe," he murmured at last, looking about the room still

warm with the spirit she had left—"nothing in which to believe—when there is love such as this in the world?"

CHAPTER XXV

DR. PARKMAN'S WAY

The next morning Dr. Parkman turned his automobile in the direction of the University of Chicago. There was a very grim look on his face as he sent the car, with the hand of an expert, through the crowded streets. He had his do-or-die expression, and the way he was letting the machine out would not indicate a shrinking back from what lay before him. He rather chuckled once; that is, it began in a chuckle, and ended with the semblance of a grunt, and when he finally swung the car down the Midway, he was saying to himself: "Glad of it! I've been wanting for a long time to tell that Lane what I thought of him."

Inquiries over the telephone had developed the fact that through some shifting about, Dr. George Lane was temporary head of the department; it was to Dr. George Lane then that Dr. Parkman must go with the matter in hand this morning. That had seemed bad at first, for Lane was one man out there he couldn't get on with and did not want to. They always clashed; upon their last meeting Lane had said—"Really now, Dr. Parkman, don't you feel that a broader culture is the real need of the medical profession?" and Parkman had retorted, "Shouldn't wonder, but has it ever struck you, Dr. Lane, that a little more horse sense is the real need of the university professor?" He declared, grimly, as he finally drew his car to a snorting stop at the university that he would have to try some other method than "firing his soul," as Ernestine had bade him do. "In the first place," he figured it out, "he has no soul, and if he had, I wouldn't be the one to fire it with anything but rage." But the doctor was not worrying much about results. He thought he had a little ammunition in reserve which assured the outcome, and which would enable him, at the same time, to "let

loose on Lane," should the latter show a tendency to become too important.

The erudite Lane was a neatly built little fellow, very spick and span. First America and then England had done their best—or worst—by him. Just as every hair on his head was properly brushed, so Dr. Parkman felt quite sure that every idea within the head was properly beaten down with a pair of intellectual military brushes, one of which he had acquired to the west, and the other to the east of the Atlantic. "I suppose he's a scholar," mused the doctor, as he surveyed the back of the dignitary's head while waiting, "but what in God's name would he do if he were ever to be hit with an original idea?"

"Ah, yes, Dr. Parkman, we so seldom see you very busy men out here. We always appreciate it when you busy men look in upon us."

Now the tone did not appeal to Dr. Parkman, and with one of his quick decisions he bade tact take itself to the four winds, leaving him alone with his reserve guns.

"I always appreciate it," he began abruptly, not attempting to deny that he was a busy man, "when people take as little of my time as possible. I will try to do unto others as I would that others do unto me."

By the merest lifting of his eyebrows, Lane signified that he would make no attempt at detaining the doctor longer than he wished to stay. He awaited punctiliously the other man's pleasure, silently emphasising that the interview was not of his bringing about. "Thinks I'm a boor and a brute," mused Parkman.

"What I wanted to see you about," he began, "relates to Dr. Hubers."

"Ah, yes—poor Hubers. A remarkable man, in many ways. It is one of those things which make one—very sad. We wanted him to go on with his lectures, but he did not seem to feel quite equal to it."

"Huh!"—that might mean a variety of things. The tone of patronage infuriated Karl's friend. "Jealous—sore—glad Karl's out of it," he was interpreting it.

Then he delivered this very calmly: "Well, the fact of the matter is, that among all medical men, and in that part of the scientific world which I may call the active part—the only part of any real value—Karl Hubers is regarded so far above every other man who ever set foot in this university that all the rest of the place is looked upon as something which surrounds him. Over in Europe, they say—Chicago?—University of Chicago? Oh, yes—yes indeed, I remember now. That's where Hubers is.'"

"The professor," as Dr. Parkman frequently insisted on calling him, showed himself capable of a rush of red blood to the face, and of a very human engulfing of emotion in a hurried cough. "Ah, I see you are a warm friend, Dr. Parkman," quickly regaining his impenetrable superiority, and smiling tolerantly. "But looking at it quite dispassionately, putting aside sympathy and all personal feeling, I have sometimes felt that Dr. Hubers, in spite of his—I may say gifts, in some directions, is a little lacking in that broad culture, that finer quality of universal scholarship which should dominate the ideal university man of to-day."

Dr. Parkman was smiling in a knowing way to himself. "I see what you mean, Professor, though I would put it a little differently. I wouldn't call him in the least lacking in broad culture, but he is rather lacking in pedantry, in limitations, in intellectual snobbery, in university folderols. And of course a man who is actually doing something in the world, who stands for real achievement, has a little less time to look after the fine quality of universal scholarship."

Perhaps Lane would have been either more or less than human, had he not retorted to that: "But as to this great achievement—it has never been forthcoming, has it?"

The doctor had a little nervous affection of his face. The corner of one eye and one corner of his mouth sometimes twitched a little. People who knew him well were apt to grow nervous themselves when they made that observation. But as no one who knew him chanced to be present, the storm broke all unannounced.

"For which," he snarled out, "every cheap skate of a university professor who never did anything himself but paddle other men's canoes, for which every human phonograph and intellectual parrot sends out thanks from his two-by-four soul! But among men who are men, among physicians who have cause to know his worth, among scientists big enough to get out of their own shadows, and, thank God, among the people who haven't been fossilised by clammy universities out of all sense of human values—among them, I say, Karl Hubers is appreciated for what he was close to doing when this damnable fate stepped in and stopped him!"

The man of broad culture, very white as to the face, rose to his fullest height. It should not be held against him that his fullest height failed in reaching the other man's shoulder. "If there is nothing further," he choked out, "perhaps we may consider the interview concluded?"

"No," retorted Parkman serenely, "the interview has just begun. It's your business, isn't it, to listen to matters relating to this department?"

"It is; but as I am accustomed to meeting men of some—"

"Manners?" supplied the doctor pleasantly. "As I am accustomed to men of a somewhat different type,"—he picked the phrase punctiliously, manifestly a conservative, even in war—"I was naturally unprepared for the nature of your remarks."

"Oh well, the unexpected must be rather agreeable when one leads so cut and dried a life. But what I want to see you about," he went on, quite as though he had dropped the most pleasant thing in the world, "is just this. I want you to give the use of Dr. Hubers' laboratory, his equipment and at least one of his assistants, to Dr. Hubers' wife, that she may get in shape to work with him as his assistant, and enable him to carry on his work and do those things, which, as you correctly state, are still unachieved."

Now the delivering of that pleased Dr. Parkman very much. He scarcely attempted

to conceal his righteous pride.

"Really, now," gasped the head of the department, after a minute of speechless staring, "really, now, Dr. Parkman, you astonish me."—"That's the truth, if he ever spoke it," thought the doctor grimly."—Dr. Hubers' wife, I understand you to say?"—and he of erudition was equal to a covert sneer—"just what has she to do with it, please?"

"She has everything to do with it. In the first place, she is rather interested in Dr. Hubers. Then she's a remarkable woman. Needs to freshen up on some things, needs quite a little coaching, in fact; but in my judgment the best way for Hubers to go on with his work—you didn't think for a moment he was out of it, did you?—is for his wife to get in shape to work with him. That can be arranged all right?" he concluded pleasantly.

Then Dr. George Lane spoke with the authority in him vested. "It certainly can not," he said, with an icy decisiveness.

"But why not?" pursued Parkman, innocently.

"Oh, now, don't misunderstand me, Professor. I didn't for a minute expect that you were to give any of your valuable time to Mrs. Hubers. Hastings is the fellow I'd like her turned over to. He's a friend of mine, and he's in sympathy, you know, with Dr. Hubers' work. All you'll have to do is to tell Hastings to do it," explained the doctor, expansively.

The head of the department quite gleamed with the pride of authority as he pronounced: "Which you may be very certain I shall not do."

"No?" said Parkman, leaning over the desk a little and looking at him. "You say—no?"

"I do," replied the man in authority, with brevity, emphasis and finality.

Dr. Parkman leaned back in his chair and seemed to be in deep thought. "Then the

popular idea is all wrong, isn't it?"

"I am at a loss to know to what popular idea you refer," said the professor, with a suitable indifference.

"Oh merely to the popular idea that this place amounts to something; that it has let go of a little mediaevalism, and is more than a crude, cheap pattern—funny what ideas people get, isn't it? Now there are people who think the university here puts a value on individuality, that it would actually bend a rule or two to fit an individual case, in fact that it likes initiative, encourages originality, wouldn't in the least mind having a few actual achievements to its credit."

"At the same time," goaded from his icy calm—"it does not propose to make itself ridiculous!"

"And doing a rather unconventional thing, in order to bring about a very great thing, would be making itself ridiculous, would it?"

"I fail to see how anything so preposterous could bring about good results," said the man in authority, introducing into that a note of dismissal.

"Do you?" replied Parkman, not yet dismissed. "Well, if you will pardon a little more plain speaking, I will say that this is something I know a good deal more about than you do."

"We have made other arrangements for the laboratory," and the professor picked up a paper from his desk and looked it over, nice subtilties evidently being lost.

"So? Going to give it to some fellow who will devote himself, after the fashion of university men, to verifying other men's conclusions?"

Then Dr. Parkman rose. "Well," he said, "you've had your chance. You had a chance to do something which would give this place an excuse for existing. I'm sorry you weren't big enough to take it.

"I fear medical men may feel some little prejudice about this," he remarked,

easily—not in the least as though dealing in heavy ammunition. "Hubers commands the medical men, you know. They care more for him than for all the rest of the fellows out here put together. About that medical school of yours," he said, meditatively, "that you're pushing so hard just now,—to whom shall I tender my resignation as chairman of the committee I'm on? And, at the same time, I'll just be released from the lectures I was to give in the winter quarter. I'm entirely too busy to spend my time on a place that doesn't care for anything but dead men's bones. Lewis and Richmond will probably want to pull out too. Of course," he went on, seemingly to himself, "a thing like this will unfortunately be noised about, and all doctors will be a little sore about your not caring to stand by Hubers. But I suppose I had better see the president about all that. He gets home next week? And, come to think of it, I'm pretty close to a couple of members of the board. I operated on both Lessing and Tyler. Both of those fellows have a notion they owe their lives to me. That makes people feel rather close to one, you know. But then, of course, you don't know—why should you? And, dear me—there's that rich old patient of mine, Burley. Now isn't it strange,"—turning genially to Lane, as if merely interesting him in a philosophical proposition—"how one thing leads to another? I fear Burley may not be so interested in making that gift to the new medical building, if he knows I've cut loose from the place. The president will feel rather sore about that, too,—you know how the president is about such things. But then,"—shrugging his shoulders indifferently—"he needn't feel sore at me."

Dr. George Lane was swallowing very hard. Though learned, he was not dull. Word by word he had drunk in the bitter truth that this big, dark, gruff, ill-mannered man was not to be put down with impunity. Call it bullying—any hard name you would, there was no evading the fact that it was power in sledge hammer strokes. "The professor" was just wise enough to see that there lay before him the unpleasant task of retraction.

"Ah—of course, doctor," he began, striving for nonchalance, "do not take this as too

final. You see anything so unusual as this will have to come before the committee. You did not present it to me—ah—very fully, but the more I consider it, the more I am disposed to think it is a thing we—may care to undertake. I—will present it."

"Oh, don't bother about that," said the doctor pleasantly. "I wouldn't worry the committee about it, if I were you. I can get a down-town laboratory all right. I simply thought I would give the university a chance at the thing. It doesn't matter," he concluded, opening the door.

"Well now, I'll tell you, doctor," said Lane, and part of his face was white, and part of it was red, "while you're out here, you would better go up and see Hastings. I'm sure I can say—speaking for the committee—that we will be very glad to have Mrs. Hubers here."

"I fired his soul all right," thought the doctor, grimly, as he walked up to find Hastings. "Those little two by fours!"

CHAPTER XXVI

OLD-FASHIONED LOVE

Karl's new secretary was what Karl himself called "one of those philosophical ducks." "That is," he explained to Ernestine, "he is one of those fellows who has been graduated from science into philosophy."

"But wouldn't you get on better with one of the scientific students who hadn't been graduated yet?" she laughed.

"Oh, no; no, I don't mind having a graduate. Ross can do the work all right. I'm lucky to get him. There aren't many of them who are stenographers, and then he can give me most of his time. He's finishing up for his Ph.D."

"And was he really a student of science in the beginning?"

"Well, after a fashion. The kind that is graduated into philosophy."

"Karl," she laughed, "despite your proud boast to the contrary, you're bigoted. It's the bigotry of science."

"No, it's having science patronised by these fellows who don't know anything about it. If they'd once roll up their sleeves and do some actual work they'd give up that idea of being so easily graduated. But they want to get where they'll not have to work. Philosophy's a lazy man's job."

"There you go again! A clear case of the scientific arrogance."

"No, they amuse me; that's all. 'I had a great deal of science in my undergraduate work,' Mr. Ross said, 'but I feel now that I want to go into the larger field of philosophy.'"

"Karl," she laughed, a little amused and a little indignant, "did he actually say that to you?"

"He actually did. And with the pleasantest, most off-hand air. It was on the tip of my tongue to reply: 'Fortunately, science never loses anything in these people she graduates so easily into philosophy.'

"I wonder what they think," he went on, "when we turn them upside down two or three times a century? It doesn't seem to worry them any. 'Give me some eggs and some milk and some sugar and I'll make a nice pudding,' they say—that's about what goes into a pudding, isn't it? And then they take the stuff in very thankless fashion, and when their pudding is done, they say—'Isn't it pathetic the way some people spend their lives producing nothing but eggs and milk and sugar?' And the worst of it is that half the time they spoil our good stuff by putting it together wrong."

"Such a waste of good eggs and milk and sugar," she laughed.

"But fortunately it is a superior kind of eggs and milk and sugar that can't be hurt by being thrown together wrong. The pudding is bad, but the good stuff in it is indestructible. And as we don't have to sit down to their table, why should we worry over their failures?"

"Why, indeed? But then, I don't agree that all puddings are bad."

"No, not all of them. But it rubs me the wrong way to see bad cooks take such liberties with their materials."

"Because good eggs and milk and sugar aren't so easy to produce," she agreed.

"Some of us have paid a pretty good price for them," he said.

That turned them to the things always close to them, and they were silent for a time. It was Saturday evening, and on Monday Ernestine would begin her new work. Dr. Parkman had arranged it for her—she did not know how, but it had been done, and Professor Hastings, who would have her in charge, was eager to give all possible help. That day, while Karl was busy, she had been reading a book Dr. Parkman had given her. He would keep her supplied with the best things for her to read, he said, selecting that which was vital, so that she would not waste time blundering through Karl's library at random. Dr. Parkman was being so splendid about it all. He was a man to give himself to a thing without reservations; if he helped at all he made his help count to the uttermost. She felt him back of her as a force which would not fail. And she would show him his confidence was not misplaced—his support not given to a vain cause! Resolution strengthened within her as the way was cleared. Unconsciously she caught Karl's hand and held it tight in both of hers.

"You know, liebchen," he said, caressing her hand in response, "I've done considerable thinking of late. Perhaps a fellow thinks more about things when he is not right in them, and it seemed to me to-day, when I was thinking over these things suggested by Ross, that the reason most people don't get on better with their work is just because they don't care for it enough. You have to love a thing to do much with it. Take it in any kind of scientific work; the work is hard, there is detail, drudgery, and discouragement. You're going to lose heart and grip unless you have that enthusiasm for the thing as a whole. You must see it big, and have that—well, call it fanaticism, if you want to—a willingness to give yourself up to it, at any rate. The

reason these fellows want to get into the 'bigger field of philosophy' is because they've never known anything about the bigger field of science."

She loved that fire in his voice, that rare, fine light which at times like this shone from his face. In such moments, he seemed a man set apart; as one divinely appointed. It filled her heart with a warm, glad rush to think it was she would bring him back to his own. It was she would reseat Karl on his throne. And what awaited him then? Might not his possibilities be greater than ever before? Would not determination rise in him with new tremendousness, and would not hope, after its rebirth in despair, soar to undreamed of heights? Would not the meditation of these days, the new understanding rising from relinquishment and suffering, bring him back to his work a scientist who was also philosopher?

She believed that that would be true, that the things his blindness taught him to see would more than atone for the things shut away. And would not she herself come to love the work just because of what it meant to Karl? Care for it because of what it could do for him? Loving it first because he loved it, would not she come to love it for itself?

A quiver of pain had drawn the beautiful light from his face. "Tell me about your work, dear," he said abruptly. "You haven't said much about it of late."

She turned away her face. She was always forgetting that he could not see her face.

"You know you must get to work, sweetheart," he went on as she did not answer. "I am expecting great things of my little girl."

"I hope you will not be disappointed," she answered, very low.

"Of course I'll not be—if you just get to work. Now when are you going to begin?"

"I'm going to begin Monday," replied Ernestine.

"Good! Painting some great picture?"

She hesitated. "I hope it will be a great picture."

"Tell me about it."

"I can tell you better, dear, when it is a little farther along."

"You love your work, Ernestine. You have the real, true, fundamental love for it. I always loved to see your face light up when you spoke of your work. Is your face lighted up now?" he asked, a little whimsically, but earnestly.

She laughed, but the laugh caught in her throat.

"Will you tell me about your picture as it progresses, dear? Don't be afraid to talk to me of your work, Ernestine. Things will be less hard for me, if I think you are happy. And it will be good to know there is to be some great thing come of our love, dear. I want something to stand for it, something beautiful and great."

"There will be!" she said passionately. "There is going to be."

"I know," he said gently. "I am sure of it."

He stroked her face lovingly then. He loved so to do that.

"Will you mind much, Karl," she began, a little timidly, "if I am away from you some this year?"

"Away from me?" he asked, startled. "Why, what do you mean, Ernestine?"

"Oh, not that I am going away," she hastened. "But, as I say, I am going to begin my work on Monday, and part of the time I shall be working, away from home."

"You mean in some studio?"

Her face grew troubled; she frowned a little, bit her lip, but after a second's hesitation, answered: "Yes."

"Found some fellow to study with?"

And again she answered yes.

"Well now look here, liebchen, have I been such a brute that you thought I wouldn't want you to set foot out of the house? I didn't suppose there was anyone here you'd

have much to gain from, but if there is, so much the better. I want you to go right ahead and do your best—don't you know that?"

But there was a note of forced cheer in it. It would be hard for Karl to feel she was not in the house, when he had come to depend on her for so many things. She could not tell him why she was willing to be away from him. It hurt her to think he might feel she did not understand.

A little later Georgia and her mother and Georgia's Mr. Tank came over to see them. During the summer Ernestine and Karl had been bestowing an approving interest on Georgia and Joseph Tank. Karl liked him; he said the fellow laughed as though there was no reason why he shouldn't. "He doesn't know everything," he told Ernestine, "but knows too much to seem to know what he doesn't."

Georgia had been disposed to be apologetic about Mr. Tank's paper bags, and Karl had retorted: "Great Scott, Georgia, is there anything the world needs much worse than paper bags?"

To-night Mr. Tank was all enthusiasm about a ball game he had attended that afternoon. He gave Karl the story of the game in the picturesque fashion of a man more eager to express what he wishes to say than to guard the purity of his English. "Oh, it was hot stuff, clear through," he concluded. "Bully good game!"

"It is sometimes almost impossible for me to tell what Georgia and Mr. Tank are talking about," sighed Mrs. McCormick. "They use so many words which are not in the dictionary. Now when people confine themselves to words which are in the dictionary, I am always able to ascertain their meaning."

"I'm long for saying a thing the way I can get it said," laughed Tank. "And I'm long for this new spelling. I never could get next to the old system, and now if they push this deal through, I can pat myself on the back and say, 'Good for you, old boy. You were just waiting for them to start in right.' It would be such a good one on the teachers who bumped my head against the wall because I didn't begin pneumonia

with a p and every other minute run in an i or an e I had sense enough to know had no business there at all. Oh, I'm long for taking a fall out of the old spelling book."

"I do hope, Karl," admonished Mrs. McCormick, "that you will use your influence with scholars to see that the dictionary is let alone. It is certainly a very profane and presumptuous thing to think of changing a dictionary,"—turning to Ernestine for approval.

"When I was a child," observed Georgia, "I had a sublime and unquestioning faith in two things,—the Bible and the dictionary. The Bible was written by God and the dictionary by Noah Webster, and both were to remain intact to the end of time. But the University of Chicago is re-writing the Bible, and 'most any one who feels like it can take a hand at the dictionary, so what is there left for a poor girl to believe in?"

"Believe in the American dollar," said Tank cheerfully. "That's the solidest thing I've ever been up against."

Mrs. McCormick left them to call upon a friend who lived next door, Karl and Mr. Tank turned to frenzied finance, and Georgia and Ernestine wandered away by themselves—Ernestine surmised that Georgia wanted to talk to her.

"How goes it at The Mail?" she asked.

"Oh—so so," said Georgia fretfully. "Newspaper work is a thankless job."

"Why, Georgia, I thought you loved it so."

"Oh, yes,—yes, in a way, I do. But it's thankless. And you never get anywhere. You break your neck one day, and then there's nothing to do the next, but start in and break it again. You're never any better to-day for yesterday's killing. Now with you—when you paint a good picture, it stays painted."

"Why don't you get married?" asked Ernestine, innocently.

"Married! Pooh—that would be a nice thing!"

"Indeed it would. If you care for the man."

Georgia was fidgeting; it was plain she wanted to talk about marriage, if she could do so without seeming to be vitally interested in the subject.

"I mean it, Georgia," Ernestine went on. "If you care for him, marry him."

"Care for whom?" Georgia demanded, and then coloured and laughed at the folly of her evasion. "Well, the fact of the matter is," she finally blurted out, "I don't know whether I do or not. Now, in a way, I do. That is, I want him to care for me, and I shouldn't like it if he sailed away to the Philippine Islands and never showed up again, but at the same time—well, I don't think even you could get up much sentiment about paper bags, and besides"—tempestuously—"the name Tank's preposterous!"

Ernestine laughed. "What are those terms the lawyers are so fond of—immaterial, irrelevant, and something else? Georgia, once when I was a little girl and went to visit my grandmother, I had a stubborn fit and wouldn't eat any dinner because the dining-room table had such ugly legs. And the dinner, Georgia, was good."

It was Georgia who laughed then. "But Ernestine"—with a swift turn to seriousness—"you're not a fair sample; you and Karl are—exceptional. You see you have so much—intellectual companionship—sympathetic ideas—kindred tastes—don't you see what a fool I'd make of myself in judging the thing by you?"—she ended with a little gulp which might have been a laugh or might have been something else.

Ernestine was giving some affectionate rubs to her brass coffee pot. When she raised her head it was to look at Georgia strangely. She continued to look, and the strangeness about her intensified. "Shall I tell you something, Georgia?"—her voice low and queer. "Something I know? You wouldn't be willing to fight 'till you dropped for sympathetic ideas. You wouldn't be willing to lay down your life for intellectual companionship. You wouldn't be willing to go barefoot and hungry and friendless for kindred tastes. Don't for one minute believe you would! The only thing

for which you'd be willing to let the whole world slip away from you is an old-fashioned, out-of-date thing called love—just the primitive, fundamental love there is between a man and a woman. If you haven't it, Georgia—hold back. If you have,"—a wonderful smile of understanding glowed through a rush of tears—"oh, Georgia, if you have!"

CHAPTER XXVII

LEARNING TO BE KARL'S EYES

She wondered many times in the next few months why she had put it in that very simple, self-evident way.

For there are things harder than to go barefoot and hungry and friendless. Those are the primitive things, to be met with one's endowment of primitive courage, elemental strength. But poise of spirit can not be wrested from elemental courage. To carry one's carefully wrapped up burden with the nonchalance of the day—nature forgot to make endowment for that; it is something then to be worked out wholly by one's self.

Persecution she could have endured like a Spartan; but it was almost unendurable to be tolerated. She was sure it would have been easier if only they had been rude to her. To be openly jeered at would fire her soul. But there was so little in their manner either to kindle enthusiasm or stir aggressiveness. She began to think that the most trying thing in the world was to have people polite to one.

The very first week was the worst of all. No one knew what to do with her; as this was her own idea, an idea no one else pretended to understand, it was expected she make some suggestions for the proper disposition of herself. But poor Ernestine did not know enough about it to make disposition of herself. She could only smile with a courageous serenity, and ask that she be shown how to help about things. And so Mr. Willard, who was in charge of Karl's laboratory, and who was Karl without

Karl's genius, turned her over to Mr. Beason, his assistant. Beason would show her how to "help."

Her sense of humour helped her there. It was amusing that one who was learning to "help" should be such an encumbrance. And there were many amusing things about Mr. Beason. He was afraid of her because she was a woman, for like reason disapproving of her presence in the laboratory, and yet there was an unconscious deference, the same kind of veneration he would have paid Karl's old coat, or his pipe.

John Beason had never been shaken by a genuine emotion until the day he read that Dr. Karl Hubers had lost his eyesight and must give up his work. In the horror, the rage and the grief which swept over him then, Beason rose to the heights of a human being, never to be quite without humanship again. When he came back that fall, Professor Hastings was quick to sense the change.

Beason was given a place in Dr. Hubers' old laboratory, as one of Mr. Willard's assistants. That first morning, after he had been in there about an hour, he came out to Professor Hastings, who chanced to be alone.

"I don't know whether I want to stay in there or not," the boy jerked out.

He told him that Dr. Hubers would like to have him there. "You know he liked you," he said simply.

Beason sat a long time pondering. "Well, they'll never have another man like him," he said at last, savagely, and choking a little.

After the first few weeks his attitude toward Ernestine took on a complexity an analysis of which would have greatly astounded Mr. Beason himself. He did a great deal of pondering as to whether it would really be possible for Dr. Hubers to go on with his work. It seemed to him it would not be, but a few things Mrs. Hubers had said in a very simple way had opened up a great deal of speculation as to what was possible and what was not. And the thing which made him grow so quickly into an

unconscious respect for her was her assumption that the most important thing in the world was that Dr. Hubers should go on with his work. Now that looked as though she had some sense, Beason admitted. Of course the ridiculous part was thinking she was the one to bring it about, when anybody would know it would have to be some one—well, some one like himself. But then it was just like a woman to think she could do anything she took it into her head to do. Of course she would very soon find out that she couldn't, but if she proved some one else could, why then she wouldn't be so bad, after all.

Ernestine was quick to see that the way to enlist Mr. Beason was to talk to him about Karl. They were alone in the laboratory for an hour each morning, and during that period she always managed to say something about Dr. Hubers to leave Beason closer to her at the end of the hour than he had been at the beginning. There were more ways than one of winning a scientific victory, she concluded, half humorously, but with a touch of sadness. She was beginning to see that it was a battle which demanded tact and diplomacy quite as much as brains and skill. She must not only furnish enthusiasm for herself, she must inspire all associated with her if she were to gain from them what they had to give.

It was after she had one day spoken with unusual freedom of the suffering which surged beneath Karl's calm acceptance of the inevitable that Beason took his first firm stand in her behalf.

"Well now, of course," he conceded, after a long time of turning it over in his mind, "you really don't have to know much, do you? The great thing for you to learn is to tell exactly how results look. It isn't as if you had to reason and think,"—that was Beason's supreme rise to graciousness.

"Why, you have the idea exactly, Mr. Beason," she replied, admiringly, and Beason grasped that he had manifested rare insight.

"Well now,"—doubtfully—"I suppose you might practice on me. Practice is what

you need. I haven't looked at any of those things over there. See if you can give me an idea of what they are."

She did her best, blundering freely, and thinking with an inward smile that she had not counted on anything so difficult as translating things to Beason.

Then he took the tube from her hand and explained how she had failed to get the significant things, and how valueless she would be unless she made the determining points stand out. He was very blunt and unflattering, but she was grateful to him from the bottom of her heart. "You see you do have to have some brains after all," he concluded with a sigh.

But after that he frequently devoted his entire hour to helping her. He had come to accept her as one of his duties, and Beason was not one to neglect his appointed task. Day by day she gained a great deal from the uncompromising Mr. Beason.

In fact, after those first uncertain weeks, she gained a great deal from every one. Gradually it began to systematise itself, and Ernestine's good sense, her earnestness, which was fairly devotion, her respect for every one's knowledge and gratitude for all help—to say nothing of her eyes and smile and voice—slowly penetrated even the conservatism of science.

Dr. Parkman did not neglect her. He came out often and spent an hour in the laboratory, bringing things for her to work with. Perhaps the doctor saw that quite as much as his help, she needed the prestige his attention would give. It was no small thing to have the great Dr. Parkman giving her his time. "Upon my soul," Mr. Willard said one day, after the doctor had been there a long time and had seemed very much in earnest, "I don't believe Parkman's the man to spend his time on a wild goose chase!"

"It doesn't seem so, does it?" said Professor Hastings ingenuously.

"Why, think what that man's time is worth!" continued Mr. Willard, growing more and more impressed.

"I don't know any one else out here who would get much of it," Professor Hastings ventured.

"Well, she is a remarkable woman," Willard said then, insistently.

And Professor Hastings—understanding many things about human beings—said he was really coming to feel that way himself.

Ernestine was alone in the laboratory one bright morning in December. Mr. Beason had just gone away after assuring her anew that she had a very great deal to learn. Perhaps it was funny, but one was not always in the mood for humorous things. Sometimes one felt more like putting one's head down on the table and having a good cry. Her hands were not quite steady, as she went about the work Beason had patronisingly left for her to do, and out of the mists which blinded her there came a picture of her own quiet studio at home, where she had worked with her own things, things with which she was supreme. She saw herself at her easel, working in that quick, sure way of hers, no one to tell her some one else could do it a great deal better, and that it was extremely doubtful whether she could ever do anything at all. A longing to be back there doing the things she knew she could do, a longing to have again that sure sense of her work as good, swept over her then. She was accustomed to a sense of mastery; it was that made some of these things so hard. It was not easy to make over one's soul, even when it was love called one on. As she went steadily ahead with her task, working out painstakingly the correction Beason had made, she wondered whether there were as many tears back of other smiles as there had often been back of hers.

But she had been able to smile!—that was something for which to give thanks. Not even Karl himself would ever know what she had gone through, but what she had gone through was of small consequence could she but push her way on to what she was confident awaited her. There was sustaining power in that thought: her hands did not tremble now, her eyes were clear; she worked on steadily and firmly.

One thing which had unnerved her was that Karl had seemed to hate to have her go away that morning. He had followed her out into the hall. "Working so hard, liebchen?" he said—and was it not wistfully? Perhaps he had not felt like work himself and had wanted her to stay at home with him. It hurt cruelly to think Karl might not understand her willingness to be away from him so much.

His presence was always with her in the laboratory. The days brought a very clear picture of Karl at work there, a new understanding of his adjustment to his work, firmer comprehension of his love for it. Often a sense of the terribleness and wrongness of his disaster would rush over her, crowding her heart with the old rebellion and bitterness. Again and again she lived through the hour Karl had spent there alone, facing the truth, and then a horror of those things with which she worked, those awful things which had destroyed Karl's eyes, would take hold of her as a physical fear, a repulsion, almost impossible to fight.

She was constantly brought to see the difference between him and these other men; every hour she spent there brought deeper appreciation of Karl's greatness, clearer sense of it. And when their kindly patronage sometimes passed from the amusing to the insufferable, she would think how Karl, master of them all, took her so unreservedly into his mind and heart, cherishing her ideas and opinions as quite the most vital things in all the world, and sometimes that would help her to smile, and not infrequently it made her long to hurl a test-tube at the self-satisfied head of Mr. Beason. But always, in the end, it caused her to set her whole being with new persistence, more passionate stubbornness, in this determination to achieve.

It was while she was still alone that Professor Hastings came in with a note he had just received for her. "It's from Dr. Parkman," she said as she tore it open hastily.

She read a little of it and then sat down. He thought for a moment that she was going to cry.

"Dr. Parkman wants me to come down to one of his operations this afternoon,"—she

looked up at him appealingly. "I—I never went to anything like that," she added, with a tremulous laugh.

"What does he say about it?" he asked, anxiously.

"Merely—merely that it will be a good cancer operation, and that I had better begin on that part of the work. He says he would be willing to do that, but he thinks it will help me to be able to make some of the observations for Dr. Hubers myself. I—well, it sometimes makes me sick to see things I don't like,"—laughing a little, and plainly unnerved.

"Oh, no," he assured her; "it will not be that bad." But he added, uneasily: "Dr. Parkman seems anxious for you to come?"

"No, not particularly anxious; he simply tells me to be there at two o'clock."

"I suppose then you'd better go," he laughed. "You won't mind much. You may to-day, but you'll become accustomed to it very soon. And it is important. Some one else might do it, but it will help your own understanding of the subject, make your equipment that much better. It's a great thing for you to have Dr. Parkman's help. And he is so pleased with your progress. He told me the other day that he thought it absolutely phenomenal the way you were getting on."

"Did he?" she asked eagerly, for she had learned to seize upon all which would buoy her up.

"We all think so," he replied earnestly. "Even Mr. Willard, who, as you may have observed, is not an enthusiast, said the other day that you were becoming really useful."

She brightened, and then laughed. She had never supposed she would be inordinately pleased to have a man like Mr. Willard say she was really useful.

"While Mr. Beason went so far as to assert that you had a general intelligence not unlike that of a man."

She laughed heartily at that. "Well, I'm afraid they won't think I have the nerve or sense of a man when I get in the operating room this afternoon," she said with a wry little face.

"Well, remember what it's all for," he said, in that simple way of his which went so far because it was so direct, "and remember that we are all believing in you."

In response to that she went back to her work with new resolution.

It was a little before two when her lagging footsteps brought her in sight of the hospital. "Why, I act as though I were going to my own execution," she told herself scornfully. Ever since receiving the note, she had been trying not to think about what was before her; but it was here now, a fact to be faced. Conquering an impulse to turn about and beat a hasty retreat, she advanced with a brisk and business-like air she was sure would deceive the most knowing of hospital attendants.

They seemed to know about her in the office, and took her up to one of the rooms adjoining the operating room. The hospital was a very large place, and there were a great many odours she did not like. She hated herself for being so silly about things! Through the open door she saw many faces: white faces, thin faces, faces drawn with pain, faces robbed of hope, faces fretful, and faces indifferent, and she caught sight of one girl whose very happy eyes looked out from a face which bore the record of much pain. A story easy to read: she had been very ill, but now she was getting well. And how calm and well-ordered a place it was— strange how they could keep so unruffled a surface over so turbulent a sea!

A nurse upstairs said that Dr. Parkman had told her to look after Mrs. Hubers. She dressed her in a white gown and talked to her pleasantly about operations in general. Ernestine was glad that this very rational being did not know how hard she was struggling to keep her teeth from chattering.

In a minute, Dr. Parkman himself came in, he, too, in white gown, ready for the operation. He looked so strange; to her nervous vision, supernatural, a being from

other worlds, holding the destiny of this one in those strong, supple, incisive fingers. "I don't suppose you'll enjoy this much," he said, "but you'd better get used to them. Karl may need you to do some of this for him, and you wouldn't like it not to be able to."

"No, indeed," she replied, heartily—very heartily. "I'm so glad to come."

He looked at her in his keen, deep-seeing way. She had an uncomfortable sense that he had a distinct impulse toward a smile.

"Hughes, one of our young doctors, will point out a few things to you as we go along, and I'll go over it with you afterwards."

Then they went into the operating room.

She fought hard against the smell of ether, and managed to hold herself quite firm against it. But there was a ghastliness in the whole thing which frightened her.

The patient was lying there on the operating table, covered with sheets, looking as if dead. It was a woman who was to be operated on, and Ernestine could not overcome the idea that it was a dreadful thing for her to be there alone, surrounded by strange people who were acting in so unconcerned a manner. They did not seem to be thinking in the least of what life and death meant to this woman. One young doctor was showing something to another, and they laughed right out loud! The woman whose life was at stake was not impressing them any more than—not any more than that terrible looking little instrument which the nurse handed to Dr. Parkman.

Her dizzy vision got Dr. Parkman's face as he leaned over his patient. She had never seen such a look of concentration; he did not know anything in the world then save the thing he was doing. And the concentration was enveloped in so tremendous a coolness. But her own face must have warned the nurse who was looking after her, for she whispered, "Suppose you come over here by the window until they have started. There is no need for you to watch while they are making the incision."

So she stood there with her back to them, looking out at a little park across from the

hospital. Down there, men and women were moving about quite as usual; one girl was laughing very heartily about something. Strange that people should be laughing!

"Now you might come over here," said the nurse, as pleasantly and easily as though saying, "Wouldn't you like a cup of tea?"

She tried then with all her might to take it as the rest of them were taking it. But they were operating on the stomach, and her first glimpse caused an almost uncontrollable sinking in the knees. Her ears began to pound, but by listening very hard she could hear what Dr. Hughes was saying. He was saying something about its being a very nice case, and she wondered if the woman were married, and if she had any children, and then she knew how irrelevant and unprofessional that was. Dr. Hughes was telling her to look at something, and she did look, and she saw Dr. Parkman's hands, only it seemed they were not human hands at all, but some infallible instrument, an instrument with an unconquerable soul,—and then everything was dancing before her eyes, her ears were pounding harder and harder, her knees sinking, everything swaying, some one had hold of her, and some one else, a great many miles away was saying—"Take her out!"

When she opened her eyes, she was lying on a couch in an anteroom, the nurse bending over her. The attendant smiled pleasantly, no more agitated than before. "Too bad," she said; "a good many of us take it like that at first."

But Ernestine was not to be comforted. It meant too much to her. The tears were running down her face, but suddenly she brushed them angrily aside, and sat up. "I'm going back," she said resolutely.

"Oh, but you mustn't," protested the nurse,—"not today. It really wouldn't do. And anyway they must be almost through. Dr. Parkman works so rapidly."

It was a very disheartened Ernestine who sat there then alone. "What will Dr. Parkman think of me?" she bewailed to herself. "He will never want to have anything more to do with me. He will be so disgusted that he will let me alone now.

And how am I to get along without him? Oh, why am I such a fool?"

The whole day had been hard, she was tired out when she came, and this was too much. So she just lay back on the couch and cried. It was so that Dr. Parkman found her when he came briskly in at the close of the operation.

"Why, what's the matter?" he demanded. "Heard some bad news?"

"Bad—news!" she choked out; "no, I haven't heard any bad news—except that I'm an utterly worthless, weak-minded fool!"

"And where did you hear that?" he pursued.

"Oh, doctor—I'm so ashamed! But if you'll only give me another chance! If you'll just not give me up for a little while yet!"

"Give you up! Now what kind of reviving fluid did Miss Lewis produce for you? What in the world are you talking about? Do you think you're any grand exception in not seeing your first operation through? Hum! Ask some of these nurses around here. Some of the doctors too, only they won't tell the truth. My first day in the dissecting room was a day of about thirty minutes. So you see you have plenty of company in your weak-mindedness."

She brightened then to the extent of looking willing to be comforted. "But it's humiliating, doctor, to think you're going to accomplish some big thing and then be absolutely overcome by a little incidental thing that doesn't happen to appeal to your senses. It's awful to have your senses get ahead of your soul like that," she laughed.

"Hum!"—Dr. Parkman had a "hum" all his own. "There's nothing unique in that experience, either. The spirit is willing, but the stomach is weak—to put it in exact terms. As a matter of fact, that's what life is made up of—having great purposes overthrown by minor inconveniences. Many a man can get hold of a great idea, but very few of them can stick by it through the things that make them uncomfortable. That's the reason most dreamers fail—they're not willing to come down out of the clouds and get to work at things that turn their stomachs!"

"Well, I'm not like that!" she flashed back at him.

"You? I know you're not. Some ancestor of yours gave you a big bump of stubbornness—for which you should look back to him with gratitude. Stubborn people aren't easily put out of the race. Now I'll tell you why I wanted you to come down here," he went on, more seriously. "I want you to see the thing just as it is. I want you to get the conception of it as a whole. I don't want you to become short-sighted. Some people look so much through the microscope that they forget how to look any other way. That's the difference between Karl and some of those fellows you're associated with now. That Willard and Lane and young Beason are the scientific kind, too abominably scientific to forge ahead. Don't lose sight of what you are doing. All these things you are doing now are simply a means to an end. You are to be one of the instruments employed—as you put it yourself one day—but make yourself such a highly-organised, responsive instrument that you're fairly alive with the idea yourself. See? That's where your real value will come in. You know,"—it was Dr. Parkman now who breathed the enthusiasm which draws one to a light out beyond obstacle and difficulty—"I'm beginning to see the thing more and more as actual fact. I caught the idea from the first, and then it seemed it simply had to be done because it was such a great thing to do, but I'm getting it more and more now just as a practical, matter-of-fact thing. And it isn't so far away,—not so very. You see, after all, Mrs. Hubers, you don't have to do it all. It would be stupid to set a race horse at a job that could be just as well accomplished by a plug. Any well-trained man can do certain things for Karl—but it's the touch of the artist—the things that make it real—it's making the blind man see—doing the impossible!—that's your work. Why, I can fairly see the whole thing," he went on—"Karl and you and some good assistant. He'll get both points of view then—he can't miss anything. The other fellow can give him certain technicalities you might miss—and then you'll turn in and bring it to his vision. A clear statement of facts could never make a blind man see. And then it will be your business to keep the

spirit right—that's the real point, after all. Why, I can see it just as clearly as I could see that work to be done in there!"— pointing to the operating room.

It was another Ernestine now. She rose to it as the warrior to the trumpet call. He knew that the right word had been said.

"Now I don't think it will hurt you to see some of these operations," he went on, in more business like way. "Not only to help with observations for Karl, but—well, just to see it for yourself. Nothing will make this quite so real and vital to you as to see it actually breaking down human organisms, destroying life. I want you to get an eye for the thing as a whole:—see it as it is now, see the need of making it some other way. You must have more than a desire to help Karl—you must have an enthusiasm for the thing itself. You'll get so then that when you see an operation like this you won't see just some broken-down, diseased tissue that makes you feel weak-kneed, but you'll see something to get in and fight. Oh, it's a battle—so get your fighting blood up! Remember that you'll have to have enough for two. You know, what you must do for Karl is not only give him back the weapons with which to fight, but you must rouse his soldier's blood,—see what I mean?"

It was a joy to watch the response. He could see weariness and discouragement slipping from her as she spoke.

He was thinking to himself that she was superb, but aloud he said, "This is a good specimen in here. If you'll just come into the next room I'd like to go over it with you. I think I can make a few things clear."

She was radiant then, happy that he had so soon forgotten her first failure, appreciating his assumption that she was ready even now to go on with the fight.

"She will carry it through," thought Dr. Parkman, as he finally left the hospital. "And, by the good Lord, I believe that Karl Hubers is going to get back in the game and win! Nasty blow to the woman haters," he mused, as he looked in upon an office full of waiting patients,—"a very nasty blow."

CHAPTER XXVIII

WITH BROKEN SWORD

He wished that Ernestine would come home. He had let Ross go at four, and it was lonesome there alone. In spite of the fact that she was away so much, Ernestine was almost always there when he wanted her most. That was just one of the wonderful things about Ernestine. Something must have detained her to-day.

He reached over on the table for his copy of "Faust." It had become his habit to pick it up when he did not care to sit face to face with his own thoughts. It seemed to hold some word for everything in life. Its universality made it a good friend.

It was becoming easier to read with his fingers, but he had never come into the old joy in reading that there had been in the days when he could see it. And it seemed to him that there was an unnecessary clumsiness about the whole thing. He had worked out a little idea of his own for which he was going to have a model made. He believed it might help some—at any rate he had enjoyed working it out. "If a fellow feels like inventing, he simply must invent something, whether it amounts to anything or not," he had explained to Ernestine.

He did not read consecutively to-night, but just a line here and there, getting a little of wit, a little of philosophy, a dash or two of sarcasm, an occasional gleam of sentiment; he liked to take it that way at times like this; it seemed if not one thing, then surely another, must keep him from the things into which it would be so easy to slip to-night.

"Restless activity proves the man!"—several times his fingers went over that, and his responsive face told that to his mind it brought a poignant meaning, and to his heart an understanding and a sadness. He closed the book, and sat there thinking. He seemed very self-contained—quiet, poised, but the understanding eye would have known that he was thinking deep thoughts, facing hard truths.

Once at a horse race he had seen a horse which had just been lamed tied near the track. It heard the ringing of the gong, heard the music of the other horses' feet, heard, saw, smelled, sensed in every way the race that was going on. A weakness in one foot could not kill the spirit of a race horse. Tied there beside the track, watching others struggling for the race! He had wondered about that horse, then, had been sure from the quivering of its nostrils, the pawing of its foot, the passionate trembling of its whole superb body that it suffered. Thinking back to it to-night he had good reason to know that he had been right that day.

It was queer about life. In some ways so incomprehensively great and superb, and yet so easy to be overthrown. Great purposes seemed very great, but was a thing really great when it was so easily undermined? Was there not a dizzying instability about it all?

He smiled a little as he lighted his pipe. He seemed to be doing a great deal of speculating these days. What if he too were to be graduated into the bigger field of philosophy? But he shook his head, still smiling a little. If he ever entered the bigger field of philosophy he was sure he would not be carried there in other men's elevators, that he would not arrive in the jaunty, well-groomed state of Ross and his sort. No, if he ever found the bigger field of philosophy, it would be after he had scaled slippery crags and forded great rivers, after he had pushed his way through brambles and across sharp stones, after he had many times lost his footing, and had many times stopped to rest, believing he could go no farther. It was after some such quest that he might perhaps find his way up into the bigger field of philosophy. But he would not find Ross there. Ross and his fellows were down in a nice little garden that had been fixed up for them. That was it: the garden of philosophy,—a garden made by man, in which there were little artificial lakes and shrubbery set out in attractive designs. A very nice garden indeed, where the sun shone and where it was true pretty flowers would grow—but ah, one did not feel the wind upon one's face down in that sheltered garden as he believed one would feel it up there on the lonely

heights to which one had climbed alone! And the garden of philosophy—he was smiling at his fancy, but it interested him—was electric lighted, while up there on the big wide sweep, one came very close to the stars.

What was philosophy, anyway? With Ross it seemed a matter of speaking the vocabulary of philosophers. It was so, he knew, with many men. And yet, as to the thing itself, it was not a mere learning a system of thought, acquiring the easy use of a peculiar kind of words. It was not fair, after all, to judge a thing by the people least fitted to understand it. Perhaps philosophy was conquering life. Perhaps it was learning to take life in good part, making up one's mind to write good text-books if it seemed certain the writing of text-books were to be one's part. Perhaps it was just holding one's place. The mere thing of holding one's place seemed a bigger thing now than it once had. He wondered. He was wondering about many things these days, and perhaps he had already scaled a crag or two, for he was able sometimes, in spite of the deep sadness of his face, to smile a little in his wonderings.

Ernestine was her sweetest self when she came in a little later. "I'm glad you were late," he said, after her affectionate protestations regarding her shortcomings, "you haven't been this nice for a long time."

She threw aside her hat and coat and took her favourite place on the low seat beside him. "Don't you remember, liebchen, how it was over there in Europe—after you'd treated me badly, you were always so nice, that I used to be quite tempted to make you be horrid?"

"I never was horrid to you," she protested.

"You're never horrid any more," he said, and, strangely enough, he said it sadly.

"Well, do you want me to be?"

"Yes! I wish you'd turn in once in a while and call me an old brute, and say you wished you'd never seen me, and didn't know how in heaven's name you were going to go on living with me!"

"Karl," she gasped—"are you going crazy?"

"No—at least I hope not. But you're just nice to me all the time, because—because I'm blind! I don't like it! I wish you'd swear at me sometimes!"

"Well, in the first place," laughing, but serious too,—it had come so heatedly, "it isn't my way to swear at any one. I never did swear at you. Why should I begin now?"

"Oh, swear was figurative language," he laughed.

"And of all things for a man to harrow up his soul about! Not liking it because his wife is never horrid to him!"

"It's not as crazy as it sounds. Are you and I a couple of plaster saints? Well, hardly! Then why don't we have any quarrels? It's just because you're sorry for me! I'll not have you being sorry for me!" he concluded, almost angrily.

But when she kissed him, he could not resist a smile. "You don't know much, do you, Karl? Don't you know that we don't quarrel about little things, because we've had so many big things on hand? We don't swear at each other, because—"

"Because we have so many other things to swear at," he finished for her.

"That's it. All our fighting emotion is being used up."

"Oh, you're such a genius for making things seem right! Now looking at it that way, I'm quite reconciled to your being nice to me. Still I want you to promise that if you ever feel like swearing, you will."

"I promise," she responded solemnly.

"Don't do things—or not do things—because you're sorry for me, Ernestine."

"We are 'sorry for' people who are unequal to things. I'm sorry with you, not for you, Karl."

"Ernestine,"—with an affectionate little laugh—"is there anything you don't understand?"

"You might play a little for me," he said after a silence. "Play that thing that ends in a question."

"Of Liszt's?"

"Yes; the one that leaves you wondering."

At first she had resented bitterly her not being able to play more satisfyingly. If only music were her work! It seemed an almost malicious touch that fate, in taking away Karl's own work, had also shut him out from hers. Resentment at that had made it hard for her to play for him at all, at first. But she had overcome that, and had been able to make music mean much to them both. They loved especially the music which seemed to translate for them things within their own hearts.

But to-night when Ernestine had left him pondering a minute the question he said Liszt always left with him, she turned, eagerly it seemed, to lighter things. She played a little Nevin, played it with a lightness, gladsomeness, he had never felt in her touch before. He said Nevin helped him to see things, that he could see leaves moving on their branches, could see the shadows falling on the hillsides where the cattle were grazing, as he listened to Nevin. But it did not bring the pictures to-night. It opened up new fears.

"Ernestine," he said abruptly, "come here."

"Are you ever frightened, Ernestine?" he asked of her, still in that abrupt, strange manner.

"Frightened—about what?"

"Frightened about having to live all your life with me!"

For a moment she did not answer. Then, her voice quiet with the quiet that would hold back anger: "Karl, do you think you are treating me very kindly to-night? Saying these strange things I cannot understand?"

"But, Ernestine—look here! You're young—beautiful—love life. Doesn't it ever

occur to you that you're not getting enough fun out of things?"

"Karl,"—and there was a quivering in the voice now—"do you think I have been thinking lately about 'getting fun out of things'?"

"No, but that's just it! You ought to be thinking about it! Ernestine—think of it! How are you going to go on forever loving a blind man?"

For answer, she knelt down beside him, her arms about his neck, her cheek against his.

"Yes—I know—in that way. But in the old way of the first days? I was so different then. How can you love me now, the way you did then? What do I do now but sit in a chair and try to be patient? Look at a man like Parkman! That's life. Ernestine"—drawing her close, a sob in his voice—"liebchen,—can you?"

She longed to tell him then; it would mean so much to tell him now,—Karl was so troubled to-night. But the time was not ripe yet; she must not spoil it all. And so instead she talked to him of how real power comprehended more than activity, how depth of understanding, great things of the soul, were more masterful than those outer forces men called "life." Ernestine seldom failed in being convincing when she felt things as she now felt this.

"You always have the right word," he said at last. "You can always get ahead of the little blue devils."

"Oh, Karl," she murmured, very low, her heart too full to resist this—"some day I can show you better what I expect of life."

"Of course," he mused, after a silence, "you have your work."

"Yes," replied Ernestine, and something in her voice puzzled him, "I have my work."

He would have been startled could he have seen her face just then. For Ernestine was so happy to-night. She had come away from the hospital with a song in her

heart; a song of resolution and of triumph. She had never foreseen the future so clearly; the time had never seemed so close at hand; it had never been this real before. Just in front of her as she sat there beside Karl was the Gloria Victis, that statue for which he had cared so little at first, but which in these later days she often found him dwelling upon with his hands in lingering touch of appreciation. To her the statue had come to hold many meanings; she looked at it now with shining eyes. Karl had held so tight to the broken sword—how splendid then that he should win the fight despite it all.

And she felt she had never risen so completely to the idea of Karl's greatness as she did to-day. What was there in the afternoon had meant so much to her? Was it actually seeing things as they were, or was it the things Dr. Parkman had said to point the way anew? There was to-night a new tide of appreciation, a larger understanding, more passionate response to this thought of Karl as greatest of them all. Looking at his face as he sat there in deep thought, she saw the marks of his greatness upon it just as plainly as she saw those other marks of his suffering.—This man stop work? Such as he out of the race?

She remembered the letters they had received when the news of his blindness had gone out. She had wept over them many times, but it seemed she had never grasped their significance before. They were from men of science, from doctors, from students, and from many plain people unknown outside their small communities, who wrote to say they were sorry. They had seen about him once or twice in the magazines, they said, or perhaps their own doctor at home had told them of him, and they were so interested because their wife or husband or mother had died of cancer, and they knew what an awful thing it was. It should have been some one whom the world needed less than it needed him, these plain people said.

Her eyes filled with a rush of tears. This was her Karl—he with whom all the world grieved! She recalled the editorials in the scientific papers, telling of the things he

had done, the things it had been believed by them all he would achieve. This was her Karl!—this man whose withdrawal from active participation had been told of by great scientists everywhere as a world-wide calamity. How quiet and unassuming and simple he had been about it all—he whose stepping-out had been felt around the world!

And, now, some day before long she would come to him with: "Karl, I have found a new way of fighting with broken swords; take a good grip on the sword, a good strong grip, and let us turn back to the fight!"

She turned to him with that quick passionateness he loved in her so well. "I love you," she said, and though she had said it many times in other days, it had never sounded just like that before.

CHAPTER XXIX

UNPAINTED MASTERPIECES

Georgia was to be married. It was the week before Christmas, and on the last day of the year she would become Mrs. Joseph Tank. She had told Joe that if they were to be married at all they might as well get it over with this year, and still there was no need of being married any earlier in the year than was necessary. She assured him that she married him simply because she was tired of having paper bags waved before her eyes everywhere she went, and she thought if she were once officially associated with him people would not flaunt his idiosyncrasies at her that way. And then Ernestine approved of getting married, and Ernestine's ideas were usually good. To all of which Joe responded that she certainly had a splendid head to figure it out that way. Joe said that to his mind reasons for doing things weren't very important anyhow; it was doing them that counted.

Yesterday had been her last day on the paper. She had felt queer about that thing of taking her last assignment, though it was hard to reach just the proper state, for the

last story related to pork-packers, and pork-packing is not a setting favourable to sentimental regrets. It was just like the newspaper business not even to allow one a little sentimental harrowing over one's exodus from it. But the time for gentle melancholy came later on, when she was sorting her things at her desk just before leaving, and was wondering what girl would have that old desk—if they cared to risk another girl, and whether the other poor girl would slave through the years she should have been frivolous, only to have some man step in at the end and induce her to surrender the things she had gained through sacrifice and toil. As she wrote a final letter on her typewriter—she did hate letting the old machine go—Georgia did considerable philosophising about the irony of working for things only to the end of giving them up. She had waded through snowdrifts and been drenched in pouring rains, she had been frozen with the cold and prostrated with the heat, she had been blown about by Chicago wind until it was strange there was any of her left in one piece, she had had front doors—yes, and back doors too, slammed in her face, she had been the butt of the alleged wit of menials and hirelings, she had been patronised by vapid women as the poor girl who must make her living some way, she had been roasted by—but never mind—she had had a beat or two! And now she was to wind it all up by marrying Joseph Tank, who had made a great deal of money out of the manufacture of paper bags. This from her—who had always believed she would end her days in New York, or perhaps write a realistic novel exposing some mighty evil!

"Ah, well—it's all in the day's work!"—she had been saying that to herself as she covered her typewriter, and then, just as she was fearing that her exit would be a maudlin one, Joe called up to say that he did not think it would be too cold for the machine, and why not spin out somewhere on the North Shore for a good dinner? Now that had been nice of Joe, for it tided her over the good-byes.

To-day she was engaged in the pre-nuptial rite of destroying her past, indulging in the letter destroying ceremonial which seems always to attend the eve of matrimony.

It was so that Ernestine found her when she stopped on her way from the university that afternoon.

Mrs. McCormick was sewing yards upon yards of lace on something when Ernestine came in. "She's right in there," she said, referring to Georgia in a sepulchral tone which might fittingly have been employed for: "The remains have been laid out in the front room."

Georgia herself, though not sepulchral, was subdued. "My, but I'm glad you've come," she said, brushing aside several hundred letters that Ernestine might have a place to sit down. "I'm having the most terrible twinge of conscience."

"Why, what about?"

Georgia pointed to the clock. "Think of my not being at the office! I ought to be hanging around now for an afternoon assignment."

"You'll get over that," Ernestine assured her, cheerfully.

"Oh, I suppose so. One gets over everything—even being alive. Meanwhile, behold me,"—with a great sweep of her arms—"surrounded by my blighting past."

"That one looks like Freddie Allen's writing," said Ernestine, giving an envelope at her foot a little shove.

"It is," said Georgia, with feeling; "yes—it is. Poor Freddie—he was such a nice boy."

"I suppose he's nice still," observed Ernestine.

"Oh, I suppose so. I'm sure I don't know. He's way back there in the dim past."

"Well, do you want him up here in the sunny present?" Ernestine inquired, much entertained.

"No, oh no—if I had wanted him I would have had him," with which reversion to the normal Georgia they laughed understandingly.

She shook herself free of the dust of her past then, piled up the pillows and settled

herself on the bed. "But we had some good times back there in the dim past, didn't we, Ernestine?"

"Some of them were good times," replied Ernestine, a little soberly.

"Of course our college life would have been happier if we had been able to pull down that sophomore flag. I've always thought Jack Stewart might have done a little better with that. But as long as we kept Jim Jones away from every party in his junior year, perhaps we should be satisfied." Georgia sighed heavily. "And it is a joy to think back to your telling the dean he didn't have the courage of his convictions when he let them fire Stone for heresy. Oh there are a good many things to be thankful for. You always had lots of nerve when it came to a show-down. You looked so lady-like, and yet you really weren't at all."

"Well, I don't know whether I like that or not."

"I mean not so lady-like that it interfered with anything you wanted to do. You'd speak up in the pleasantest, most agreeable voice and say the most dreadful things. I'll never forget the day you told "Prof" Moore in class that you had always had a peculiar aversion to the Pilgrim Fathers."

"I always did," Ernestine said fervently.

"Then one day when we had spent an hour trying to tell what Shakespeare meant by some line you said you thought quite likely he put it in just because there had to be another line. And "Prof" Jennings conditioned you on the whole year's work—remember?"

"I have reason to," laughed Ernestine.

"The funny part of it was that you never seemed to think you were saying anything startling. Like the day you contended in ethics that you thought frequently it was better to be pleasant than truthful. Kitty Janeway was so shocked at that. I wonder if Kitty Janeway is any happier with her second husband than she was with her first?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Ernestine in a rather far-away voice.

"I'll send all the girls cards," said Georgia, and again she sighed heavily. "The cards are going to look very nice," she added, a little more hopefully.

"Ernestine?"—after a little pause.

"Yes?"

"You and I are hanging right over the ragged edge of thirty."

"Horrors!—Georgia; is this your idea of furnishing pleasant entertainment for a guest?"

"But I was just thinking how many things have happened to us since we were twenty-two."

"I was thinking of that a minute ago myself."

"To you, especially. Now, I never supposed when we were in college that you were going to marry Karl Hubers."

"No," laughed Ernestine, "neither did I."

"I mean I never associated you two with one another. And now I can't think of you separately. And then your father and mother, and then Karl losing—heavens, but I'm cheerful! Now, isn't it just like me," she demanded, angrily, "to act like a fool just because I'm going to be married? If I keep on I'll find myself weeping because Socrates is dead. And I never do weep, either. I tell you that Joe Tank's a terrible man," she laughed, brushing away some tears.

"I don't think you're going to have much to weep about, Georgia. I know you're going to be happy."

"Well, if I'm not it won't be Joe's fault. Unless it is his fault on account of its not being his fault. What I mean is that good-natured people are sometimes aggravating."

"Oh he'll not always be good-natured," she reassured her.

Ernestine said then that she must go, and was standing at the door when Georgia burst forth: "Oh Ernestine—I'm so glad I remembered. You really must go down to the Art Institute and see those pictures by that Norwegian artist—I shouldn't dream of pronouncing his name. They go away this week, and it would be awful for you to miss them."

A wistfulness, fairly pain, revealed itself for an instant in Ernestine's face. And then, as if coming into consciousness of the look: "I know," she said briefly. "I read about them. I've been—thinking about it. I did see some of them in Europe, but of course I should love to see them again."

"I wish you would, my dear; perhaps"—a little fearfully—"they'd make you feel like getting to work yourself. Ernestine,"—gathering courage—"it's awful for you to let your work go this way. Every one says so. I was talking to Ryan the other day—you know who he is? He asked all about you, and if you were doing anything now, and when I told him I was afraid not he fairly flew into a rage, said that was just the way—the people who might be great didn't seem to have sense enough to care to be."

That brought the quick colour. "Perhaps Mr. Ryan does not understand everything in life," she said, coolly.

"Now, Ernestine—he was lovely about you. Would he have shown any feeling at all if he didn't care a great deal for your work? Does any one fly into a rage at my not painting? He said you were one American woman who was an artist instead of 'a woman who paints.' It seems he saw the Salon picture. Oh, he said beautiful things about you."

Ernestine did not answer. She was standing there very quietly, her hand on the knob. "Now, Ernestine," Georgia went on, after the manner of one bound to have it out, "I've tried all winter to cultivate repression. I don't know what it is you are trying to do over there in the laboratory. You asked me to do two things—not to ask you

about it, and not to mention it to Karl. I haven't done either, but I want to tell you right now if you have any idea of giving up your own work I think it's time for your friends to inquire into your mental workings! The very fact you don't want Karl to know about it shows you know very well he won't think it's right. Anything that relates to his work can be done by people who do that kind of work a great deal better than you can. Really, Ernestine, the thing is positively fanatical. And anyway,"—this with the air of delivering the overpowering—"I don't think it is at all nice the way you are taking other men into your confidence and deceiving Karl."

She met that with a little laugh. "Dear me—what laudable sentiment. I've always heard there was no one half so proper as the girl about to be married. Never mind, Georgia,"—a little more seriously, a little as if it would not be hard to cry—"Karl will forgive me—some day."

"But, Ernestine, I want you to work! Can't you see how awful it is for you not to—express yourself?"

"I am going to express myself," she answered, lightly enough, but after she had gone Georgia wondered just what she had meant by that.

She decided, when she came out of the apartment building, that she would take a little walk. It was just cold enough to be exhilarating, and she felt the need of something bracing. She was wishing as she walked along very fast, responding to the keen, good air, that Karl were with her now. Karl did not exercise enough, and when he did yield to her supplications and go for a walk with her he did not seem to enjoy it as she wished he might. "After a while, liebchen," he would say. "I'll be more accustomed to things after a while. And meanwhile there's plenty of fresh air right here in our back yard." "But it isn't just getting the fresh air," she would protest, "it's enjoying it while you're getting it."—"Wait till spring comes," he would sometimes answer. "I'm going to get out more then."

When she saw she was near one of the stations of the Illinois Central she stopped, a

little confused. Could it be she had meant all the time to come here? Looking to the south, she saw that at the next station, not three blocks away, the train which would take her to the city in ten minutes was just arriving. The Art Institute was only two blocks from the Van Buren Street station;—those facts associated themselves quickly in her mind. She looked at her watch: not quite three. Karl had said he would be busy with Mr. Ross until five. She stood there in hesitation. She had seen no pictures since—oh it was too long ago to remember. What harm could it do her? And anyway—this with something of the uprising of the truant child—it was Christmas time! Every one else was taking a vacation, why—but here it was all swept into the imperative consciousness that she had no time to lose, and she was at the ticket window before she was quite sure that she had made up her mind.

It was all so strange then; exhilaration mounted high for a little while, but there followed a very tense excitement. She tried to laugh at herself, contend that she was coming for enjoyment, relaxation, that it was absurd to go to pieces this way; but things long suppressed called for their own, and the man to whom she gave her admission fee wondered for a long time after she had passed him just what it was about her seemed so strange.

How good it was! How good to be back among her own kind of things! In the laboratory every one knew more than she did; there she was repressed, humble even, gratefully accepting the crumbs of knowledge falling from their tables. It was good to feel for a little while that she was some place where she knew a great deal about things. She wished Mr. Willard or Mr. Beason would happen along that she might give them some insight into the colossalness of their ignorance.

She turned down the corridor leading to the room where she would find the special exhibit. She stopped before many of the pictures—reverting to that joy of the spirit in dominance. There was exultation, almost rapture, in this quick, firm rush of understanding; deep joy in just knowing the good from the bad.

But when she reached the pictures she had come to see it was different. She walked to the middle of the room, and in one slow sweep of glance, punctuated with long pauses, took them in. And she responded to them with a warm, glad rush of tears.

They fell upon her artist's soul as the very lovely rain upon the thirsty meadow. They drew her to them as the mother the homesick child, and like the homesick child, back at last after weary days, she knew only that she had come home. In this first overflowing moment there was no thought of colour—brush work—this or that triumphant audacity; it was a coming to her own, a home-coming of the spirit—the heart's passionate thankfulness, the heart's response.

A few minutes of reverent pause, a high delight, deep response, and then—the inevitable. Clear as a bell upon the midnight air was that call from soul to kindred soul. Assurance and longing and demand possessed her beyond all power to stay. The work she stood before now called to her as naturally and inevitably as the bird to its mate, as undeniably as the sea to the river, as potently as spring calls upon earth for its own, as autumn calls to summer for harvest time.

It frightened her. It seemed something within her over which she had no control. It surged through her as far beyond all reason as the tides of the sea are beyond the hand of man. It was procreative power demanding fulfillment as the child ready for birth demands that it be born.

She was conscious of some one's having come into the room. That her face might not be seen she turned away and sat down before one of the pictures. She was quivering so passionately that it seemed almost impossible to hold herself within command.

The girl who had come in was moving restlessly from one picture to another; at last she walked over and sat down on the seat by Ernestine.

"I think I like this one best," she said, abruptly, nodding to the picture before them.

Ernestine nodded in reply. She was not sure what would happen were she to speak.

The girl she supposed to be one of the students there.

"I would give anything in the world—just anything in the world—if I could do it too!"

At the passion of that she turned quickly and looked at the girl. In spite of the real feeling of her tone a fretful look was predominant in her face.

"Do you—work hard?" she asked, merely to relieve the pause.

"Work—yes; but mere work won't do it. I can't do anything like this,"—it was in bitterness she said it.

"Very few can, you know," murmured Ernestine.

"Yes—but I want to! I don't care anything about life—I don't care anything about anything—if I can't paint!"

It struck her immediately as so entirely wrong. She looked at the girl, and then again at the pictures. All the great things they conveyed were passing her by. She missed the essence of it. The greatness of the work merely moved her to anger because she was not great herself. It was an attitude to close the soul.

"But you should care for life," she said, in her very gentle way. "Do the best you can with your own work, but work like this should, above everything else, make you care for life."

The girl moved impatiently. "You don't understand. I guess you are not an artist," and she rose and went away.

Ernestine smiled a trifle, but the strange little interview had opened up a long vista. The girl represented, in extreme measure, but fundamentally, the professional attitude. Most artists saw work in relation to themselves. Pictures were either better or worse than they could do. They came to the great things like these, seeking something, usually some mechanical device, to take away to their own work. She could see so plainly now the shallowness of that.

Her own mood had changed,—broken. Perhaps it was the consciousness that she too had been seeing it in relation to herself, or it may have been but natural reaction. The big uprising was dying down; the heat of the passion had passed; it was all different now, and in the wake of her brimming moment there came the calm that follows storm, the sadness of spirit which attends the re-enthronement of reason, but also the understanding, far-seeingness, which is the aftermath of great passion like that.

There had come to her, as she sat there beside the girl, a throbbing determination to do both things. The thought had come before, but always to be banished. It came now with new insistence just because anything else seemed so impossible. There had never come, even to the outermost edge of her consciousness, the thought of giving up the work she was going to do for Karl. Her hardest hour had never even suggested the possibility of surrender. Her love had seen its way; her life had been consecrated. But now, when it seemed no longer within her power to deny the work for which she had been ordained, it seemed that to fulfill both things was the one thing possible. But in this after-moment of unblurred understanding she saw she could do both things only by taking from the things she gave to Karl. It would mean giving her soul to the one, and what she had left to the other. And she knew that she could never do what she meant to do for Karl unless she gave everything within herself to that cause. The chief aim of her struggle in the laboratory had not been to acquire knowledge and usefulness—that she could do, she knew; her real aim had been to give to Karl's work the things she had always given to her own. With a divided soul she could do no more for him than any other assistant. She was seeking to give him herself. Oh no—it was simple enough; she had no thought of offering Karl an empty vessel.

Her mind saw it all, her will never wavered, but the bruised, conquered spirit quivered under the pain. A long time she sat there, and as the hour went by a strange thing happened. The pictures were healing the spirit which they had torn. As they had first moved her to the frenzy for achievement, had then left her with the pain of

relinquishment, they were bringing her now something of the balm of peace. How big they were!—first passion, then pain, then understanding, now strength.

Ernestine came in that hour to see a great truth. It was something she worked out for herself, something taught her by life and her own heart, and that is why it reached her soul as it could never have done had she but read it in books. She came to see that the greatest thing in life was to be in harmony with the soul of the world. She came into the understanding that to do that, one need not of necessity paint great pictures, one need not stand for any specific achievement, one need only so work out one's life that one made for harmony and not for discord. The greatest thing pictures could do was to draw men into this world harmony. These pictures were great because they reached the soul, and she came to see, and this is what few do see, that the soul which is reached is not less great than the soul which has spoken. She too could have been one of the souls to speak; she accepted that in the simplicity with which we receive the indisputable, but it was good to think that she would not have failed utterly in fulfilling herself, if at the end, no matter through what, she made for harmony, and not for discord.

She grew so quiet then: the quiet of deep understanding. A long time she sat before a picture of light out beyond some trees. Oh what a world—with the light coming through the trees like that, and men to see it, and make it seen! She wished Karl might see these pictures; she looked at them with a new intentness,—she would tell Karl all about them; he would be so glad she had come.

She rose to go. Once more she looked around at the pictures, and to her eyes there came a dimness, and to her spirit a deep and tender yearning. There would be joy in having done such work as this. But there were other things! To work out one's life as bravely and well as one knew how, to do what seemed best, to be faithful and unfailing to those who were nearest one, to be willing to lay down one's life for one's love,—perhaps when the end of the world was reached, and all things translated in

terms of universal things, to have done that would itself mean the painting of a masterpiece. Perhaps the God of things as they are would see the unpainted pictures.

CHAPTER XXX

EYES FOR TWO

"This day smells as though it had been made in the country," Karl said, leaning from the dining room window which Ernestine had thrown wide open as she rose from the breakfast table.

"Yes, and looks that way," she responded, leaning out herself, and taking a long draught of the spring.

"Let's take a walk," he said abruptly.

"Except when you asked me to marry you—you never proposed a more delightful thing," she responded with gayer laugh than he had heard for a long time.

"Suppose we walk down through the park and take a look at the lake," he suggested.

"I call that a genuine inspiration!"—losing no time in getting Karl's things and her own.

Nothing could have pleased her more than this. It seemed beginning the spring right.

"I can fancy we are in Europe," he said, after they had gone a little way, and she laughed understandingly;—this seemed closer to the spirit of the old days than they had come for a long time.

Her guiding hand was on his arm, but more as if she liked to have it there, than as though necessary. "Your little finger could pilot me through Hades" he said, lovingly, gratefully, as a light touch told him of a step to go down, and again she laughed; it was very easy to laugh this morning.

The winter, full of hard things for them both, had gone now, and spring, as is spring's way, held promise. In the laboratory they no longer treated Ernestine with

mere courteous interest. That day in December when she went down to Dr. Parkman's operation had marked a change. Since then there had been a light ahead, a light which shed its rays down the path she must go.

What did it matter if she were a little stupid about this or that, if Mr. Beason was unconsciously rude or Mr. Willard consciously polite? For she knew now—and did anything matter save the final things? With her own feeling of its not mattering their attitude had seemed to change; she became more as one with them—she was quick to get that difference. "You're arriving on the high speed," Dr. Parkman had assured her when he visited the laboratory a few days before.

So she knew why she was happy, for added to all that was it not a glorious and propitious thing that Karl felt like taking a walk? Did it not argue a new interest in life—a new determination not to be shut off from it? And Karl—why did he too seem to feel that the spring held new and better things? Was it just the call of spring, or did Karl sense the good things ahead? Could it be that her soul, unable to contain itself longer, had whispered to his that new days were coming?

"Why, even a fellow on his way to the penitentiary for life would have to get some enjoyment out of this morning," he said, after they had stood still for a minute to listen to the song of a bird, and had caught the sweetness of a flowering tree.

"And oh, Karl," she laughed, joyously, "you're not on your way to the penitentiary for life."

"No," he said, and he seemed to be speaking to something within himself rather than to her,—"I'm not!"

They had reached Jackson Park, and sat down for a little rest before they should wend their way on to the lake. "Oh, Ernestine," he said, taking it in in long breaths, feeling the dew upon his face, and hearing the murmur of many living things,—"tell me about it, dear. I want to see it too!"

"Karl—every tree looks as though it were just as glad as we are! Can't you feel that

the trees feel just as we do about things? The leaves haven't all come out yet, some of them are holding themselves within themselves in a coy little way they have—although intending all the time to come out just as fast as ever they can. And it's that glorious, unspoiled green—the kind nature uses to make painters feel foolish. Oh, nature's having much fun with the painters this morning. Right over there,"—pointing with his finger—"is such a beautiful tree. I like it because all of its branches did not go in the way they were expected to go. Several of them were very perverse children, who mother trunk thought at one time were going to ruin her life, but you know lives aren't so easily ruined after all. 'Now you go right up there at an angle of twenty-two degrees,' she said to her eldest child. 'Not at all,' said the firstborn, 'I intend to lean right over here at whatsoever angle will best express my individuality.' And though the mother grieved for a long time she knows now—Karl—how foolish we are! But listen. You hear that bird who is trying to get all of his soul into his throat at once? He's 'way up there on the top branch, higher than everything else, and so pleased and proud that he is, and he's singing to a little blue cloud straight above him, and I tell you I never saw such blue—such blue within blue. Its outside dress is a very filmy blue, but that's made over an under dress of deeper blue, and there's just a little part in it where you can see right into the heart, and that's a blue so deep and rich it makes you want to cry. And oh, Karl—the heart itself has opened a little now, and you can get a suggestion, just a very indefinite suggestion—but then all inner things are indefinite—that inside the heart of the cloud is its soul, and you are permitted one fleeting glimpse to tell you that the soul of the cloud is such a blue as never was dreamed of on land or on sea."

"I can see that cloud," he said,—"and the bird looking up at it, and the tree whose eldest child was so perverse and so—individual."

"And, Karl," she went on, in joyous eagerness, "can't you see how the earth heaved a sigh right here a couple of hundred centuries ago—now don't tell me the park commissioners made them!—and that when it settled back from its sigh it never was

quite the same again? It was a sigh of content—for the little slopes are so gentle. Gentle little hills are sighs of content, and bigger ones are determinations, and mountains—what are mountains, Karl?"

"Mountains are revolutionary instincts," he said, smiling at her fancifulness—Ernestine was always fanciful when she was happy.

"Yes, that's it. Sometimes I like the stormy upheavals which change the whole face of the earth, but this morning it's nice to have just the little sighs of content. And, dear—now turn around and look this way. You can't really see the lake at all—but you can tell by looking down that way that it is there."

"How can you tell, liebchen?" he asked, just to hear her talk.

"Oh, I don't know how you can. It's not scientific knowledge—it's—the other kind. The trees know that the lake is there."

"Let's walk down to the lake," he said. "I want to feel it on my face. And oh, liebchen—it's good to have you tell about things like this."

As they walked she told him of all she saw: the people they met, and what she was sure the people were thinking about. Once she laughed aloud, and when he asked what she was laughing at, she said, "Oh, that chap we just passed was amusing. His eyes were saying—'My allowance is all gone and I haven't a red sou—but isn't it a bully day?'"

"There's no reason why I should be shut out from the world, Ernestine," he said vigorously, "when you have eyes for two."

"Why, that's just what I think!" she said, quickly, her voice low, and her heart beating fast.

The shadows upon the grass, the nursemaids and the babies, the boys and girls playing tennis, or just strolling around happy to be alive—she could make Karl see them all. And as they came in sight of the lake she began telling him how it looked

in the distance, how it seemed at first just a cloud dropped down from the sky, but how, upon coming nearer, it was not the stuff that clouds are made of, but a live thing, a great live thing pulsing with joy in the morning sunshine. She told him how some of it was blue and some of it was green, while some of it was blue wedded to green, and some of it too elusive to have anything to do with the spectrum. "And, dearie—it is flirting with the sunlight—flirting shamefully; I'm almost ashamed for the lake, only it's so happy in its flirtation that perhaps it is not bothered with moral consciousness. But it seems to want the sunlight to catch it, and then it seems to want to get away, and sometimes a sunbeam gets a little wave that stayed too long and kisses it right here in open day—and isn't it awful—but isn't it nice?"

In so many ways she told how the lake seemed to her—how it seemed to her eyes and how it seemed to her heart and how it seemed to her soul, how it looked, what it said, what it meant; what the clouds thought of it, and what the sunlight thought of it, what the wind thought of it, what the dear babies on the shore thought of it, and what it thought of itself. She could not have talked that way to any one else, but it was so easy for her heart to talk to Karl's heart. One pair of eyes could do just as well as two when hearts were tuned like this!

And then, when she did not feel like talking any more, they stood there and learned many things from the voice of the lake itself. "Ernestine," he said, when they turned from it at last, "it seems to me I never saw Lake Michigan quite so well before."

CHAPTER XXXI

SCIENCE AND SUPER-SCIENCE

"Insubordinate children who play off from school in the morning must work in the afternoon," Karl said at luncheon, and they went to their work that afternoon with freshened spirit.

When the McCormicks gave up their flat at Christmas time, Beason had come to

live with the Hubers. Ernestine prided herself upon some cleverness in having rented two rooms without Karl's suspecting it was a matter of renting the rooms. When he engaged Ross as his secretary in the fall she said it would be more convenient for them all for Mr. Ross to have his room there. They had an extra room, so why not? She did not put it the other way—that she felt the house more expensive than they should have now. Of course Karl would make money in his books—that had been settled in advance, but things had changed for them, and Ernestine felt the need of caution. Then as to Beason, she said there was that little room he could have, and it would do the boy good to be there. "You like John," she said to Karl, "and as he has not yet been graduated into philosophy, he may be more companionable than Mr. Ross." And Karl said by all means to have Beason if it wouldn't bother her to have him around.

She was glad of that for more reasons than a reduced rent; Beason had become a great help to Ernestine. After he came there to live they fitted up some things for her in her studio, and she managed to get in a number of extra hours when Karl thought she was busy with her pictures.

In her glow of spirit this afternoon—that walk in the park had meant so much as holding promise for the future—Ernestine was even willing to admit, looking back upon it, that the winter had not been nearly so bad as one would suppose. Mr. Beason and Mr. Ross were both, in their differing ways, alert and interesting, and there had been some good wrangles around the evening fire. Other people had found them out, and they had drawn to them an interesting group of friends. So the days had flowed steadily on, a brave struggle to meet life in good part, keep that good-fellowship of the spirit.

One of the hardest things of all had been deceiving Karl. Her reason justified it, but it hurt her heart. They had been able to do it, however, better than she would have believed possible. Mr. Ross was with him most of the time when she was not, and

had frequently been forced to intercept some caller who was close to an innocent remark about Mrs. Hubers being over at the university. Several times Karl had caught the odour of the laboratory about her, and she had been forced to explain it as the odour of the studio; and more than once, in the midst of a discussion, her interest had beguiled her into some surprisingly intelligent remark, and she had been obliged to invent laughing reasons for knowing anything about it. It hurt her deeply to take advantage of Karl's blindness in keeping things from him, even though the motive was all love for Karl, and determination to help. She would be so glad when all that was over, and she thought as she worked along very hard that afternoon that perhaps it would not be many days now until Karl should know.

That would be for Dr. Parkman to say; so many vital things seemed left to Dr. Parkman. "Did you ever think," she said, turning to Mr. Beason, who was busy at the table beside her, "what the doctor really counts for in this world?"

"Yes—in a way," said Beason, adjusting his microscope, "but then I never was sick much."

"Well, I didn't mean just taking one's pulse," she laughed. "It seems to me they mean more than prescriptions. For one thing, I think it's rather amusing the way they all practice Christian Science."

"Why—what do you mean?" he demanded, aroused now, and shocked.

"Oh, I've come to the conclusion that a modern, first-class doctor is a Christian Scientist who preserves his sanity"—she paused, laughing a little at Beason's bewildered face, and at the thought of how little her formula would be appreciated in either camp. "I've noticed it down at Dr. Parkman's office," she went on. "It's quite a study to listen to him at the telephone. He will wrangle around all sorts of corners to get patients to admit something is in better shape than it was yesterday, and though they called up to say they were worse, they end in admitting they are much better. He just forces them into saying something is better, and then he says, triumphantly,

'Oh—that's fine!'—and the patient rings off immensely cheered up."

"That's a kind of trickery, though," said Beason.

"Pretty good kind of trickery, if it helps people get well."

"Well I shouldn't care to be a practicing physician," Beason declared, "just for that reason. That sort of business would be very distasteful to me."

Ernestine was about to say something, and then relegated it to the things better left unsaid; but she permitted herself a wise little smile.

"I don't think it's such an awfully high grade of work," he went on. "In a way it is—of course. But there's so much repetition and routine; so much that doesn't count scientifically at all—doesn't count for anything but the patient."

"But what is science for?" she demanded, aggravated now. "Has medical science any value save in its relation to human beings?"

"Oh yes, I know—in the end," he admitted vaguely.

"All this laboratory work is simply to throw more power into the hands of the general practitioner. It's to give him more light. It's just because his work is so important that this work has any reason for being. Dr. Hubers saw it that way," she concluded, with the air of delivering the unanswerable.

"But even that wasn't just what I meant," she went on, after they had worked silently for a few minutes. "What I was thinking about was the superdoctor."

Beason simply stared.

"No, not entirely crazy," she laughed. "For instance: what can a man do for nervous indigestion without infusing a little hope? Think of what doctors know—not only about people's bodies, but about their lives. Cause and effect overlap—don't they? Half the time a run down body means a broken spirit, or a twisted life. How can you set part of a thing right when the whole of it's wrong? How can a doctor be just a doctor—if he's a good one?"

But nothing "super" could be expected of Beason. His very blank face recalled her to the absurdity of getting out of focus with one's audience.

She herself felt it strongly. It seemed to her that Dr. Parkman's real gift was his endowment in intuition. When all was going well she heard nothing from him; but let things begin to drag, and the doctor appeared, rich in resources. He seemed to have in reserve a wide variety of stimulants.

He looked in upon them often. Whenever in their neighbourhood he stopped, and though frequently he could not so much as take time to sit down, the day always went a little better for his coming. "If the end of the world were upon us, Dr. Parkman could avert the calamity for a day or two—couldn't he, Karl?" Ernestine had laughed after one of his visits.

This proved to be one of the days of his stopping in, and he arrived just as Karl was dictating a few final sentences to Mr. Ross. While they were finishing—he said he was not in a hurry today—he took a keen look at Karl's face. His colour was not good—the doctor thought; in fact several things were not to his liking. "Too many hard times with himself," he summed it up.—"Droopy. Needs a bracer. Needs to get back in the harness—that's the only medicine for him."

He had been thinking about that very seriously of late. Ernestine was at least in position now to show the possibilities of the situation, and working with Karl would do more for her in a month than working along this way would do in five. Why not? No matter how long they waited it was going to be hard at first. The deep lines in Karl's face furnished the strongest argument against further waiting.

"What have we here?" he asked, picking up one of the embossed books lying open on the table near Karl.

"I presume that's my Bible," Karl replied.

"Has it come to this?" the doctor asked dryly.

"Didn't we ever tell you the story of my Bible?"

"No. You never did. I never suspected you had one."

"Oh yes; the Bible was the first book of this sort I had. It was sent to me by some home missionary society, some woman's organization—"

"Fools!" broke in Parkman.

"They saw in the paper about my eyes and so they said to themselves—'Now here is a good chance to convert one of those ungodly scientists.' So they sent the Bible along with a nice little note saying that now I would have time to read it, and perhaps all of this was the hand of God leading me—you can construct the rest. Well." he paused with a laugh—"Ernestine was mad."

"I should hope so!" growled Parkman.

"She was so divinely angry that in having fun with her I overlooked being enraged myself. Oh, if I could only give you any idea of how incensed she was! I think she intended notifying the Chicago police. Really I don't know to what lengths she would have gone had it not been for my restraining influence. And then she constructed a letter. It was a masterpiece—I can tell you that. She compared me to them—greatly to their disadvantage. She spoke of the various kinds of religious manifestation—again greatly to their disadvantage."

"Did she send it?" laughed the doctor.

"No. I persuaded her that well-intentioned people should receive the same kindly tolerance we extend to the mentally defective. The writing of the letter in itself half way contented her—it was such a splendid expression of her emotions. Poor old girl," he added musingly, "she was feeling pretty sore about things just then."

"But the sequel is the queer part," he went on. "I began to read their Bible, and I like it. It's part of the irony of fate that I haven't gotten from it the things they intended I should; but I tell you part of this Old Testament is immense reading. You know, Parkman, I suppose we're prejudiced ourselves. We don't see the Bible as it is itself. We see it in relation to a lot of people who surround it. And because we don't care

for some of them we think we shouldn't care for it. Whereas the thing in itself," he concluded cheerfully, "is just what we'd like."

"And how go your own books?" Dr. Parkman asked him.

Karl shrugged one shoulder in a nervous little way he had acquired. "Oh—so, so. Pretty fair, I guess." His face settled into a gloom then, but almost immediately he roused himself from it to say, in a voice more cheerful than spontaneous: "They'll be finished in a couple of weeks. I'm both glad and sorry. Don't know just what I'll go at then."

Again he seemed to settle into the gloom which the doctor could see was ever there waiting to receive him. But again he roused himself almost immediately. Was it this way with the man all the time? A continuous fight against surrendering? "But I'm mighty thankful I've had the books," he said. "They've pulled me through the winter, and they've enabled me to make a living. Lord, but a man would hate not to make a living!" he concluded, straightening up a trifle, more like the Karl of old.

The sheer pathos of it had never come home to the doctor as it did with that. A man who should have stood upon the very mountain peaks of fame now proudly claiming that he was able to make a living! But if it brought home the pathos of the situation it also brought new sense of the manhood of Karl Hubers. It was great—Parkman told himself—great! A man who felt within himself all the forces which make for greatness could force himself into the place of the average man, and thank the Lord that he was able to make a living!

"Here's a little scheme I've worked out," Karl said, and opening one of the drawers of the library table, pulled out the model for the idea he had worked out for reading and writing in Braille.

It was the first Dr. Parkman had heard of it; he wanted to know all about it, and Karl explained how it had seemed to him as soon as he learned how the blind read and wrote that the thing could be simplified and vastly improved. So he had worked this

out; he explained its points of difference, and wanted to know what Parkman thought of it.

"Why, man," exclaimed the doctor, "it strikes me you've revolutionized the whole business. But—why, Karl—nobody ever thought of this before?"

"The usual speech," laughed Karl.

"But in this case it seems so confoundedly true."

"Well I believe it will help some, and I'll be glad of that," he added simply. "Oh I have some more schemes. If I've got to be blind I'm going to make blindness a better business."

"Our old friend the devil didn't do so well then after all," said Dr. Parkman quietly. "He closed up one channel, but he didn't figure on your burrowing another."

Karl laughed. "Oh this won't worry him much; it came so easily I can't think it amounts to a great deal. But as long as I was used to scheming things out it—amused me, exercised a few cells that were in pretty bad need of a job. And I have other ideas," he repeated.

Parkman asked what Karl intended to do with his model, offering some suggestions. The doctor was more than interested and pleased; he was deeply stirred. "Why, confound the fellow," he was saying to himself,—"they can't knock him out! They knock him down in one place, and he bobs up in another!" The ideas of this brain were as difficult to suppress as certain other things in nature. Dam up one place—they find another.

They smoked their cigars and talked intermittently then; they were close enough together to be silent when they chose. And all the while the undercurrent of Dr. Parkman's thought flowed steadily on.

He was thinking that after all there were better things to do with fate than damn it. If ever a man would seem justified in spending his soul in the damning of fate, that

man, it seemed to him, was the friend beside him. And while he had done some of it, perhaps a great deal more than any one knew, it had not been his master-passion. His master-passion had been to press on—press on to be knew not what—there was the glory of it! It was easy enough to work toward a goal sighted ahead; but it took a Karl Hubers to work on through the darkness.

And ah, there was a good time coming! The doctor's sombre face relaxed to a smile. His own life seemed almost worth living now just because he had been able to take a hand—yes, and play a few good cards—in this little game. Those things Karl had shown him today made it seem there was all the finer joy in bringing him back to the things which were his own. He had been thrust from out the gates, but he had not sat whimpering outside the wall. He had gone on and sought to find a place in that outer world in which he found himself. And now he should come back to his own through gates of glory.

Karl asked him about Ernestine then. How was she looking; was she thin—pale? Her face felt pale to him, he said. He had urged her to work, because he knew she would be happier so, but Parkman must see to it she did not overwork. Had he seen the picture on which she was working so hard? He asked that wistfully; and the doctor's face was soft, and a gentleness crept into his voice as he said he believed he was to see the great picture very soon now. And then, after a silence, Karl said, softly, very tenderly—"Bless her gamey little heart!"

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DOCTOR HAS HIS WAY

It was in response to the doctor's telephone message that Ernestine went down to his office one afternoon a few days later. Dr. Parkman had been detained at the hospital, they told her, but would be there very soon, and so she sat down in the waiting room, which was already well filled. Were there always people there waiting for

him—and did they not sometimes grow impatient and want to find a doctor who would not keep them waiting so long?

The woman sitting near her looked friendly, and so she asked: "Don't you get very tired waiting for Dr. Parkman?"

"Oh, yes," sighed the woman, "very tired."

"Then why don't you go to some doctor who would attend to you more quickly?" she pursued, moved chiefly by the desire to see what would happen.

The woman stared, grew red, and replied frigidly: "Because I do not wish to."

All the other patients were staring at Ernestine, too. "Why don't you do that yourself?" asked a large woman with a sick-looking small boy.

"I guess if there was anything much the matter with you, you'd be willing to wait," said a pale woman with a weary voice.

And then a man—she was sure that man was a victim of cancer—said loftily: "A doctor you never have to wait for isn't the doctor you want."

"The only thing seems queer to me," said a meek looking woman, taking advantage of the outbreak, "is that he don't look at your tongue. Down in Indiana, where I come from, they always look at your tongue. There's a lot of questions he don't ask," she ventured, looking around for either assent or information.

"He asks all there's any need of," the first woman assured her. "I guess you aren't very sick," turning, witheringly, to Ernestine.

And then they went back to their waiting; those who had rocking chairs rocking, those who had magazines reading, or turning leaves at least, some just sitting there and looking into space. It must take away all sense of freedom to feel that people like this, sick people for whom everything was hard, were always waiting for one.

She would tell the doctor how she had been well-nigh mobbed by loyal patients. They were like a great family; she knew well enough they did considerable

grumbling, but her remark put her without the fold, and from her as an alien, criticism was not to be brooked. By the glare with which the first woman still regarded her she was sure she was suspected of being an agent sent there by some inferior doctor to try and get Dr. Parkman's patients away from him.

Ernestine was tired, and she believed she would have to admit that she was nervous. She had been working harder, she supposed, than she should, but the further she went the more she saw to do, and something from within was eternally pushing her on.

As she waited, her mind turned to the stories that office must hold. How much of anxiety and suffering and sorrow and tragedy—and occasional joy—it must know. The mothers who brought children whom others had declared incurable—how tense these moments of waiting must be for them! The husband and wife who came together to find out whether she would have to have the operation—how many of the crucial moments of life were lived in such places as this! The power in these doctors vested! The power of their voice, their slightest glance, in holding men from the brink of despair! Who could know the human heart better than they? They did not meet the every day men and women well groomed with restraints and pretence. For it was an hour when the soul was stripped bare that the doctor looked in upon it. Men were various things to various people, but to the doctor they came very close to being themselves. Too much was at stake to dissemble here. When phantoms of fear and death took shape in the shadows one sought the doctor—and told the truth.

She had a fancy which moved her then. She saw the men like Dr. Parkman fighting darkness down in the valley, while from the mountain peak adjacent men like Karl turned on, as with mighty search-lights, more, and ever more, of the light. And what were the search-lights for if not to be turned down into the valley?

"What time did you go to bed last night?" he demanded, after they had shaken hands in the inner office.

"Why—did you see the light?" she faltered;—she had made a promise against late hours.

"The light—no; but I see your face now, and that's enough. Was it two—or worse?"

"Just a mere trifle worse. And truly, doctor—I didn't mean to. But don't you know it's hard to stop when you feel just right for a thing? Why, one can't always do things at the proper time," she expostulated.

"No, and one can't always keep an abused nervous system from going to pieces either. Did you ever stop to think of that?"

"But you'll look after the nervous system," she replied ingenuously.

"Now that's where a lot of you make the mistake. I can't do anything at all without the cooperation of common-sense."

"Well I'm intending to be real good from this on," she laughed. "But it is so important that I know everything!"

He laughed then too. "A very destructive notion."

"Tell me," he said, when he had settled himself in his chair in the particular way of settling himself when he intended having a talk with her, "have you been rewarded in all this by any pleasure in it whatsoever? I don't mean," he made clear, anticipating her, "just the pleasure of doing something for Karl. But has your work given you any enthusiasm for the thing in itself?"

"Doctor—it has. And that was something I was afraid of. But you should have heard me talking to Mr. Ross the other day when he made one of his patronising remarks about mere science. I believe that when you work hard at almost anything you develop some enthusiasm for it."

"Um—a rather doubtful compliment for science."

"It was rather Beasonish," she laughed. "But you see in the beginning my face was turned the other way."

He gave her one of those concentrated glances then. "And how about that? Never feel any more like heading the other way?"

She smiled, and the smile seemed to be covering a great deal. "Oh sometimes the perverse side of me feels like turning the other way. There are many sides to us—aren't there? But never mind about that," she hastened. "That is just something between me and myself. I can suppress all insurrections."

There was a pause. She leaned back in the big chair and was resting; he had seen from the first that she was very tired. "No desire to back out?"—he threw that out a little doubtfully.

She sat up straight. She looked, first angry, and then as if she were going to cry. "Doctor—tell me! Am I that unconvincing? Hasn't the winter—"

"This winter," he interrupted gently, "has proved that you knew what you were talking about when you came to me last fall. Could I say more than that? I only asked the question," he explained, "because this is the last chance for retreat."

And then he told her, watching the changing expressions of her responsive face. But at the last there was a timidity, a sort of frightened fluttering.

"But doctor—am I ready? Can I really do it? There is so much I don't know!"

"The consciousness of which is excellent proof of your progress. My idea is this. In any case it is going to be hard at the first. You might go on another year, and of course be in better shape, but I don't know just what Karl would be doing in that year; he's in need of a big rousing up, and as for you, after working the year with him, you'll be a long way ahead of where you would be alone. So it argues itself that way from both standpoints. I made up my mind when I was out the other day that Karl needs just what this is going to give."

"You think he looks badly?" she flew at that, relinquishing all else. "You think Karl's not well?"

"I didn't mean that. But he needs the hope, the enthusiasm, activity, this is going to give."

"Hasn't he been splendid this winter?" she asked softly, those very deep warm lights in her eyes. "Did you ever see anything like it, doctor?"

"I thought I knew something about courage," he replied shortly, "but Karl makes me think I didn't."

"I don't believe there are many men could turn from big things to smaller ones, and grow bigger instead of smaller," she said, with a very tender pride.

"They say scientists are narrow and bull-headed. Wonder what they would say to this? And there's another thing to remember. We have seen the results of the victories. Only Karl Hubers knows of the fights."

"I know of some of them," said Ernestine, simply.

"Yes," he corrected himself—"you. And before we quite deify Karl we must reckon with you. He could not have done it without you."

"He would not have tried," she said—and the man turned away. That look was not his to see.

When she recalled herself it was with a sense of not having been kind. Why did she say things like that to Dr. Parkman after Karl had told her—? "And you, doctor," she said in rather timid reparation, "I wonder if you know what you have done for us both?"

"Oh, I haven't counted for much," he said almost curtly. "It would have worked itself out without me." But even as he spoke he was wishing with all his heart that there was some way of showing her what they had meant to him. He did not do it, for a soul which has been long apart grows fearful of sending itself out, fearful of making itself absurd.

They talked it all out then, going at practical things in a very matter-of-fact way.

"And now," said the doctor, "I have a suggestion. It is more than a suggestion. It is a request. A little more than a request, even; a—"

"Command?" she smiled at him.

"You know," he began, "how it is with the athletes. Sometimes they become overtrained, which is the worst thing could happen to them. A good trainer never puts overtrained men in the game. Now, my dear enthusiastic friend,"—she was looking at him in that intent way of hers—"I've noticed two or three times that you've about jumped out of your chair at some meaningless noise in the other room. Your eyes tell the story;—oh there are various ways of reading it. You're a little overtrained. Before you tell Karl the great secret I want you to go away by yourself for a couple of weeks and rest."

"You mean that I should leave Karl?" she demanded.

"I do. I want you to have change, rest, and for that matter a little lonesomeness won't be a bad thing. You'll be in just the right mood then to put it all to him when you come back. He'll be in just the right mood to take it."

"Oh, but, doctor—you don't understand! I can't leave Karl. There are things I do for him no one else could do. Why you must remember he's blind!" she concluded, passionately.

She was not easy to win, but he stated his case, and one by one met her arguments. Yes—Karl would be lonely. But when she came back he would be so glad to see her that he would be a much better subject for enthusiasm than he was now. She also would be in better mood. "If you tell him now," he said, "and he makes some objections, says it can't be done—ten to one, as you are now, you will begin to cry. A nice termination for your whole winter's work! You must go to him just as you came to me in the beginning—overwhelm him, take him whether or no. And you're not right for that now. It's just because I'm bound this thing shall go through, that I insist you do as I say."

"Couldn't Karl go with me?" she asked, quite humbly, her eyes pleading eloquently.

He showed her, kindly, but very decisively, that that would not make the point at all. There followed then but a few final protestations. Where would Karl think she was? What in the world would he think of her—going away and leaving him like that? Who would look after him? What if he needed some help he didn't get? Suppose he grew so lonesome and depressed he just couldn't stand it?

On all of which points he somewhat banteringly reassured her. Other men had been lonesome now and then, and it had not quite killed them. Beason and Ross were in the house, and there was a good maid, who adored Dr. Hubers. "As to where he thinks you are, I'll tell him half the truth. That you are a little nervous and I have prescribed change and rest."

But she would not agree to that. "Karl would worry," she said. "We'll tell him instead that I have to go to New York to see about my picture. It will be easier for Karl if he thinks it is about my work."

He yielded to her judgment in that, and agreed to the further compromise that if she found she could not possibly stay away two weeks she might come back in one.

It was the change, the going away, the getting lonesome the doctor wanted most of all. He wanted to lift her clear up to her highest self that she might have all that was hers to give when she told her story to Karl.

"And of course, doctor," she asked anxiously, "when the time comes you will talk to him too—tell him you feel I can do it?"

"Trust me for that," he said briefly.

"But where is it I am to go?" she laughed, as she was ready to leave.

He told her then of a place in Michigan. An old nurse of his had married and was living there, and he frequently sent patients to her as boarders. "I have written to her and she wants you to come," he said.

"Well—upon my word! Before I so much as said I would go?"

"Why certainly," he answered, looking a trifle surprised. "For three days, perhaps five, I want you to sleep. You'll find you're very tired—once you let go. Then you can walk in the woods—I think it's going to be warm enough for browsing around. And you can think of Karl," he said with a touch of humour, and a touch of something else, "and of all this is going to mean. I've thought a great many times of what you said about the statue. There's something mighty stirring in that idea of unconquerableness."

"There is!" she responded.

"A great thing, you know, is worth making a few sacrifices for. You've made some pretty big ones for this, now make this one more. Haven't you been laying claim to great faith in my judgment?"

"Oh yes—as a matter of judgment; only—"

"Very well then, be lonesome—if you must be lonesome. I hope you will be—it's part of the treatment. And then you'll come back and in your first bursts of delight tell Karl just what you've done. When he says it's impossible, you'll just laugh. You'll get him to try and then the day is yours."

Out on the street she stopped half a dozen times in the first block, thinking she would go back and tell Dr. Parkman she couldn't possibly leave Karl. "Why, he's a terrible man," she mused, half humorously, half tearfully, "sending wives away from husbands like this—wanting people to be lonesome, just because he thinks it's good for them! I'll not do it—I'll go back and tell him I won't!" But she did not go back. She felt Dr. Parkman might look unpleasant if a patient came back to say: "I won't."—"No one would ever get up courage enough for that," she concluded mournfully, "so I'll just have to go."

CHAPTER XXXIII

LOVE'S OWN HOUR

It was Sunday, and Ernestine was going away next morning. She had told Karl the day before; it alarmed him at first, for he telephoned Dr. Parkman, asking him to come out. When the doctor arrived he demanded the truth as to Ernestine. Had anything happened? Was she not well? He was so relieved at the doctor's assurance that Ernestine was perfectly well, and was going away because of her work, that he accepted the situation more easily than she had anticipated. "Perhaps it will do me good, liebchen," he told her. "I fear I'm getting to be a selfish brute—taking everything for granted and not appreciating you half enough."

But that afternoon it was Ernestine herself who was forced to fight hard for cheerfulness. She did not want to go away. She was curiously depressed about it, and resentful. More than once she was on the point of telephoning to Dr. Parkman that she could not leave Karl.

Georgia and Joe and Mrs. McCormick came in about five and Georgia's spirit seemed to blow through the house like a strong, full current of bracing air. She and Joe had returned from California the night before, and there were many things to tell about their trip. Mrs. McCormick said it was indeed curious how some people always had so many more adventures than other people had. She wondered why it was she never met any of these amusing persons Georgia was always telling about.

Their visit did Ernestine much good. It was impossible to feel blue or have silly forebodings in the presence of so much naturalness and cheer as always emanated from Georgia. Those hearty laughs had cleared the atmosphere for her.

"Look here, liebchen," said Karl, emerging from a brown study, "we must fix up a code."

"A code, dear?"

"For your writing to me. You see Ross will have to read the letters, and how can you say in every other line you love me, with that duffer reading it out loud?"

"Oh, Karl—how stupid of me not to learn writing the other way! You see it never occurred to me I would be away from you. Couldn't I take that manual, and make it out from that?"

"Well—you might, but we'll do both; it will be fun to have a code. Now, when you say—'I am a trifle tired,' you mean—'Oh, sweetheart, I am so lonesome for you that I am never going away again!'"

"But won't Mr. Ross think it strange if I say in each letter that I am a trifle tired?"

"What do we care what he thinks? They're not his letters, are they? And when you say—'New York seems most attractive,'—you mean—'Oh, dearest, I never dreamed I loved you so much! I am finding out in a thousand new ways how much I care, and never, never, shall we be separated again.'"

"And when I say, 'I send you my love'—it will be perfectly proper for Mr. Ross to read that, I mean—'Dear love—I send you a thousand kisses, and I would give the world for one minute now in your arms.'"

And so they arranged it,—revising, enlarging, going over it a great many times to have it all certain—there was such a tender kind of fun in it. As to the other side of it, Karl of course could write to her on his typewriter.

It was a beautiful evening they had sitting there before the fire. She saw pictures for him, and he even saw some pictures for her,—he said a blind man could see certain pictures no one else could possibly see. They spoke of how they had never been separated since their marriage, of how strange it would seem to be apart, but always of how beautiful to be together again. There was such a sweetness, tenderness, in the sadness which hung about their parting. They made the most of their pain, as is the way of lovers, for it drew them together in a new way, and each kiss, each smallest caress, had a new and tender significance.

"You'll be back in time for your birthday, Ernestine?"

"Oh, yes; I'm only going to stay a week."

"I thought you said, perhaps two?"

"Did I? Well I've decided one will be enough."

"Ernestine, what have you been painting? Tell me, dear. That's one thing I'm a little disappointed in. I do so want to keep close to your work."

"Well, Karl," after a silence, "that picture I have been working on this winter is hard to tell about because it is in a field all new to me. It is a picture which emphasises, or tries to, what love means to the world,—a picture which is the outgrowth of our love. I am not sure that it is good in all its technical features, but I believe there is atmosphere in it, poetic feeling, and, back of that, thought, and soul, and truth. I think there is harmony and richness of colour. Some people will say it is very daring, and no one will call it conventional, but I am hoping,"—Ernestine's voice was so low and full of feeling he could scarcely get the words—"that it is going to be a very great picture—the greatest I have ever done. Some of it has been hard for me, dear. In truth I have been much discouraged at times. But great things are not lightly achieved, Karl, and if this is anything at all, it is one of the great things. As to the subject, detail, I am going to ask you to wait until I come back. I have been keeping it for you as a little surprise. Perhaps it will help some of your lonely hours, dear"—her voice quivered—"to think about the beautiful surprise. And if it seems strange sometimes that I could bring myself to go away from you, will you not bear in mind, Karl dear, that I am doing it simply that the great surprise may be made perfect for you? It is a whim of mine to keep this a great secret; in the end I know you will forgive the secrecy. And when I come back"—her voice was stronger, fuller now—"I am going to make you see it just as plainly as you ever saw anything in all your life!"

"You must! I couldn't bear it to be shut out from your work."

"You are not going to be shut out from my work!"—she said it with an intensity almost stern.

"I want your life to be happy, Ernestine," he said, after a time, and the words seemed to have a new meaning spoken out of this mood of very deep tenderness. "I don't want it to be darkened. I want my love to make you happy—in spite of it all."

"It does," she breathed,—"it does."

"But I want you to be—as you used to be! I haven't been fair in letting this make such a difference with us."

"Karl—how can you talk like that, when you have been so—splendid?"

"But you see I don't want to be splendid," he said whimsically. "I'd rather be a brute than be splendid. And I want you to love me always as you did at first—just because you couldn't help yourself."

"I can not help myself now," she laughed. "I am just as helpless as I ever was."

And then a long and very precious silence. She was filled with many things too deep for utterance, even had she been free to speak. She thought of her birthday night a year before, their happiness then, all that had come to them since, all that love had meant, the great things it was to do for them. She looked at Karl's face—his fine, strong face which seemed the very soul of the mellow fire-light. How would that dear face look when she told him what she had done? Convinced him that great things were before him now? Would it not be that his determination not to fail her would stir fires which, even in his most triumphant days, had slumbered?

But from exultation in all that, she passed to the heart's pain in leaving him. She moved a little closer, took his hand and rested it lovingly against her cheek. She had never been away from Karl. Tears came at the thought of it now.

And he must have been thinking of what Ernestine had meant to him in the last year, for of a sudden he stooped down and with his old abandonment, with all the fullness of the first passion and the tender understanding of these later days, gathered her into his arms. "Oh, Ernestine," he whispered—breathing into her name all that was in his heart—"Ernestine!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

ALMOST DAWN

She found that in the beginning at least it was as Dr. Parkman had said. It was good to sleep. It was good to go to bed at night with the sense of nothing to do in the morning, good to wake at the usual time only to feel she might go back to that comfortable, beautiful sleep. For Ernestine was indeed very tired. Since that day when the great idea had come to her there had been no time when she was free from the sense of all that lay before her. But now she could rest.

Strangely enough she did not worry greatly about Karl. Her first waking thoughts were of him, but fuller consciousness always brought the feeling that it was all right with Karl; he was missing her, of course, but she was going back to him very soon and bring him the things he had believed shut away forever;—bring him the light!—that was the way she had come to think of it. The deliciousness of her rest was in the sense of its being right she should take it; she could best serve Karl by resting until she was her strongest self.

Her room was so quiet and restful, the bed so comfortable, and Mrs. Rolfe, Dr. Parkman's old nurse, so good to her. It was soothing to be told to close her pretty eyes and go to sleep, sustaining to be met with—"Now here is something for our little lady to eat." After many days of responsibility it was good to be "mothered" a little.

But after the first revel in sleep had passed she did a great deal of languid, undisturbed thinking. She seemed detached from her life, and it passed before her, not poignantly, but merely as something to look upon, quietly muse about. Soon she would step back into it, but now she was resting from it, simply viewing it as an interesting thing which kept passing before her.

From the very first it came before her, from those days when she was a little girl at

home, and she found much quiet entertainment in trying to connect herself of those days with herself of the now. "Am I all one?" she would want to know, and in thinking that over would quite likely fall asleep again.

She thought a great deal about her father and mother; they were more real to her than they had been for a long time; but it was hard to connect the Ernestine of that home with the Ernestine who belonged to Karl. There was Georgia, to be sure, who extended clear through. Dear Georgia—how well she had looked Sunday in that beautiful black gown. She remembered such a funny thing, and such a dear thing, Georgia had done once. They had become chums as freshmen and when they were sophomores Georgia came to their house to live, and one night she inadvertently said something which started one of those terrible arguments, and ended in the saying of so many bitter things that Ernestine could not bear it—especially before Georgia, and as soon as she could she left the table and went up to her room. She did not cry, her mother cried so much that it seemed enough for the family, but she sat there very still looking straight ahead—denying herself even the luxury of tears. And then, just when that atmosphere of unhappiness and bitterness seemed pressing down upon her—crushing her—there had come a wild shriek from Georgia—"Ernestine—Ernestine—get your things quick—let's go to the fire!"

That was not to be resisted even by a nineteen-year-old girl. She remembered tumbling into her things, running two blocks, and then gasping—"Where is it?" and Georgia replied, gasping too—"Don't know—small boys—said so." And then after running all over town they found there was no fire at all, and that had so overcome them with laughter that she forgot all about those other things which would have given her so miserable an evening. She had had just a little suspicion then, and now she had a firm conviction, that Georgia never heard small boys say anything about fire that night. Bless Georgia's big heart—she loved her for just such things as inventing fires for unhappy people to go to.

As she lay there resting, away from the current of her life, she thought a great deal about a little grave over in France, such a very, very small grave which represented a life which had really never come into the world at all. She could fancy her baby here with her now—patting her face, pulling her hair—so warm and dear and sweet. Her arms ached for that little child which had been hers only in anticipation. And what it would have meant to Karl!—the laughter of a very small voice, the cuddling of a very small head…. Deep thoughts came then, and deeper yearnings, and when Mrs. Rolfe came in at one of those times she was startled at the look in the deep brown eyes of her patient, a look which seemed to be asking for something which no one could give, and when Ernestine smiled at her, as she always did, the woman could scarcely keep back the answering—"Never mind, dearie—never you mind."

And through all of her thoughts there was Karl—his greatness, his work, his love. She would be so happy when she did not have to keep things back from Karl. It seemed it would be the happiest moment of her life when she could throw her soul wide open to him with—"There is never going to be another thing kept back from you!" She could not bear the thought of Karl's believing she was in New York. But soon there would be no more of that, and Karl himself would tell her she had done it because she cared so much.

And most beautiful of all things to think about was the hour when she would tell him! How would he look? What would he say?

On the fifth morning she awakened feeling quite different. Those birds!—What were they singing about? She got up and raised the curtain, and then drew in a long breath of delight. For it was a radiant spring morning, breathing gladness and joy and all beautiful things. Oh how beautiful off there in the trees!—the trees which were just coming back to life after their long sleep. She too had been asleep—but it was time now to wake up and be glad!

She felt very much awake and alive this morning.—Oh, how those birds were

singing! She laughed in sheer happiness, and began to sing too. She would dress and go out of doors. To remain in her room one hour longer would be unbearable bondage. For all the world was awake and glad! She could scarcely wait to get out there among the birds and trees.

She had never felt so alive, so well tuned to life, so passionately eager for its every manifestation as when, after a hurried breakfast, she started up the beautiful green hill to the trees where all the birds were singing—the soft breath of the spring enfolding her, her spirit lifting itself up to meet the caress of the spirit of spring. She walked with long, swinging step, smiling to herself, humming a glad little air, now and then tossing her head just to get the breath of spring upon her face in some new way. Mrs. Rolfe watched her from the kitchen door, smiling.

On the hill-top she stopped, standing straight, breathing deep, revelling in the song of the birds—they were fairly intoxicated with joy at this morning—listening to the soft murmur of the spring beneath it all—happy—oh so happy, as she looked off to the far distances. The long winter had gone, and now the spring had come again—the dear spring she had always loved!

It was with her too almost an intoxication—the throwing off of gloom, the taking on of joy. On such a morning nature calls unto her chosen, and they hear her call, and are glad. As she stood there on her hill-top her spirit lifted itself up in lyric utterance; her whole being responded to the songs of the returning birds.

How well Dr. Parkman had planned it! She would go back now and tell Karl what a great thing it was to be alive, how the spirit was everything, and could conquer all else. It seemed very easy now. It was all a matter of getting the spirit right;—how good of Dr. Parkman to think it out like this.

But there was something a little wrong. She stopped for a minute, pondering. Now she knew! Karl!—why could he not be here too? All in an instant she saw it so clearly that she laughed aloud. She was rested now—ready to tell him—and this the

place! She would send for him! Mr. Ross—or perhaps the doctor himself—would come with him, and here where it was all so beautiful, where the call of the spring reached them and made them glad—she would tell him! And then, his spirit strong as hers was now strong, he would respond to it, be made ready for the fight.

How simple and how splendid! How stupid not to have thought of this before! And then again she laughed. It would be fun to improve on Dr. Parkman's idea. That was all very well—but this a thousand times better. Karl's spirit too needed lifting up;—what could do it as this? It was true he could not see it with his eyes—but there were so many other ways of being part of it: the singing of the birds, the scent of the budding trees, the rich breath of spring upon one's face. And even the vision should not be lost to him. She would make him see it! She would make him see the sunlight upon the trees, the roll of that farther hillside—one did not need to try to forget the park commissioners here!—and then she would say to him: "See, Karl—even as I can make you see the trees and that little brook there in the hollow, just as plainly as I can make you see the sky and the hill come together off there—so plainly will I make you see the things in the laboratory which belong with your work." She would prove to him by the picture she drew of these green fields in spring-time that she could make plain to him all he must see. How glorious to prove it to him by the spring-time!

And then, both of them uplifted, gladdened, both of them believing it could be done, loving each other more than they had ever done before, newly assured of the power of love, they would go back and with firm faith and deep joy begin the work which lay before them.

She turned to walk back to the house. She would send a telegram to Dr. Parkman that Karl must come. Perhaps he could be here to-night;—to-morrow, surely. Dear Karl—who needed a vacation more than he? Who needed the rejuvenation of the spring as Karl needed it?

She had walked but a little way when she stopped. Someone was coming toward her, walking fast. Had the sun grown a little dim—or was something passing before her eyes? The world seemed to darken. She looked again at Mrs. Rolfe, coming toward her. How strange that she shivered! Was it a little chilly up here on the hill-top where a minute before it had been so soft and warm? She wanted to go to meet Mrs. Rolfe, but she did not; she stood strangely still, waiting. And why was it that the figure of Mrs. Rolfe was such a blur on the beauty of the hillside?

But when at last she saw her face she did run to meet her. "What is the matter?"—her voice was quick and sharp.

The woman hesitated.

"Tell me!" demanded Ernestine. "I will not be treated like that!"

"Dr. Parkman wants you to come home," the woman said, not looking Ernestine in the face.

"Why?—Karl?"—she caught roughly at the other woman's arm.

She knew then that she could not temporise nor modify. "Dr. Hubers was taken sick yesterday. He was to have an operation. The telegram should have been delivered last night."

She thought Ernestine was going to fall—she swayed so, her face went so colourless, her hands so cold. But she did not fall. "That—is all you know?"—it came in hoarse, broken whisper.

And when the woman answered, yes, Ernestine started, running, for the house.

CHAPTER XXXV

"OH, HURRY—HURRY!"

That train!—She would go mad if it kept stopping like that. She kept leaning forward in her seat, every muscle tense, fairly pushing the train on with every nerve

that was in her. Never once did she relax—on—on—it must go on! She would make it go faster! When it stopped she clenched her hands, her nails digging into the flesh—and then when it started again that same feeling that she, from within herself, must push it on. At times she looked from the window. Now this field was past—they were so much nearer. Soon they would be over there where the track curved—that was a long way ahead. They were going faster now. She would lean forward again—pushing on, trying through the straining of her own nerves to make the train go faster.

Mrs. Rolfe had wanted to come with her, but she said no. It seemed she could get there faster by herself. There had been an hour's wait for the train; it made her sick, even now, to think back to that hour. At least this was doing something, getting somewhere. She had telegraphed to every one she could think of, but no reply had come up to the time the train started. She reasoned that out with herself, now for good, now for bad. And then—if he were better, if there were anything good to tell—

Her temples were thumping more loudly than the train thumped. Her heart was choking her. Her throat was so tight she could not breathe. Again and again she went over it to herself. Dr. Parkman had operated on Karl. Of course Dr. Parkman would do it right. He would not dare to operate on him without her being there unless he was absolutely sure it would be all right. And then close upon that—he would have waited for her if—

Appendicitis—that was what those quick operations were. And most of them—especially with Dr. Parkman—came out all right. And Karl was the doctor's best friend! Would not a man save his best friend when he could save every one else? And Karl himself—his will, his power, his love for her—why Karl would know that nothing must happen while she was away! But close upon that came awful visions—Oh why had Dr. Parkman sent her away and then done this thing?

She would tell him when she got there—she would tell him—

It would all be right when she got there. If only the train would hurry! There was smoke off there. Was it?—It was the smoke of Chicago! Nothing had ever looked so beautiful before. Very soon now! Why, perhaps within a few hours she and Karl would be laughing at this! "Isn't it great the way I got on, liebchen?" he would say. "Isn't Parkman a dandy?"

They were passing those houses on the outskirts. Oh why was Chicago so big! But she must be calm—very calm; she must not excite Karl in the least. How sorry he would be that she had been frightened like this! They were passing larger buildings, coming closer to the city. She gritted her teeth hard, clenched her hands.

Karl was at the hospital—the telegram told that. She would get off at the stop just this side of the main station—that was a little nearer the hospital, she believed. She would take a cab—if only there were an automobile!—but the cabman would surely go very fast if she told him why she had to hurry like this.

Long before the train came to its stop she was standing at the door. She would not have waited for the standstill if the porter had not held her back. Oh how she must hurry now!

She ran to the nearest cabman. Would he hurry very fast?—faster than he ever had before? It was life and death, it was—"Yes—yes, lady," he said, putting her in. "Yes, I understand. I'll hurry."

"But faster," she kept saying to him—"oh please, faster!"

She saw nothing either to the right or left. She saw only the straight line ahead which they must travel. And still everything from within her was pushing her on—oh if the man would only hurry!

A big building at last—the hospital. Only two blocks now, then one, and then the man had slowed up. She was out before he stopped, running up the steps—somebody in the hospital would pay—and up the stairs. The elevator was

there—but her own feet would take her faster.

"Dr. Hubers?—Where is he?" she said in choked voice to a nurse in the hall.

The nurse started to speak, but Ernestine, looking ahead, saw Dr. Parkman standing in the door of a room. She rushed to him with outstretched hand, white, questioning, pleading face. Her lips refused to move.

CHAPTER XXXVI

WITH THE OUTGOING TIDE

He simply took her into the room, and there was Karl—alive. That was all she grasped at first; it filled her so completely she could take in nothing else. He was lying there, seemingly half asleep, looking much as he always did, save that of course it was plain he was very sick. She stooped down and kissed him, and his face lighted up, and he smiled a little. "Ernestine," he murmured, "did they frighten you?"

It was as she had known! His thought was of her. And oh how sorry Karl would be when he was quite well and she told him all!

She nestled her head close to him, her arm thrown about him. The tears were running down her cheeks. Of the blessedness of finding Karl here—breathing, smiling upon her, sorry she had been frightened! She took his hand and it responded to her clasp. That thrilled her through and through. Those awful fears—those never-to-be-forgotten fears—that Karl's hand might never close over hers again! She leaned over him that she might feel his breath upon her face. In all her life there had never been so blessed a joy as this feeling Karl's breath upon her cheek. Nothing mattered now—work, eyes, nothing. She had him back; she asked nothing more of life. What could anything else matter now that those awful fears had drawn away? She was sobbing quietly to herself. Again his hand closed over hers.

Then something made her look up, and at the foot of the bed she saw Dr. Parkman.

One look at his face and she grew cold from head to foot; her throat grew painfully tight; strange things came before her eyes. She could not move. She simply remained there upon her knees, looking at Dr. Parkman's face, her own frozen with terror.

The doctor came to her, took her hands, and helped her to rise. Two nurses and another doctor were bending over Karl—doing something. Dr. Parkman led Ernestine into an adjoining room.

She did not take her eyes from his face; the appeal, terror, in them seemed to strike him dumb. It was as though his own throat were closed, for several times he tried vainly to speak.

"Ernestine," he said at last, "Karl is very sick."

"How—sick?" she managed to whisper.

"How—sick?" she repeated as he stood there looking at her helplessly.

And, finally, he said, as if it were killing him to do it—"So sick that—"

"Don't say that!"—she fairly hissed it at him.

"Don't dare say that! You did it—you——" And then, sinking down beside him, catching hold of his hand, she sobbed out, wildly, heartbreakingly—"Oh, Dr. Parkman—oh, please—please tell me you will save Karl!"

Her sobs were becoming uncontrollable. "Ernestine," he said, sharply—"be quiet. Be quiet! You have got to help."

The sobs stopped; she rose to her feet. He pulled up a chair for her, but she did not sit down. A few sobs still came, but her face was becoming stern, set.

"Tell me," she said, holding her two hands tight against her breast, and looking him straight in the face.

And then he jerked it out. Karl had been taken ill—pain, fever, he feared appendicitis. He had two other doctors see him; they agreed that he must be operated

on immediately. They brought him here. They found—conditions awful. They did all that surgery could do—every known thing was being done now, but—they did not know. He had rallied a little from the operation; now he seemed to be drooping. He was in bad shape generally,—heart weakened by the shock of his blindness, intestines broken down by lack of exercise, whole system affected by changed conditions—all these things combined against him. He told the short story with his own lips white, swaying a little, seeming fairly to age as he stood there.

Her face had been changing as she listened. He had never seen a human face look as hers did then; he had never heard a human voice sound as hers sounded when she said: "Dr. Parkman, you are mistaken." She looked him straight in the eye—a look which held the whole force of her being. "I say you are mistaken. We will go back in here now to Karl. You and I together are going to save him."

There was the light from higher worlds in her eye as she went back, in her voice a force which men have never named or understood. And something which emanated from her took hold of every one who came into that room. There was more than the resources of medical science at work now.

On her knees beside the bed, her arm about him, passionately shielding him from the dark forces around him, her face often touching his as if reassuring him, Ernestine spoke to Karl, quietly, tenderly, forcefully, love's own intuition telling her how much to say, when to speak. By her warm body which loved him, by her great spirit which claimed him, she would hold him from the outgoing tide. Her voice could rouse him where other stimulants failed; the only effort he made was the tightening of his hand over hers, and sometimes he smiled a little as he felt her close to him.

Two hours went by; the lines in Dr. Parkman's face were deepening. They worked on unfalteringly—hypodermics, heat, rubbing, oxygen, all those things with which man seeks to deceive himself, and for which the foe, with the tolerance of power, is willing to wait. But their faces were changing. The call of the outgoing tide, that tide

over which human determination has not learned to prevail, was coming close. They worked on, for they were trained to work on, even through the sense of their own futility.

Looking about her Ernestine saw it all, and held him with a passionate protectiveness. If all else failed, her arms—arms to which he had ever come for help and consolation—could surely hold him! The cold fear crept farther and farther into her heart, and as it crept on her arms about him tightened. Not while she held him like this! Oh not while she held him like this!

And then a frenzy possessed her. That she should sit here powerless—weeping—despairing, surrendering, while Karl slipped from her! She must do something—say something—something to hold him firm—call him back—make him understand that he must fight!

Suddenly a light broke over her face. She looked at Dr. Parkman, who was bending over Karl. "I will tell him," she whispered—"what I did—the secret—about the work."

He hesitated; medically his judgment was against it; and then, white to the lips with the horror of the admission he faced the fact that this had passed beyond things medical. Let her try where he had failed. Through a rush of uncontrollable tears he nodded yes.

And she did tell him,—in words which were not sentences, with sharp flashes of thought—such flashes as alone could penetrate the semi-consciousness into which she must reach; after a moment of pause in which to gather herself together for the great battle of her life, with concentration, illumination, with a piercing eloquence which brought hot tears to every cheek, and deep, deep prayers to hearts which would have said they did not know how to pray—a woman fighting for the man she loved, human love at its whitest heat pitted against destiny—she told him.

"Karl," at the last—"you understand?—That's the great secret!—That's the great

picture! I've not painted one stroke this winter! I've been working for you—working in your laboratory every day—studying day and night—getting ready to be your eyes—going to give you back your work—oh, Karl—Karl—won't you—" but the sobs could hold back no longer.

She had reached him. He took it in, just a little at first, but comprehension was growing, and upon his face a great wondering, a softening.

"Old man,"—it was Dr. Parkman now—"you get that? See what you've got ahead? God, man—but it was splendid! She came to me with the idea—her idea—thought it all out herself. Karl was not happy—Karl must have his work. Karl—Karl—it was nothing but Karl. She was closer to him than any one in the world. She could make him see what others could not. Then she would be his eyes. Man—do you know that this woman has fairly made over her soul for love of you? Do you know that she has given up becoming one of the great painters of the world to become your assistant? Do you get it, Karl? So help me God it was the pluckiest fight I've ever seen or heard of. And she's won! I'm no fool—and I say she can do what she says she can. She's ready. She's ready to begin to-morrow. What do you say, old man? What do you think of Ernestine now? Isn't she worth taking a good brace and living for?"

And then he got it all; he was taking it in, rising to it, understanding, glowing. And a look that was very wonderful was growing upon Karl's face.

"Ernestine," he whispered, dwelling long upon the name, his voice a voice of wonder, "you did that—for me?"

"I did it because I love you so!" she whispered, and it seemed that surely death itself could not withstand the tenderness of it.

And then his whole face became transfigured. His blind eyes were opened to the light of love. His illumined face reflected it as the supreme moment of his life. In that moment he triumphed over all powers set against him. He rose out of suffering on wings of glory. He transcended sorrow and tragedy, blindness—yes, in that

moment, death. He saw behind the veil; he saw into the glory of a soul; he comprehended the wonder of love. Compensation for suffering and loss—understanding, victory, peace; it was the human face lighted with divine light. They did not dare to move or breathe as they looked upon the wonder of his face.

"Ernestine—little one," he whispered, the light not going from his face—"you loved me—like that?"

"You see, Karl,"—it was this must reach him—"what you have to live for now?"

But he did not get that. He was filled with the wonder of that which he was seeing.

"You see, old man," said Parkman, sharply, "what you've got ahead of you?"

But he only murmured, happily, faintly, as one about to fall asleep: "She loved me—like that."

It terrified her; it seemed, not as though the great idea were holding him, but as though he were taking it away with him, even as though well content to go, having this to take with him from life.

"Karl—Karl!" she sobbed—"don't you _see _how I love you?—don't you see you _must _live now—for me?"

But he had far transcended all sense of suffering or loss, even her suffering and loss. Her plea—she herself—could not reach him. He and the great idea were going away together. And that light did not leave his face.

It was so that he sank into a sleep. He did not hear Ernestine's sobs; he knew nothing of her pleading cries. In a frenzy of grief she felt him going out to where she could not reach him. She called to him, and he did not answer. She pressed close to him, and he did not know that she was there.

But the great idea was with him. It lighted his face to the last. It was as if that were what he was taking with him from life. It was as if that, and that alone, he could keep.

"Karl—Karl!" she cried, terrorised—"look at me! Speak to me! I am here! Ernestine is here!"—And then, the strongest word of woman to man—"I'm frightened! Oh take care of me—Karl—take care of me!"

Dr. Parkman tried to take her away, but she resisted fiercely, and they let her stay. And during the few hours which followed she never ceased her pleading—to him to come back to her, to them to help. Crazed with the consciousness of his slipping from her, wild beyond all reason with the thought that her kisses could not move him, her arms could not hold him, her passion lashed to the uttermost in the thought that she must claim him now or lose him forever, she pleaded with all the eloquence of human voice and human tears. She could not believe it—that he was there beside her and would not listen to her pleadings. Again and again she told him that she was frightened and alone; that—surely that—he must hear. It could not be that he was there beside her, breathing, moving a little now and then, and did not hear her call for help.

And when at last she heard some one speak a low word, and saw some one bend over him to close his eyes, she uttered one piercing, heartbreaking cry which they would bear with them so long as they lived. And then, throwing herself upon him, shielding him, keeping him, there came the wild, futile call of life to death—"Karl!—Karl!—Karl!"

PART THREE

CHAPTER XXXVII

BENEATH DEAD LEAVES

The cold March rain drove steadily against the car window. His thoughts were like that,—cold, ugly, driving thoughts. Looking out at the bleak country through which they were passing he saw that dead leaves were hanging forlornly to bare trees. His

hopes were like that,—a few dead hopes clinging dismally to the barren tree of experience. So it seemed to Dr. Parkman as he looked from the car window at the country of hills and hollows through which he was passing. The out-lived winter's snow still in the hollows, last summer's leaves blown meaninglessly about, denied even the repose of burial, the cheerless wind and the cheerless rain—it matched his mood.

Almost a year had gone by, and Dr. Parkman was going out to see Ernestine. Every mile which brought him nearer, brought added uncertainty as to what he should say when he reached her. What was there for him to say? The dead leaves of her hopes were all huddled in the hollow. Was he becoming so irrational as to think he could give life to things dead? Was she not right in wishing to cover them up decently and let them be? Was anything to be gained in blowing them about as last summer's leaves were being blown about now by the unsparing, uncaring winds of March?

She was out where she had lived as a girl,—living in the very house which had once been her home. He had understood her going. It was the simple law of living things. The animal wounded beyond all thought of life seeks only a place of seclusion.

But when Georgia returned from her visit to Ernestine the month before, she came to him with:

"Dr. Parkman, you must do something for Ernestine!" And after she had told him many things, and he questioned still further, she said, in desperate desire to make it plain—"She is becoming a great deal like you!"

And from then until the time of starting on this trip he had had no peace.

He understood; understood far more deeply than she who would have him see. Was any one better qualified to understand that thing than he?

Well,—what then? What now? Was there any other thing to expect? Was he, of all men, going to her with platitudes about courage and faith? And even so, would sophistry avail anything? Did he not know Ernestine far too well far that?

His own face bore the deep marks of hard and bitter things. But the loss and the sorrow showed themselves in strange ways, little understood as manifestations of grief. He ran his automobile faster, showed even less caution than before in his business ventures, had less and less to say, was called more and more strange by those associated with him. And the thing which mocked him most of all was that the year had been attended with the greatest professional successes of his life. He never heard his plaudits sounded without a curse in his heart.

"It went mighty hard with Parkman not to be able to save Hubers," medical men said with growing frequency as the year advanced. But there were none of them who dreamed into what deep and vital things the cut had gone. With his own will and his own skill he patched it up on the surface, not the man to leave his wound exposed to other eyes. But he knew its hopelessness too well ever to try and reach the bottom of the wound. It was not a good, clean, straight cut such as time expects to heal. Indeed it was not a cut at all; nothing so wholesome and reachable as that. It was a destroying force, a thing burrowing at the springs of life, a thing which made its way through devious paths to vital sources. Did a patched up surface mean anything to a thing like that?

The evening of the day he had seen Georgia, and she told him of Ernestine, he sat a long time in his office alone. The grey ashes of his own life seemed spread around him. And it was he, who was asked, out of this, to rekindle a great flame? And what flame? What was there left for Ernestine? Ask her to come back—to what? Fight—for what?

He did not know, or at least he said he did not know, and yet he, like Georgia, saw it as all wrong, unendurable, not to be countenanced, that Ernestine should shut herself out from life.

Perhaps he was going to her because he knew so well the desolation of ashes. Was it because he had lived so long among them that he hated to see another fire go out?

Could it be that a man who had dwelt long among ashes knew most surely the worth of the flame?

He had reached the end of his journey. He had come to the western college town for which he had set out. From the window he could see some of the college buildings. Yes, this was the place.

He rose and put on his coat. A few minutes later he was standing on the station platform, watching the on-going train. Then he turned, with decision, in the direction Georgia had bade him go.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

PATCHWORK QUILTS

And now that the first ten minutes had passed he felt anew the futility of his errand. His first look into her face made him certain he might better have remained in Chicago. The thing which cut off all approach was that she too had done some work on the surface.

It seemed to him as he sat there in utter silence that he had been brutal, not alone to her heart, but to his own, that he asked too much, not only of her command, but of his. He had come to talk of Ernestine and the future; the things about him drew him overmasteringly to Karl and the past.

She had taken him to her little sitting room up stairs, forced to do so because the fire down stairs had gone out. He understood now why it was she had faltered so in asking him to come up here. Here was Karl's big chair—many things from their library at home. It was where she lived with her past. She wanted no one here.

She would make no attempt at helping him. She sat there in silence, her face white, almost stern. In her aloofness it was as though she were trying to hold herself, from the consciousness of his presence.

He too remained silent. For he was filled with the very things against which he had come to protest.

It was Karl who was very close; it was the thoughts of Karl's life which filled him. His heart had never been so warm for his friend, his appreciation had never been so great as now. Karl, and all that Karl meant, had never been so close, and so dear. And the words he finally said to Ernestine, words of passionate tenderness spoken in utter unconsciousness of how far he had gone from his purpose, were: "I do not believe any of us half appreciated Karl!"

Startled, she gave him a long, strange look. "No, Dr. Parkman,"—very low—"neither do I."

"I have been looking into it since. I wanted to throw Karl's results to the right man. He was head and shoulders above them all."

There was a slow closing of her eyes, but she was not shrinking from him now;—this the kind of hurt she was able to bear.

"If he had been left to work out his life—" but he stopped, brought suddenly to a sense of how far he had lost himself.

She too saw it. "Dr. Parkman,"—with a smile which put him far from her—"this is what you came to say? You think I need any incitement? You needn't, Dr. Parkman,"—with rising passion—"you needn't. Every time I leave this room two things are different. I have more love for Karl—more hate for his destroyers. And those two passions will feed upon me to the end of my life!"

Instinctively he put out a protesting hand. It was too plain that it was as she said.

"More love for Karl—more hate for his destroyers,"—she repeated it with a passionate steadfastness as though it comprehended the creed of her life.

"His—destroyers?" he faltered. "What do you mean—by that?"

And she answered, with a directness before which dissembling and evasion

crumbled away: "Read the answer in your own heart.

"And if you cannot look into your own heart," she went on, unsparingly, "if your own heart has been shut away so long that it is closed even to yourself, then look into your looking-glass and read the answer there. Let the grey hairs in your own head, the lines in your own face,—yes, the words of your own mouth—tell you what you would know of Karl's destroyers."

He drew in his lips in that way of his; one side of his face twitched uncontrollably. He had come to reach her soul, reach it if must be through channels of suffering. He had not thought of her reaching his like this.

But she could not stop. "And if you want to know what I have gone through, look back to what you have gone through yourself—then make some of those hours just as much stronger as love is stronger than friendship—and perhaps you can get some idea of what it has been to me!"

He was dumb before that. Putting it that way there was not a word to say.

He saw now the real change. It was more than hollowed cheeks and eyes from which the light of other days had gone, more than soft curves surrendered to grief and youth eaten out by bitterness. It was a change at the root of things. A great tide had been turned the other way. But in the days when happiness softened her and love made it all harmonious he had never felt her force as he felt it now. Reach this? Turn this? The moment brought new understanding of the paltriness of words.

It was she who spoke. "Dr. Parkman,"—looking at him with a keenness in which there was almost an affectionate understanding—"you did not say what you intended to say when you came into this room. You intended to speak of me—but the room swept you back to Karl. Oh—I know. And it is just because you were swept back—care like this—that I am going to tell you something.

"Doctor,"—blinded with tears—"we never understood. None of us ever knew what it meant to Karl to be blind. After—after he had gone—I found something. In this

book"—reaching over to Karl's copy of Faust—"I found a letter—a very long letter Karl wrote in those last few days, when he was there—alone. I found it the day I went out to the library alone—the day before they—broke it up. Oh doctor—what it told! I want you to know—" but she could not go on.

When she raised her head the fierce light of hate was burning through the tears. "Can you fancy how I hate the light? Can you fancy with what feelings I wake in the morning and see it come—light from which Karl was shut out—which he craved like that—and could not have? Do you see how it symbolises all those other things taken from him and me? He talked of another light—light he must gain for himself—light which the soul must have. And Karl was longing for the very light I was ready to bring! He would have believed in it—turned to it eagerly—the letter shows that. Do you wonder that there is nothing but darkness in my soul—that I want nothing else? Look at Karl's life! Always cut off just this side of achievement! Every battle stopped right in the hour of victory! Made great only to have his greatness buffetted about like—held up for sport!—I will say it! "—in fierce response to his protesting gesture—"It's true!"

He tried to speak, but this was far too big for words which did not come straight from the soul.

"Do you know what I am doing now?" She laughed—and none of it had told as much as that laugh revealed. "I am making patchwork quilts! Can you fancy anything more worthless in this world than a patchwork quilt?—cutting things up and then sewing them together again, and making them uglier in the end than they were in the beginning? Do you know anything more futile to do with life than that? Well that's where my life is now. My aunt had begun some, and I am finishing them up. And once—once—" but the sob in her voice gathered up the words.

He wanted to speak then; that sob brought her nearer. But she went on:

"I sit sewing those little pieces together—a foolish thing to do, but one must be

doing something, and as I think how useless it is there comes the thought of whether it is any more useless than all the other things in life. Is it any more useless than surgery? For can a great surgeon save his best friend? Is it any more useless than science—for can science do anything for her own? Is it any more useless than ambition and purpose and hope—for does not fate make sport of them all? Is it any more useless than books—for can books reach the hearts which need them most? Is it any more useless than art—for does art reach realities? Is it any more useless than light—for can light penetrate the real darkness? Is it,"—she wavered, quivered; she had been talking in low, quick voice, her eyes fixed on something straight ahead, as though reading her words out there before her. And now, as she held back, and he saw what she saw and could not say, he asked for her, slowly: "Is it any more useless than love?"

CHAPTER XXXIX

ASH HEAP AND ROSE JAR

As she broke then to the sobs for which he had hoped, something of tremendous force stirred within the man; and he felt that if he could bring her from the outer darkness where she had been carried, back to the things which were her soul's own, that his own life, his whole life, with all of the dark things through which it had passed, would have found justification. He had tried to save Karl, and failed. But there was left Ernestine. And it seemed to him—he saw it simply, directly, unquestioningly—that after all he would not have failed Karl if he could do what it was in his heart to do now for her.

Looking at her bowed head he saw it all—the complete overthrow, the rich field of life rendered barren waste. Barren waste—but was that true for Ernestine? Did there not remain for her the scent of the field? The memory of that glorious, luxuriant growth? With him barren waste—but for her did there not grow in the field of life

some things which were everlasting? With the quickness with which he saw everything he saw that it was the picture of his own barrenness could show her most surely the things which for her remained.

He drew back from the thought as one draws away from the rude touch upon a wound. Lay bare the scars of his life that another profit by their ugliness? Years of habit were against it; everything fundamentally himself was against it. But he was a man who had never yet shrunk from the thing he saw was right to do. The cost of an accomplishment never deterred him from a thing he saw must be accomplished. With each second of listening to her sobs, he was becoming once more the man who masters, the man ruthless and unsparing in his purposefulness.

"Ernestine," he began, and his voice was very strange, for it knew it was to carry things it had never carried before, "you and I are similarly placed in that we have both lost the great thing of life. But there is something remains to each of us. Life has left something to us both. To you it has left a rose jar. To me—a heap of ashes."

It came with the moment's need. It comprehended it so well the channels long closed seemed of themselves to open. In the clearness with which he saw it, the fullness with which he felt it, he lost himself.

"Do you know that you have no right to cry out against life? Do you know that there are men and women who would lay down their lives—yes, and give up their immortal souls—for hours which you have had? Do you know that you have no right to say Karl Hubers was mocked by fate, made sport of, buffetted about? Do you know,"—his face went white as he said this, slowly—"that I would be a thousand times willing to give up my two eyes—yes, and lay down my life—just to know, as he knew, that love was great and life was good?"

The tears remained undried upon her cheek. He held her.

"Look deeper. There is another way to read Karl's life—a deeper truth than those truths you have been seeing.

"Ernestine, we all dream of love; we all desire it. It is only at rare, rare times it comes as it came to you. And I say to you—and I mean it from the bottom of my heart—that if you had been forced to give up your love in the first hour of its fulfillment, for all that you should thank God through the remainder of your life that it had been yours. For you had it!—and nothing, loss, death, defeat, disappointment of every kind, can strip from your soul the consciousness that once, no matter for how short a time, love in its fullness and perfection was yours. Long, lonely years may come, and all hard things may come, but through it all the thing to keep your soul in tune is the memory of some one perfect hour."

Stillness followed that, the stillness which was silence. She had not moved.

"You dreamed your dream,"—and in his voice now the beautiful things of appreciation and understanding. "I know your dream. You dreamed of growing old together; of taking from life everything there was together; of achieving to the uttermost; of rejoicing in each other's victories, growing more and more close together. I know your dream—a beautiful dream. Giving up some things as the changing years do their work, and taking on the other things, the more quiet, in fact finer things, that come with the years. Oh, yes—don't think I do not know that dream. To walk together down the years, meet them fearlessly, gladly, in the thought that they but add to the fullness of your love—I know—I know. And now that it is not to be as you thought, you say life has left nothing to you; that you hate it; will have none of it. Oh, Ernestine, if you could only know how rich you are!"

Then harshly, rudely, the change; the voice which had seemed to caress each word was now like a lash.

"Suppose you didn't have the luxury of giving yourself up to your own heart? Suppose that every day and night of your life, you had to fight memory, knowing it held nothing for you but jeers and mockery and things too damnable for words! Suppose you had to fairly forbid yourself to think of the beautiful things of life!

Suppose that what had been the most beautiful moments of your life were made, by memory, the most hideous! Suppose the memory of his kiss always brought with it the consciousness of his falseness; that his words of love never came back to you without the knowledge that he had been laughing at you in his heart all the time! Suppose you could never get away from the damning truth that what you gave from the depth of your heart was tossed aside with a laugh! Suppose you had given the great passion of your life, the best that was in you, to a liar and a hypocrite! Suppose you had been made a fool of!—easy game! Then what of life?—your belief in love?—thoughts of fate? Great God, woman, can't you see what you have got?"

After the throbbing moment which followed that there came a great quiet; slowly passion settled to sadness. He seemed to have forgotten her, to be speaking instead to his own heart, as he said, very low, his voice touched with the tenderness of unrelinquished dreams: "To have had one hour—just one perfect hour, and then the memory of that untarnished forever—it would be enough."

Her heart rushed passionately to its own defence; she wanted to tell him no! She wanted to tell him it was cruel to be permitted to live for a time in a beautiful country, only to be turned out into the dark. She wanted to tell him that to know love was to need it forever. But his head had fallen to his hand; he seemed entirely lost to her, and even now she knew his answer to what she would say. "But you had it," he would reply. "The cruel thing would be to awaken and find no such country had ever existed." They would get no closer than that, and with new passionateness her heart went out to Karl. Karl would understand it as it was to her!

He too felt that they could come no closer than this. They sat there in the gathering twilight with their separate thoughts as souls sit together almost in the dark, seeing one another in shadow, across dim spaces.

The tearing open of his heart had left him weakened with pain. Perhaps that was why he was so very tired, and perhaps it was because he was so tired that this

thought of growing old came back to him. It seemed to him now, leaning back in his chair and filled with the things of which he had spoken, that almost as great as a living presence with which to share the years, would be that thing of growing old with a beautiful memory. It would be a supreme thing to have a hand in your hand, a face against your face, a heart against your heart as you stepped on into the years; but if that could not be, and perfection is not given freely in this life, surely it would keep the note of cheer in one's voice, the kindly gleam in one's eye, to bring with one into old age the memory of a perfect love. It would be lonely then when one sat in the twilight and dreamed—but what another loneliness! If instead of holding one's self away from one's own heart, one could turn to it with: "She loved me like that. Her arms have been about my neck in true affection; her whole being radiated love for me; she had no words to tell it and could tell it only with her eyes and with the richness and the lavishness of her kisses. She would have given up the world for me; she inspired me to my best deeds; she comforted me in my times of discouragement and rejoiced with me in my hours of cheer. She is not here now, and it is lonely, but she has left me, in spirit, the warmth of her presence, the consciousness that she loved me with a love in which there was no selfishness nor faltering, and the things she has left me I can carry through life and into eternity."

And all of that was Ernestine's could she but see her way to take it!

He knew that it was growing late. "I must go," he said, but still he sat there, knowing he had not finished what he had come to say. But need he say it? Would it avail anything? Must not all human souls work their own way through the darkness? And when the right word came, must it not come from Karl himself, through some memory, some strange breath of the spirit? He knew, but she would have to see it for herself. That each one's seeing it for one's self was what made life hard. Would there not surely come a day, somewhere in the upward scale, where souls could reach one another better than this?

But he had stirred her; he knew that by the way she was looking at him now. Finally she asked, tremblingly, a little resentfully: "Dr. Parkman, what is it you would have me do?"

"Do something with your life," was his prompt reply. "Help make it right for Karl."

She caught that up breathlessly. "Make it right for Karl?"

"You say he was always cut off just this side of achievement. Then you achieve something which will at least show what he was able to inspire."

That sunk so deep that her face went very white.

"But you do not understand," she whispered passionately. "You mean that I should paint—and I tell you I cannot. I tell you it is dead!"

"Not necessarily that you should paint. Not just now, if you cannot. But come back into touch with life. Do something to force yourself back into it, and then let life itself show you that the other things are not dead after all."

"But I do not want to!" came bitterly from her.

"Sometimes," he said, with more of his usual manner, "we do things we do not want to, and through the doing of them, we get to want to. Do something!—whether you want to or not. Stop doing futile things and dwelling on the sense of their futility. Why, Ernestine, come up to the hospital and go to work as a nurse! Heaven knows I never expected to advise you to do that, but anything—painting pictures or scrubbing floors—that will bring you back to a sense of living—the obligations of life—show you that something is yours that life and death and hell can't take from you!"

And still he sat there, thinking. In just a moment he must go—go away leaving her alone with the years which awaited her. For just an instant it seemed as though all of the past and all of the future were in his keeping. What word leave with her? He knew by her passionate breathing that he had reached her. And now he was going

away. Could he have done more—reached deeper? In this, too, had he failed? What word leave with her? His heart was so full of many things that his mind did not know what to choose. He remembered the day she had come to him filled with the spirit to ride down an adverse fate and win triumph from defeat. Her splendid spirit then! Would that spirit ever come again? Could it?

Karl was very close in those final moments, and even more close than Karl was the spirit of love. Many precious things seemed in his keeping just then.

"Ernestine," he said at the last, and his face was white and his voice trembled, "you have known. It came to you. You had it. It came to you as June to the roses,—in season, right. I grant you it was short. I grant you it was hard to see it go. But you had it! Say that to yourself when you go to sleep at night. Say it to yourself when you wake in the morning. And some day you will come to see what it means just to know that you know, and then your understanding and your heart will go out to all who have never known. You will pity all who scoff and all who yearn, and you will say to yourself: 'The world needs to know more about love. More than knowledge or science or any other thing, the world needs more faith in love.' Then some day you will see that you not only know but have power to make it plain, and you will not hold back any longer then. And there is to be the real victory and completion of Karl Hubers' life!—there the real triumph over fate—that triumph of the spirit of love. I see it now. I see it all now. And my good-bye word to you is just this—I do not believe you are going to withhold from Karl the immortality which should be his."

CHAPTER XL

"LET THERE BE LIGHT"

Hours had passed, and still she could not master the sobs. It seemed no one had ever been as cruel as Dr. Parkman had been to her that afternoon. Karl would understand!—and in her passionate need of Karl's understanding she turned at last to

the letter of which she had spoken, the letter which always seemed a little like Karl's voice speaking from out the silence.

Old and worn and blurred with the grief spent upon it, the letter bore upon itself the record of the year's desolation. It had lived through things never to be told,—never to be comprehended.

"Lonesome days, liebchen,"—he had written. "It would seem almost like a rush of light to feel you standing in the doorway now.

"My letters which I send you will tell you I am well, getting along all right, that I love you. These are some other things. If I think they will hurt you, I will not let you see them. But I will feel better to get them said, and of course the easiest way to say them is to say them to you.

"I can't write. I wish I could. There are things 'way back in my thoughts I should like to say, and say right. For I've done some thinking this year, liebchen—while I sat here writing text-books there came a good many thoughts.

"Text-books—any fool can write them! Lectures on what other men have done—what do I care about them? I'll do it, for I have to, but I want somebody to know—I want you to know that I know it doesn't amount to a hill of beans!

"Liebchen, you hear a lot of talk about the beauties of resignation. Don't you ever believe any of it. We don't get resigned to things that really count. But what we do get, is courage to bear them. I'm not resigned and I don't want to be! But I will try to be game about it, and we can't be game while we are sore. I know that because the times I've been least game are the times I was most sore. Wonder if anybody can make any sense out of that?

"Life's queer—you can't get around that. Making us one thing and then making us be another. What are we to think of it, liebchen? Seems as if we could get on better if we could just get a line on the scheme of things, understand what it is all about, and the why. Or isn't there any why? I like a why for things. It gives them their place. I

don't like disorder, and senselessness, and if there isn't any why—why then—See what I'm getting at?

"What are you going to do when your force pushes you on to a thing which is closed to you? Stop the force? Well, doesn't that stop yourself? Turn it somewhere else? Easy to say in working out a philosophy,—not so easy to do.

"Where's the end of it?—that's what I want to know. I'm one of those practical chaps who wants to see an end in sight.

"Ernestine, light's a great thing. Light's the great thing. I never knew that until I went blind. You have to stay a long time in the darkness to know just what it is light means.

"They call great men 'great lights.' 'And then came the light,' they say, regarding the solving of some great thing. 'He brought the light'—that's what I wanted to do! They tell about science bringing the light. I know now what a tribute they pay when they say that. Light of understanding, light of truth—and ah, mein liebchen, the light of love—and well do I know how that light can shine into the darkness!

"'More light'—Goethe said, when he was going out into the dark. A great thing to ask for. I know how he felt!—'And God said—Let there be light'—I don't wonder that story has lived a long time.

"My books are finished. Now what?—more books?—lectures?—some kind of old woman's make-shift? Sit here and watch my red blood dry up? Sit here like a plant shrivelling away in the darkness? Be looked after and fussed over and have things made as easy for me as possible? I don't know—I can't see—

"There, liebchen—I've taken a brace. I took a long drink of courage, and I'm in better shape. Often when I get like that I've been tempted to take a long drink of something else—but I never have. Whiskey's for men who feel good; men who haven't much to fight. Not for me—not any such finish as that.

"I'm making bad business of this letter. I wanted to tell things, tell what light was

and what darkness was; but I can't do it. Many things have been circling around my thoughts and I thought I might get hold of a few of them and pull them in. But I can't seem to do it. I never was much good at writing things out; it's hard to get words for things that aren't even full-born thoughts.

"My work was great, liebchen—great! A constant piercing of the darkness with light—a letting in of more light—new light. I can understand now why I loved it; where the joy was; what it was I was doing.

"Is life like that? Don't we understand things until we are out of them? By Jove, is it true that we have to get out of them, in order to understand them? And if that's true, is it the understanding that's the goal? Is it—oh, I don't know—I'm sure I don't know.

"But look here, liebchen,—is it true that while I had the light, I didn't have it at all,—didn't know what it meant? Did I have to lose it in order to get it? For isn't it having a thing to understand it—more than it's having it to really have it and not understand? See what I mean? Those are some of the things circling around on the outside.

"Sometimes I think so. Sometimes I think the light was shut out that the greater light might come. Sometimes I think we scientists haven't the right line on the world at all. Why, Ernestine, sometimes I think it's miles deeper than we ever dreamed! A hodge-podge—this letter. Like my life, starting out one thing, and ending up another, or rather not ending up anything at all—a going to pieces in the midst of my philosophy—a not being sure of anything—a constant 'perhaps.'"

"I'm lonesome. I'm tired. I don't feel well. The old ladies would say I'm 'under the weather.' Why, I can't even keep feeling right when you're away.

"I want you. I want you—here—now. I can't talk to you on this infernal machine, my hands groping around just as senselessly as my thoughts. I tell you, liebchen, blindness is bad business. It sounds well in a poem, but it's a bad thing to live with.

It's bad to wake up in the night sometimes and think that it will be daylight soon and then remember that it will never be daylight for you again!

"I wish you were here. I'm just in the mood for talking—not talking, perhaps, but having you close to me, and understanding.

"There's one thing that there's no perhaps about. That's you. There's no perhaps when it comes to our love. There's no perhaps—

"Now, that made me fall a-dreaming. I stopped writing and lighted my pipe and sat a long time, thinking of you. It's 'our hour'—I know that, because I heard the clock strike. Where are you? Why aren't you here?

"I want you. Believe I said that before, but if I said it a thousand times, I couldn't make it strong enough. I don't know why I want you like this—this soul want. It isn't just your kisses, your sweetness, the dear things about you. I want you to be here to understand—for you would—you do.

"My light in the darkness, my Ernestine! I shall never let you go away again. The darkness is too dark without you.

"Evening now, for again I stopped; too tired, too quiet, someway, to feel like writing. I am going to bed. I wish you were here for your good-night kiss. I wish you were here just to tell me that you understand all these things I have not been able to say. I wish you were here to tell me—what in my heart I know—that you are going to bring me the light, that love will light the way. I wish you were here to tell me that what my eyes cannot tell you, as they used to, you can read now just by the beating of my heart, just through the fullness of our silences.

"Oh, little one—your eyes—your dear eyes—your lovely hair—your smile—your arms about my neck—your whispered word in my ear—your soft cheek against mine—your laugh—your voice—your tenderness—I want it all to-night—and the Ernestine of the silences—the Ernestine who understands without knowing—helps without trying.

"Soon you will be back. That will be sunrise after long darkness.

"Good-night. It's hard to leave you—so lonesome—wanting you so. Again, good-night, dear girl for whom my arms are yearning. Bless you, sweetheart—God bless you—and does God, Himself, know what you have been to me?"

She read the last of it, as always, with sobs uncontrollable. Dr. Parkman—everything—was forgotten. It was Karl alone in the library, longing for her, needing her—and she not there.

"Oh, Karl—Karl!" she sobbed across the black chasm of the year—"if I could only have had that hour!"

CHAPTER XLI

WHEN THE TIDE CAME IN

But the days which came then were different. Dr. Parkman had stirred her to a discontent with despair.

She had come West with Georgia and Joe. For five days they had been at this little town on the Oregon coast. Through the day and through the night she listened to the call of the sea. It stirred her strangely. At times it frightened her.

She did not know why she should have wished to come. Perhaps it was because it seemed a reaching out to the unknown. After she had known she was to go, she would awaken in the night and hear the far-off roll of the Pacific, and would lie there very still as if listening for something from the farther unknown. Her whole being was stirred—drawn—unreasoningly expectant. There were moments when she seemed to just miss something to which she was very close.

To-day she had walked clear around the bend. The little town and pleasant beach were hidden from view, and there was only the lighthouse out among the rocks, and the sea coming in wild and mighty to that coast to which no mariner would attempt

to draw near.

It was the hour of the in-coming tide, and as the sea beat against the rocks it seemed as omnipotent and relentless as that sea of fate against which nothing erected by man could hope to prevail.

There was no human being in sight. Man, and all to which man blinded one, were far away. She was alone with things as they were, alone with the forces which made the world and life, and as the tides of the sea brought close to her wave after wave, so the mind's tides were bringing close to her wave upon wave of understanding.

Fate had washed them away just as this ocean would wash away the child's playhouse built upon the sands. They had believed they could make their lives, that it was for their spirit to elect what they should do, their hands build as they had willed; and all that the spirit had willed to do, and all that the hands set about to achieve, was washed away by just one of those waves of fate which rolled in and took them with no more of regret, no more of compassion, than the sea would have in washing away the play-house built upon the sands. And if the sea were chidden for having taken away the house upon the sands, which meant much to some one, it would quite likely answer grimly: "I did not know that it was there."

She laughed—and Karl would have hated life for bringing Ernestine to that laugh. But she laughed to think how she had looked fate in the face with the words: "I will prevail against you!" Would the child, building its house upon the sand and saying to the ocean: "I will not let you take my house!" be more absurd than she?

What she had believed to be the tremendous force of her spirit had been as one grain of sand against the tides of ocean. What was one to think of it all then—of human love which believed itself created for eternity, of dreams which one's soul persuaded one would come true, of aspirations born in a hallucination of power, of that spark within one which played one false, of believing one could master fate only to find one had erected a child's house upon the sands, and that what had been achieved in

consciousness of great power could be swept away so easily that the ocean was not even conscious of having taken it unto itself?

Very sternly, very understandingly, their lives swept before her anew…. Just one little wave from the tide of fate had lapped up, unknowingly, uncaringly, that house upon the sand which a delusion of the spirit had made seem a castle grounded in eternity. Why blind one's self to the truth and call life fair? For what had they fought and suffered and believed and hoped? Just to hear the mocking voice of the outgoing tide?

The fury of the sea was creeping into her blood. Rage possessed her. All of her spirit, mightier than ever before, went out to meet the spirit of the sea—hating it, defying it, understanding its own futility, and the more hot from the sense of impotence. That died to desolation. She had never been so wholly desolate—the sea so mighty, she so powerless. Fate and human souls were like that.

Karl—where was he? Swept out by the ocean of fate. To what shore had he been carried? What thought he of the tide which had carried him out from her? Was his soul, like hers, spending itself in the passion of rebellion—so mighty as to shake the foundations of one's being, so futile as to prevail against not one drop of water in that sea of fate?

Time passed; the tide was still coming in, nearing its height. But to the sea there had come a change. The spirit of it seemed different. For a long time she sat there dimly conscious of a difference, and then it seemed as though the sea were trying to reach her with something it had to bring.

She tried to shake herself free from so strange a fancy, but it held her, and for a long time she sat there motionless, looking out at the sea with all her eyes, reaching out to it with all her soul, becoming more and more still,—a hush upon her whole being,—moved, held, unreasoningly expectant.

The sea seemed trying to make her ready. Each wave which beat upon the rocks beat

against her consciousness, driving against her mood and spirit, as if clearing a way, making her ready, open, to what would come.

It seemed finally to have cleared her whole being, driven away all which might impede. It seemed now as though she could take in things not seen or heard. There was that strange openness of the spirit, that hush, that unreasoning expectancy.

All at once it rushed upon her, filling her overwhelmingly. It said that there was a sea mightier than what she called the sea of fate; it told of a sea of human souls over which fate only seemed to prevail. A great rush of truth filled her with this—It was the belief in the omnipotence of fate which was the real delusion of the spirit.

Over and over again, with steadily rising tide, it told her that,—no more to be reasoned away than the sea, resistless as the tide.

She never knew in after years just what it was happened in that hour. She could not have told it, for it was not a thing for words to compass. But after that great truth had rushed full upon her, sweeping away the philosophy of her bitterness, Karl's spirit, something sent out from him to her, seemed to come in with the tide. He pleaded with her. He asked her to stop fighting and come back to the soul of things. He asked her to be Ernestine—his Ernestine. He told her that his own spirit could not find peace while hers was waging war and full of bitterness. He wanted her to make a place for them both in that great world-harmony of their belief. He told her that out where souls see in wider sweeps, they know that there is a spirit over which death and fate cannot prevail.

Darkness came on, but she had no thought of fear. And before she turned away something had risen from the dead. Out of woe and despair, defeat and bitterness, out of loneliness and a broken heart, something was born again. Karl asked that she make it right with the world. Karl asked for a child of their love. And at the last it was the call of the child to the mother which she heard. It was the maternal instinct of the spirit which answered.

Very late that night, after she had sat long at her window, looking up at the stars, waiting, a great light seemed to appear, and shimmering against the sky, high above the tides of the sea, she saw the picture which she would paint.

CHAPTER XLII

WORK THE SAVIOUR

For more than three years then they saw nothing of Ernestine. She left this note for Georgia: "I am sorry to seem erratic, but I cannot wait for you. I am going away at once. I am going first to New York, and then, I think, to Paris. I am going to do something which I can do better there than anywhere else. Thank you, Georgia, for everything. It must be satisfying to feel one has succeeded as beautifully in anything as you have succeeded in being a friend to me. Do not worry. There is nothing now to worry about. You will be glad to know that I am going back to my work."

A little later Dr. Parkman had this from her from New York: "I am sailing for Paris. I am going to work. I see it all now; all that you would have me see, and more. Some day I will try to show you just how well I see it.

"I do not know how I am going to bear part of it—the going back where we were so happy. But I will bear it, for nothing shall keep me from the work I see before me.

"Thank you—for all that you have done, and most of all for all that you have been. My idea is all comprehended in this: To the very uttermost of my power, I am going to make it right for Karl."

Six months later she wrote him this:

"Dear Doctor: Thank you for attending to those things for me. It infuriated me at first to think that the only thing in money left by the work of Karl's great life was the money from those books which I resented so bitterly. But how wrong to see it that way—for Karl would be so happy to know that the brave work he did after his

blindness was helping me now. But I never spend a dollar of this money without thinking of the mood—the circumstances—out of which it was earned.

"No—no money for the work he did for the blind. Karl intended that as a gift. He would be so glad to know of its usefulness. He thought it all wrong that books for the blind were so expensive, and so many of the great things not to be had.

"Karl used to repeat a little verse of Heine, which he translated like this:"

'At first I did not even hope, And to a hostile fate did bow— But I learned to bear the burden— Only do not ask me how.'

"I have learned to bear it here in Paris—only do not ask me how. I could not say. I do not know.

"But I want to tell you of a few of the good things. You would not believe what that work in the laboratory has done for me. It has given me a new understanding of colour—new sense of it, new power with eye and hand, a better sense of values. Would you have thought of that? And do you not see the reasons for my being glad?

"What I have done so far is but leading up to what I am going to do. That is so vital that it must not be done too quickly. I must get my hand in, gain what there is to be gained here, that the work I am going to do for Karl may have the benefit of it all. But I have made innumerable sketches, and it is growing all the time. There need be no fear of my losing it. I could no more lose it than I could lose my own soul. It grows as I grow. Sometimes I think I should wait ten years—but I shall not.

"Yes, the critics like the picture of which you speak. Of course I am painting all the time—other things—various things. But it all seems like practice work to me—a mere getting ready."

And then, after a long time, this:—"This is my birthday;—a day linked more closely than I could ever tell with Karl, our life and work and love. If I had looked forward from one happy birthday I had and seen what was ahead—how it would be with me now—I never could have gone on. We go on by not knowing what is waiting for us,

and day by day we bear what we would have said, looking ahead, we never could endure—and that is human life.

"I have been so lonely to-day that I must write this little word to one who will understand. I turn to you as one close to us in those dear days, one who cared for and appreciated Karl, understood something of the kind of love that was ours. Doctor—it was so wonderful! So wonderful that it seems to me sometimes the universe must have existed through the centuries just that our love might be born. I think of it as the one perfect flower of creation.

"I want you to know that I have come to see the worth—pricelessness—of my memories. Karl's love for me lights up my life with a glory nothing can ever take away. I think we do not have even our memories until we have earned them. I have tried to come back to my own, to take my place. I am trying to be of that great harmony of the world in which Karl and I believed, and as my spirit turns from discord and seeks harmony, I am given my memories, the memories of those many perfect days, and I am never too lonely nor too desolate to thank God that to me was left the scent of the roses.

"Oh, Doctor—where is he now? Do you ever think of all that? No one who has ever loved and lost can remain secure in his materialism. I begin to see that the beautiful thoughts, the poems, of immortality, eternity, of its all coming right, have sprung from the lonely hearts of great lovers. For they would not have it any other way—they could only endure it by having it so, and, ah, Doctor—far greater than any proof of science or logic, is there not proof in this? Lifting up their hearts in hours of desolation were not the men and women born for great loves and great sorrows granted a vision of the truth?

"We do not know. None of them know. We hope and wait and long for the years to tell us the truth. And while we wait and hope, we work, and try to make our lives that which is worthy our love. That endeavour, and that alone, makes life bearable."

After a year of silence he received this letter: "Doctor, it is finished. I will not tell you the things they are saying of it here, for you will read it in the papers. The papers here are full of it; I think I have never seen so much about any picture.

"But it is more important that I tell you this: They are seeing it, even now, as I intended it should be seen—a work of love, a memorial, an endeavour to make it right for him. I have cared more for what the scientific people, Karl's own kind, have said of it, than the artists. They claim it as their own, say they are going to have it, get it some way,—must have it. Do you not see how that means the fulfillment of my desire?

"Of course you know that it is a picture of Karl. But the critics here call it less a portrait than the incarnation of an idea. Light and truth sweeping in upon a human soul—one of them expressed it. But why try to tell you of that? When you see it you will understand what it is I have tried to do. And you shall see it soon. After it is exhibited here they want it in Vienna, and I cannot refuse, for Karl loved Vienna, and then a short time in London, and then I come with it to America, and to Chicago. I am bringing it home, Doctor, for even though it find final resting place in that great temple of science in Paris, I have the feeling, in taking it to Chicago, that I am bringing it home. And the first day it is exhibited there I want you and me to go to it together, as Karl would like that we should.

"I am so tired that I do not believe I shall ever be quite rested again. For the last three months I lived with the picture, my heart and mind knew nothing else. But the day I finished it my strongest feeling was a regret that it was finished, a yearning to go on with it forever. For doctor, I painted my heart, my life, everything that I had within myself, everything I had taken from Karl, into that picture. I am lonely now without it, for it made my life.

"It has revived Karl's whole story. They tell it here—oh so lovingly. I heard one man from the Institute telling it all to a younger man as they stood before it yesterday. I

have moved them to a new sense of Karl's greatness; it has been my glorious privilege to perpetuate him, make sure his place, reveal him—for that is what I have sought to do. Was not life good to me to give me power to do that thing?

"We shall be together in Chicago very soon—you and Karl and I. For as the days go on Karl comes closer. I hope, most of all, that the picture will bring him very close to you."

That was three months before, and to-day he had this note from her, dated Chicago:—"Yes, I am here, and the picture is here. The public exhibit does not open for a few days, but the picture will be hung this morning, and we may see it this afternoon. I shall be there at three, waiting for you."

CHAPTER XLIII

"AND THERE WAS LIGHT"

He spent the intervening hours restlessly; the hands of his watch moved slowly; his duties occupied only a small portion of his mind.

He was at the Institute at just three, and they directed him where to go. His heart was beating fast as he walked down the corridor. The hand which he laid upon the door-knob shook a little.

He opened the door, and a woman came toward him with outstretched hand.

It was Ernestine—but the three years had done much.

Older—greater—a more steady flame—a more conscious power—grief transmuted to understanding—despair risen to resolution—she had gone a long way. He looked at her in silence—reading, understanding. It was all written there—the story of deep thinking and deeper loving, of battles and victories, and other battles yet to fight, the poise which attends the victor—yes, she had gone a long way. And as she spoke his name, and smiled a little, and then could not repress the tears which his presence, all

that it meant, brought, he saw, shining through her tears, that light of love's own days.

She turned and walked to the other side of the room, and he knew that she was taking him to the picture.

She watched his face as he took it in, and she knew then that she had done her work.

For a long time he said nothing, and when at last he turned to her, eyes dim, voice husky, it was only to say: "I can say—nothing. There are—no words."

He turned back to the picture, she standing silent beside him, reading in his face that with each moment he was coming into more perfect understanding.

For she had painted Karl's face as it was just before he went into the silence. She had caught the look which illumined his face that day on his death bed when she told him what she had done. She had painted Karl as he was in that moment of perfect understanding—the joy which was uplift, the knowledge which was glory. She had perpetuated in her picture the things which Karl took with him from life. It was Karl in the supreme moment of his life—the moment of revelation, transfiguration, the moment which lighted all the years.

It was triumph which she had perpetuated in the picture. She was saying to the world—He did not achieve what he set out to achieve, but can you say he failed when he left the world with a soul like this?

He saw that it was what she had done with light which made the picture, from the standpoint of her art, supreme. The critics said that no one had ever done just that thing with light before—painted light in just that spirit of loving and understanding it; less light, indeed, than light's significance. They said that no one before had painted the kind of light which could make a blind man see. For he was blind—the picture told that, but it seemed no one had ever had light quite as understandingly as he had it there.

"You feel it, doctor?" she asked at last, timidly. "You see it all?"

He nodded. It seemed so far beyond any word of his.

But she wanted to talk to him about it. "You see what it has meant to me? Why I loved it and lived for it? Oh doctor—I wanted to show that he was greater than all the great things he sought to do! The night this picture came to me it set my blood on fire, and at no moment since, no matter how tired or lonely or discouraged—have I lost my love for it—belief in it. It seems so right. It seems to stand for so many things. They call it a masterpiece of light—and isn't it fine—great—right, that Karl's portrait should be a masterpiece of light?"

For a long time he was lost to it. It was as she said—right. To the blind man had come the light; to the man of science the light of truth, and to the human soul, about to set out on another journey, had come the perfect understanding of what had lighted the way for him here.

When he turned to her at last she was looking at the picture with such love in her eyes as he had never seen. Her lips were parted—tremulous; there were tears upon her cheeks; her whole face quivered with love and longing. He saw then, in that one glance before he turned away, that time and death held no sway over such a love as this.

"I did not mean to," she faltered. "But I have not seen the picture myself for a long time, and your being here—"

She broke down there, and he summoned no word with which to answer her sobs.

"Dr. Parkman,"—raising a passionate face—"I want you to know that if this were the greatest picture the world had ever seen—if it were a thousand times greater than anything the world had ever known—I would throw it away—obliterate it—gladly—joyously—for just one touch of Karl's hand!"

"Yes," he murmured, more to himself than to her, "and if you were not like that you never could have done it."

"What it cost!"—he heard her whisper. "What it cost!"

He told her that it had ever been so. That the great things were paid for like that. That so many of the things which had lived longest and gone deepest had come from broken hearts and souls tried almost beyond their power for suffering. He told her that the future would accept this, as it had the others, without knowing of its cost, that a myriad of broken hearts had gone into the sum of the world's achievement.

In the half hour which followed, as they sat there, speaking sometimes of Karl, more often silent, some things seemed to pass from the man's heart, other things to come. And as at the last he rose to go, for he felt she would like a little time alone, he said, and his face and his voice gave much which the words missed: "Ernestine, you have done more than you know. For me too—you have made it right."

She sat a long time before her picture, dreaming of Karl. She whispered his name, and he seemed to answer with, "Liebchen—brave liebchen—you have been good to me."

To her too the hour brought new light. It came to her now that she had won a victory for them, not because she had painted a great picture, but because she had brought them back to that world harmony from which they seemed for a time to have gone. She had won, not through the greatness of her achievement, but through having made it right with her own soul. The picture itself was a thing of canvas and paint; it was the spirit out of which it grew—his spirit and hers—was the thing everlasting. She was sure that Karl too knew now that it was having the spirit right which counted. The "perhaps" of his letter was surely answered for him now.

And out of this closeness to the past there opened to her a little of her own future—things she would do. For she must work,—theirs a love which made for work. There was much more to paint, much to show how she and Karl loved the world, what they held it worth,—and all of it to speak for their love, glorify, immortalise it.

She dreamed deeply and tenderly—the past so real to her, Karl, their love, so great.

Now she must go. To-morrow many others would come. Artists would come to pronounce her work good, wonder how she had done this or that. Doctors and the university men would come, proud to speak of Karl, claim him as their own. But ah—who would understand the tears and heart's blood out of which it had come? Who would know? Who could?

"Karl," she murmured at the last—eyes dim with loving tears—"dear Karl,"—dwelling with a long tenderness upon the name—"did I indeed bring you the light?"

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