

Mazo de la Roche

GROWTH OF A MAN

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This ebook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the ebook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the ebook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: Growth of a Man

Date of first publication: 1938

Author: Mazo de la Roche (1879-1961)

Date first posted: May 20, 2014

Date last updated: May 20, 2014

Faded Page eBook #20140527

This ebook was produced by: Delphine Lettau, Marcia Brooks, Al Haines, Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

BOOKS BY
MAZO DE LA ROCHE

*

YOUNG RENNY (JALNA-1906)

JALNA

WHITEOAKS OF JALNA

FINCH'S FORTUNE

THE MASTER OF JALNA

WHITEOAK HARVEST

*

LOW LIFE AND OTHER PLAYS

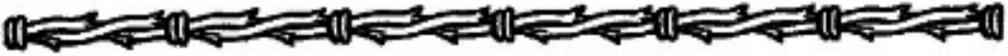
PORTRAIT OF A DOG

LARK ASCENDING

BESIDE A NORMAN TOWER

THE VERY HOUSE

GROWTH OF A MAN



Growth of a Man

By

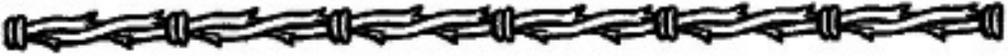
MAZO DE LA ROCHE



BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

1938



COPYRIGHT 1938, BY MAZO DE LA ROCHE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, INCLUDING THE RIGHT
TO REPRODUCE THIS BOOK OR PORTIONS
THEREOF IN ANY FORM

FIRST EDITION

Published September 1938

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS BOOKS
ARE PUBLISHED BY
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

For Helen and Alfred McIntyre

GROWTH OF A MAN

CHAPTER I

Little Shaw Manifold stood at his grandfather's side watching the train steam out of the railway station. In the train was his mother, going away from him as fast as whirling iron wheels and pounding steel pistons could carry her. The locomotive whistled and flew a black banner in triumph. As the train rounded the curve Shaw had a last glimpse of his mother's face at a window. It was only a white disc, getting smaller and smaller, and a handkerchief fluttered beside it. He knew that the handkerchief was wet because he had seen her dabbing her eyes with it, all the way to the station.

He did not wave back at her. His arms felt heavy and his mind dull. Neither did his grandfather, Roger Gower, wave. The old man stood solid and imperturbable, his wide-open, china-blue eyes staring above his massive grizzled beard. His hands, leathery and thickened by hard work, hung impassively at his sides. Shaw glanced up at him furtively, then away again. In that instant the train sped into insignificance, the face at the window vanished. He had not waved a good-bye to his mother! He had not waved . . . and she was gone!

"Come along," said his grandfather. "We can't stand gaping here all day." The voice came out of the beard, muffled and indistinct, like the mutter of a lion in a jungle, Shaw thought.

He trudged after his grandfather, a small boy in a pair of heavy cloth trousers cut down from a man's, a jacket too short for him, and a wide-brimmed straw hat to keep off the heat of the early summer sun. From under its brim his eyes looked out, with an expression guarded yet wistful. They were a greyish hazel, the eyebrows almost without arch and surprisingly thick. His nose was blunt, his mouth set and rather ugly except when he smiled. There was a sweetness in his smile and his teeth were white and even. His skin had a thick, creamy pallor that neither burned nor freckled in the sun nor chapped in the biting cold of the Ontario winter.

He trudged after his grandfather, their heavy boots clumping on the station platform. The stationmaster came out of the weather-stained frame station and said affably:—

"I see your daughter's gone away, Mr. Gower."

"Hm, yes," came the voice out of the beard; "she's gone."

"You'll miss her, after all these years."

"Hm, yes, I s'pose so. We've got plenty left at home."

"The boy's growing."

“Yes, he’s coming on.” Roger Gower moved past, resentment of the questioning in every line of his short, thick figure.

The bay mare, Nellie, was tied to the station hitching post. She bit at its already well-gnawed top in impatience and stamped the hot gravel. A bevy of flies spun about the liquid depths of her eyes, fretting her, so that she flung her head, making the rusty harness rattle.

Roger Gower climbed heavily into the buggy whose wheels were still caked with last week’s mud. It clung to the body of the buggy, hard as cement. Shaw clambered up after him and the mare, with a toss of her head more exasperated than grateful, stretched her long legs over the dusty road. The year was 1895 and no motor vehicle had yet disturbed the maple-shaded main street of Thorriton.

It was a pretty village in those days, its houses set well back from the road, vines shielding the porches and flower borders peeping between the white palings of the picket fences. It was a mysterious place to Shaw. The buggy moved so fast that he was not able to see all he wanted to. He turned his head to stare back at the colored glass bottles in the drugstore window. A sense of power came to him from their translucent green and blue depths. He would like to be a druggist and have such things in his possession.

Not a word was exchanged between the two during the return to the farm. But the silence was not one of understanding. To Shaw his grandfather was a remote and powerful being, one toward whom he felt fear but no admiration. He would not be like him when he grew up. No—nor like his uncles!

For Roger Gower the child at his side scarcely existed. His mind moved in its customary routine of crops, of ploughing, sowing, and reaping, of felling trees and fattening cattle, without a thought of the potentialities of this son of his daughter. He held the black whip in his hand but there was no need to use it except to flick at the flies that settled on the mare’s moist hide.

Shaw folded his hands between his knees and considered the possibilities of having the afternoon to himself. It was Saturday, so there was no school, but there was always some job waiting for him, some work that he hated. He hated all physical work. He wanted only to read, to think about what he had read, to invent a secret life of thought for himself, and, when he had the chance, to play with his friend, Ian Blair. He kept his mind resolutely away from the thought of his mother.

Still, though he did not think of her, tears began to run down his cheeks and he lowered his head so that the brim of his hat might hide them.

The mare flung out her hoofs and picked them up again. Once in the country she gave her whole muscular body to the business of regaining her stall. In anticipation

she tasted the oats and her big breast fairly burst in her haste.

The fruitful fields were already showing their wheat and barley crops. The tall wheat stood strong and verdant. In the orchards the apples had set into sour green promise of the sweet fruit to come. The white gate at the end of the farm lane stood open. The mare turned into the lane so recklessly that Roger Gower exclaimed, "Whoa!" and jerked at the rein.

"Get out and shut the gate." His voice came, thick and commanding, through his beard.

Shaw was conscious that he spoke, but his mind was far away.

He got a tap on the knee from the butt of the whip. "Wake up! Shut the gate!"

He scrambled over the wheel. No sooner had his foot touched the hub than his grandfather let the mare have her head and he found himself sprawling on the grass. He gathered himself up and stared resentfully after the buggy.

"Damn you, Grandpa!" he muttered. "Damn you! I'll get even with you some day. You see if I don't!"

He jumped on the bottom bar of the farm gate and swung it shut, savoring the instant's swift motion and the powerful clang of the closing. He hung on the gate for a space, sulkily contemplating the long walk up the lane. If the house had been near the road the action of his grandfather would not have been so mean, but—a mile to trudge, with his dinner waiting—

"I'll get even with you, see if I don't!" he repeated.

But by the time he had trudged halfway to the house his resentment had softened to self-pity and he heard himself whimpering—"Nice cold dinner I'll have! I bet the girls will have finished the pie by the time I get there."

He did not see the white and mauvy pink of the wood lilies that trooped on either side of the lane or the late yellow violets that hugged the shelter of a tiny hollow or smell the fragrance of a clover field. He resolutely nursed his grievance against his grandfather, keeping it as a barrier between him and the loss of his mother.

He grew so hot that he pulled off his jacket and his big hat. He wore braces over a cotton shirt that was wet with sweat. Now that his head was bare his full white forehead was noticeable, and his fine light brown hair. As he neared the house he began to run. He was breathless when he slid into his place at the table.

His uncles and aunts had finished their meal and were already about their work, but his grandfather was drinking a cup of tea and his grandmother sat behind the teapot, ready to pour him another cup if he wanted it. Neither of them looked at Shaw, whose eyes disconsolately took in the empty plates, the single piece of bread

on the board, but his grandmother, without appearing to open her mouth, said, out of the side of it:—

“Beatrice!”

Her youngest daughter appeared in the kitchen doorway.

“Yes, Ma?”

“Shaw’s dinner.”

In a moment Beatrice came in, carrying a plate mounded with dark-looking boiled potatoes on which gravy had congealed and a piece of salt pork. He awaited it with his knife and fork grasped in his hands.

“You don’t deserve any,” she said, “being so late.”

He filled his mouth to its capacity, a pink flush overspreading his face in the effort of swallowing. Beatrice carried the empty plates to the kitchen, where the clatter of dishwashing began. Roger Gower pushed his cup and saucer away from him and rose. Shaw lifted his eyes as far as the heavy grizzled beard and saw the hairs glistening with a dribble of tea. The old man walked solemnly to the door and looked at the weather out of his speculative blue eyes.

“Cristabel get away all right?” ventured his wife.

“Yes. She got away.”

“I hope they’ll meet her at the other end.”

“They’ll meet her.” He turned to Shaw. “Your grandmother’s got something for you to do. See that you’re smart about it.”

Shaw nodded, gulping a fresh mouthful. He watched his grandfather take his hat from its peg and stump out. He breathed freer. He saw the blue sky, the lilac tree, where had loomed the stocky figure.

He cut himself a piece of dried-apple pie and assisted its solidity down his throat with drinks of tepid green tea. The question that had been troubling him was at last given words.

“Grandma, am I going to sleep in the same room?”

Jane Gower turned from the cupboard where she was placing the sugar bowl and spoonholder and faced him. Her snow-white hair and clear light eyes, her delicate pink skin, gave her a look of benignity, denied by her stern features and heavy upper lip which was seldom lifted in a smile.

“Beaty’s going to have that room,” she said. “You’ll take hers.”

“Beaty!” he stared. “Am I to sleep in the attic now?”

“That’s what I said.”

He was glad. He did not want to sleep alone in the room he had shared with his mother since he was three years old. He was glad to have a little room under the

eave. . . . But his treasures—his books—Beaty must not have them!

His grandmother went to the kitchen and he slid from his chair and went up the narrow linoleum-covered stairs. He softly opened the door of the bedroom and stood there transfixed.

Surely his mother was in the room! Surely she was there! She was hiding somewhere! She had made herself invisible—but she would show herself in a moment, her blue eyes, her brown hair, her fresh pink cheeks! She could not have left him alone!

He stared at the dingy brown and drab of the wallpaper, at the washstand, the heavy white basin and ewer with the nicked spout, at the bed—why, there was only one bed! His little iron bedstead was gone!

The separation of the two beds made clear to him, as nothing else had done, the cutting of the bond between him and his mother. On his mother's bed some of Beaty's clothes were strewn. Beaty had taken the bed! Beaty had taken the room! This was no longer his place.

A pine wardrobe stood in one corner of the room. He opened the door and found what he wanted—a pile of books, neatly arranged at one end, in a corner. He gathered as many as he could into his arms and crept up the stairs into the attic room.

The ceiling was so low that even he could touch it, and sloped from the gable to within a foot of the floor. It had never been papered and smelt of damp plaster, but he had always liked the thought of the little attic, its privacy and its isolation.

Beaty's bed had been taken away and his own installed in its place. His few belongings had been carried there. There was one empty drawer in the bottom of the chest of drawers and in it he laid the first armful of books. He tiptoed eagerly down the stairs to fetch the rest.

Beatrice appeared on the stairs just as he secured the last armful.

"This is my room now," she said. "What are you doing in it?"

"Jus' getting some books," he muttered. "Some old school books."

"Well, keep out after this," she warned, but not unkindly. . . .

Now he had the books secure! His treasures! His delight! Not his grandfather, his grandmother, or any of their thirteen children had, so far as Shaw knew, ever opened one of them. They had belonged to Roger Gower's father, who must have been a very different sort of man. Shaw always drank in any stray words that were spoken of him. In the secrecy of his mind he loved him and set him on a pedestal of learning and distinction.

Shaw knew little of him but that he had been a soldier and a student. To prove

the first his epaulets and his sword hung above the dresser in the living room. And here, safe in Shaw's keeping, were his books! Most of Shakespeare, Milton's *Poems*, *Arabian Nights*, *Gulliver's Travels*, Chapman's *Homer*, Livingstone's *Travels*, *Doctor Syntax*, *Tom Jones*—these were the grandest, the most impressive, to the little boy. He had pored over these books ever since he could read. He had cast his small personality into them, as a raindrop into the sea. He had never had a toy! What were toys? He scarcely knew. They did not enter into the pioneering calculations of his grandparents or the narrow possibilities of his mother's purse. That purse of his mother's! How well Shaw knew it! How proud and important he had felt when, for a moment, she would let him hold it in his hand! He knew every line of its worn brown surface, its clasp once silvered over but now showing the yellowish metal beneath, its extreme smoothness, as though it had been handled much, in foreboding and anxiety, the compartments inside where the big copper coins, the smaller silver coins, lived, the part fastened by an extra clasp where were hidden the scarce dollar bills; most precious of all, the pocket under the flap where there was a small photograph of the young doctor, Shaw's father, who had died four years after his marriage, and a lock of his fair hair.

The last time Shaw had seen the purse was when his mother was buying her railway ticket. He had stood close by her at the wicket, his eyes raised to her face bent anxiously over the coins that the station agent counted out in change. Shaw's heart had sunk when he saw her hand three dollars in at the wicket. His grandfather had stayed outside on the platform. Shaw knew why! His grandfather knew that he should be paying for the ticket and he felt mean! That was why he stayed outside.

Shaw walked round the attic room in a dazed way. His brain felt so confused all of a sudden that he did not know what he was doing. Then he saw the last of the books in his arms and dropped to his knees before the bottom drawer to arrange them. His mind turned to his great-grandfather and he tried to recall all that his mother had told him. She herself had not known a great deal, but she questioned her father when she had found him in an easy mood and so collected a store of facts to draw on for Shaw's pleasure. This was a funny little boy of hers, but she was sure he was clever and she did all she could for him.

This great-grandfather, Shaw Gower,—the boy was glad that he had been named for him,—had come as a young man to this thinly settled district from Warwickshire. He had got some land but he had read more than he had worked. He had even written poetry, in a small irregular hand, with violet ink that had faded so that only words here and there were decipherable. Shaw had seen the poems laid away in the family Bible and had made out words like "bower" and "flowery dell"

and “whither.”

This great-grandfather had had yellow side whiskers and had loved books. Constantly Shaw compared him to his grandfather, who spoke through a big beard and read nothing but the local paper, who scarcely knew what poetry was. How could such a father have had such a son?

Shaw Gower had not been long in the country before he had met the founder of a religious sect, the Children of Peace, and fallen under his spell. He had joined the sect and brought his imagination and poetic longings to their worship and the building of their Temple.

The founder, David Willson, was a man of strong frame and domineering mind. He was steeped in the writings of the Old Testament. He felt himself born to be a patriarch and a leader and was convinced that the field for his work lay in this sequestered, richly wooded part of the country. He had come from the United States, not poor, but possessed of oxen and money, rumbling over the corduroy roads till he found the very place he sought and believed he was led there by divine guidance. There he had met the young Englishman, Shaw Gower—his Jonathan he called him.

David Willson gathered the pioneers about him and preached to them under the open sky. The autumn weather was benign, the crops had been bountiful. He stood there, dominant and strong, pouring out the noble words of the Old Testament, words of promise, of might, of peace. He was the prophet of peace and his object was to form a body, called the Children of Peace, of which he was to be the head.

Young Gower stood by his side, and after the exhortation he sang the Twenty-third Psalm in a tenor voice of quality more beautiful than any of these pioneers had heard. The two combined could not be withstood. The lonely, isolated pioneers surged forward to place themselves under David Willson’s banner.

Peace with each other; peace with the world; a life of purity, of liberty, of spiritual beauty; not austere, for there were to be feasts and processions. There was nothing of the Puritan about David Willson. When their work was over they would sing, and rejoice in the love that would bind them together.

All were of one mind in their desire to have a place of worship, a centre for their spiritual world. Without delay the foundations of a Temple were laid. The forest trees were felled. David Willson and young Gower sat with the open Bible before them drawing plans. They planned to build the Temple in three cubes, one standing above the other, and on the topmost cube a golden ball was to be raised and sheltered beneath a cupola. The Temple was to be painted white for purity. It was to have light from windows on every side, typifying Reason and Truth. Inside there

were twelve pillars bearing the names of the Twelve Apostles. In the very centre, beneath the golden sphere, was a Holy of Holies, containing a model of the Ark which was only brought out on feast days.

What a day of rejoicing was the opening of the Temple! From all the farms and near-by hamlets the Children of Peace came at dawn of a summer day. The women and maidens carrying garlands, the men dressed in snow-white linen suits, the children with wreaths of flowers on their hair. The Temple stood shining in its purity against the dark trees. Before the door David Willson waited to greet his flock. The summer air echoed his sonorous words, tears of joy filled his eyes as he declared that he and his followers were but a handful of pioneers of Peace, the great army of which would, in time to come, drive all war from the troubled world.

At the end of his address Shaw Gower, clad in pure white, his golden hair and whiskers shining in the sunrise, was raised by ropes to the very top of the Temple. He unveiled the great golden ball and, poised beside it, sang, in a voice like an angel's, a hymn of dedication, of which he had composed both words and music. The words were still preserved in the family Bible and were more legible than his poems.

SHAW GOWER'S HYMN FOR PEACE

I am a seeker after Thy peace, O Lord,
 With the rising sun in my face;
I stand holding my soul like a goblet
 To be filled with Thy grace.

I see spreading about me the fertile fields
 We have claimed from the wild woodland;
I see upturned faces of men who pray
 To be blessed by Thy hand.

Give us peace! Let strife be unknown to our babes!
 Let the hearts of our wives be calm!
Let death come to us, not in its terror,
 But in trust and in balm!

I came as a pilgrim from an old sad land—
 I came as a hart from the chase—
I found refuge and joy in this Temple
 And I found my Lord's grace!

The door of the Temple was flung wide by two youths and the congregation marched in, singing the Doxology as they marched. The women laid their garlands at the base of the pillars. The rising sun filled the Temple with sacred fire. The men who had hoisted Shaw Gower to the top of the building remained behind to lower him again to the ground.

As the congregation were taking their seats these five young men, with the singer in their midst, came with free steps into the Temple and sat on the front bench beneath the dais where the leader and patriarch stood, his hands upraised. Dressed in white as they were, their cheeks flushed by exertion, their hair waving bright over their proud heads, they did indeed look like the sons of God.

The daughters of men had a mind to them, and before the year was out all five were married or betrothed. Shaw Gower married the daughter of a Yorkshire schoolmaster who had lately come to the Province. The friendship between him and David Willson remained, but they had doctrinal differences. Shaw Gower did not bow his head to the patriarch's opinion. His wife's influence was strong and she

never became one of the Children of Peace. She adhered to the Church of England, which, about this time, erected a church. But Shaw Gower always took a prominent part in the feast days. His golden voice was raised in praise at the Autumn Feast when the great Feast Cake, made of the purest and richest butter and eggs, white and delicate, was eaten in the open, and a bonfire sent up its smoke for incense.

These Children of Peace had music in them. In their peaceful pursuits their thoughts turned toward singing and playing on instruments as the joyous outward expression of their inner life. Many of the women had clear sweet voices, and a choir was formed of these which sang on feast days, even in the Temple itself. A small organ was installed and David Willson played the accompaniments with all the fervor he threw into his religion. Shaw Gower not only had the finest voice in the community, but he had a good understanding of music. He got together a band whose fame spread throughout the Province. The instruments were of silver, polished till they reflected the glowing colors of the landscape.

On the day of the Love Feast it was an inspiring sight to see the bandsmen in their suits of finely woven white linen, their silver instruments to their lips, marching down the hillside when the pale wild roses were in flower, or at harvest time when the wayside was burning with goldenrod and the forest ablaze with the reddening leaves of the maple, and the young apple and plum trees beginning to be fruitful. David Willson had raised his eyes to the golden ball of the Temple in pride, and Shaw Gower had put behind him forever the recollection of his early life.

All this was long past. The Temple stood desolate, a weather-beaten frame building, the golden ball tarnished, the windows broken, rank weeds surrounding it like a dreary sea, but to little Shaw Manifold it was a place of strange happenings and spiritual adventure.

He put away the books and went slowly down to the living room.

“What have I got to do, Grandma?” he asked, with disinclination for work in every line of his small figure.

She looked down at him contemptuously.

“You don’t look as though you’d much work in you. My goodness, I don’t know where your mother got you! She’s not a lazy bone in her body.”

Shaw hung his head. He was saying to himself:—

“You stop talking about my Mamma. I don’t want to hear you talking about my Mamma.”

His grandmother said—“Luke and Mark have put a load of firewood outside the woodshed. You go and pile it. And see that you do it neat. Don’t make one of those teetery-tottery piles, like you did last time.”

“Have I got to pile wood all afternoon?”

“Yes.” She turned away and began to count the stitches in her knitting. She had talked more than she was accustomed to and drew back, as though into her shell.

Shaw dragged his feet unwillingly through the pantry where Beatrice and Letitia were doing the dishes. They were talking eagerly about a party they were going to that night and did not even glance at him. In the kitchen the eldest sister, Esther, was ironing a starched white petticoat with many tucks. She saw the little boy and called out:—

“Shaw, you go and fetch an armload of wood for the fire! My irons are getting cold.”

He muttered, under his breath—“Fetch it yourself! I’m not goin’ to! Who was your servant last year?”

But, though he muttered, he dragged his feet in the direction of the mound of freshly cut wood and selected pieces of the right length for the stove. He carried these to Esther and threw them in the wood box. She pushed back her irons, lifted the stove lid, and thrust several sticks in on the glowing bed of coals. He watched a small green worm that had clung on the wood frizzle a moment, then turn into a tiny black char. He liked the smell of the hot clean petticoat and ran his hand along its glossy tucks.

“Take your dirty hand off my ironing!” said Esther, and glowered down at him out of her small grey eyes under their heavy brows. The heat had set her hair into a mass of little curls. Her rather heavy lips were very red. They all looked alike, these aunts and uncles of his, and he scarcely separated them in his mind. Only his mother was different.

At first he piled the wood neatly, but as his back grew tired and his arms ached he became more and more careless, so that the foundations of the pile were insecure and it tottered threateningly. Time and again he went to the pump and drank deeply from the tin mug of the refreshing spring water, but he could not make himself pile the wood well.

His uncles came from field and barn for tea. Luke and Herbert passed him without remark, but Mark, the youngest of the family, looked derisively at the woodpile.

“Has Ma seen it?” he asked.

“No,” muttered Shaw.

Mark kicked the base of the pile and the greater part of the wood was strewn over the yard. Shaw looked after him sullenly. He picked up a heavy stick and hurled it after Mark, but not till he was sure that Mark would not see it. He himself

was little, alone, there was no one to care for him. He would not pile the wood any more! He would not pile the wood!

A hen with a single chick bustled into the yard, scratching among the chips. Shaw made a sudden swoop and captured the chick. He held it in his cupped hands, deliciously fluffy and fragile. He held it to his cheek, then kissed it rapturously. He laughed, feeling ashamed of himself for kissing it.

Kissing was something he had almost no acquaintance with. At night, after his mother had heard him say his “Now I lay me,” she always laid her hand tenderly on his forehead for a moment. That was her caress. But before she had gone away she had clutched him to her and pressed passionately loving kisses on his face. He had tasted the salt of her tears. He had felt the heavy beating of her heart.

In his grandfather’s house he had never seen a kiss exchanged. One might have lived there many more years than Shaw had had life without seeing lip meet lip. Roger Gower had, in forty-five years of married life, kissed his wife twice. The first time had been on their marriage day. The second, when she lay in bed with her first-born. He was to kiss her twice more before he died. Once on their golden wedding day and again on their diamond anniversary.

Shaw set down the chick and it scurried to its mother. Even a little yellow chick could run under its mother’s wing and stare back at the world defiant! Shaw wondered why his throat ached so. His collar was too tight! He put his fingers inside it and loosened it from his throat. His shirt was wet with sweat.

His grandmother appeared in the doorway of the kitchen. Her snowy hair was smooth above her pink face. She had a clean white apron over her grey print dress. She looked benign, but the sight of her made Shaw quail. She spoke in her low gruff voice.

“What’s this about the woodpile? Mark says it’s toppled over already. You’d better pile it good and firm, Shaw, or I’ll take a stick to you. Don’t come in to tea till it’s done right.”

She turned back into the house.

Shaw picked up a stick of wood and threw it after her, but aimed so that it struck the side of the house. He heard the heavy thud with satisfaction.

“That’s what you get, Grandma!” he growled. “And I’ll throw more sticks after you! I’ll throw them and throw them till there isn’t one left in the pile! *Then* what’ll you say, I wonder! You won’t talk about taking a stick to me, I bet!”

He walked in truculent half-circles around the wood yard, turning abruptly to walk in the opposite direction. The hen, clucking anxiously to her chick, coaxed it out of his way.

Desperately he set to work on the woodpile. His uncles went out to finish their work, but they did not look at him. He ached in every joint when he had finished. There was a splinter in his hand. His shirt was wet through. His hunger was such that he was dull to everything but its gnawing.

He went into the house and found his tea laid on a corner of the kitchen table. Cold fried potatoes, bread and butter, and stewed dried apples.

His grandmother was lighting an oil lamp, for it was a room that darkened early because of its low ceiling and small windows that faced northeast. The unshielded flame of the lamp flared red and smoky, but once the chimney was on it threw a clear mellow light. In it Shaw now saw his grandfather spread out his newspaper, his beard illuminated, the wen, crowning the baldness of his head, smooth and shiny.

Without a word his grandmother went out through the door and critically examined the woodpile. It only partially satisfied her, but she gave a grudging nod toward Shaw and he slid anxiously into his chair, his eyes already devouring the food. As he ate he stared at his grandfather. He stared at him in fear and contempt. He was all-powerful. He was unassailable. But he knew nothing of Shaw's world of books. He had forgotten the existence of the books his own father had left him. There he sat gazing at the cartoon by Sam Hunter, trying to take in its point, his blue eyes solemn and round, his beard spread like a great broom on his breast!

When would he move his eyes! Shaw stared fascinated. Then the diversion of the young women's descent from above took his attention. They came rustling down the stairs in their stiffly starched white petticoats, giggling as they came, bursting with health, their cheeks hot and red from soap and water. Beatrice had a big bow of pink ribbon on her nape and was afraid her father would notice it and perhaps object, but he never took his eyes from the cartoon, deliberately ignoring his daughters. Shaw inhaled a deep breath of the scent of musk as they passed.

Outside Mark was sitting in the buggy, very spruce, with his curly hair plastered flat and a stiff white collar so high that it pressed his chin. The mare stamped her annoyance at being taken out again, switching her long sandy tail across the dashboard against the girl's knees, in her efforts to dislodge the flies from her flanks. The three sisters piled themselves on to the seat. Mark gathered the reins closer. Jane Gower stood in the doorway gazing at him in love and admiration, her youngest, the biggest and strongest of them all, a good boy.

She watched the buggy disappear down the farm lane. Her face had softened when she came back to the kitchen. Her husband had turned over the page.

"There's something here," his voice penetrated his beard, "about buggies being run in England without horses. Not steam or electricity. Some sort of oil. They run

without tracks, they say.”

“It couldn’t be done,” she answered curtly.

“No,” he agreed, “it couldn’t be done. There are too many lies in the papers.”

“I wonder how Cristabel’s feeling to-night,” she said, as though the thought had been in her mind for some time.

“Glad she’s going to earn some money, I guess,” he mumbled.

“The work’ll be pretty hard. There’s a lot of running in a doctor’s house. Funny she’d marry a doctor and then go to keep house for a doctor when she’s a widow.”

“Hm. I don’t see anything funny in it.” He turned again to his paper.

“It’s your bath night, Shaw,” said his grandmother. “Take your clothes off.”

He was sitting stupefied, replete with food, his eyes heavy, his face pale. Now his thick eyebrows were drawn together in a knot of dismay.

“Oh, Grandma, I don’t want to have a bath! I’m too tir-erd!”

“You *take* your bath or I’ll *give* it to you.”

That was enough. He got to his feet and began to strip. His grandmother carried an empty tub from the washroom and set it near the stove. She poured the water from a steaming kettle into it, then cold water from a bucket. Shaw stood shivering in distaste. She handed him a square of flannel and a cake of yellow soap.

“Scrub well behind your ears,” she ordered.

Gingerly he stepped into the bath and squatted there. But, once in, the hot water was not unpleasant. He soaped himself well, taking pains with his ears for he did not want his grandmother’s bony fingers exploring them. He half dried himself on a damp, fuzzy towel.

“Come here,” said his grandmother; “let me look at your ears!” She peered behind them in the light of the lamp. “Now your hands!” He spread them out and she spied the splinter.

“Why, you’ve a big splinter in your finger!”

“I don’t care! I don’t want it taken out! *Please*, Grandma!” He tried to pull away his hand. She gave him a stinging slap on the buttocks.

“You stand still and have that splinter out!” With her free hand she sought a needle in her work basket.

Roger Gower laid down his newspaper and stared with interest at the operation. Staring so, his eyes had the sky-blue guilelessness of a young child’s. He wrapped a thick sunburned hand in the density of his beard.

The splinter was out! Jane Gower held it triumphantly on the point of her needle. Shaw stood with his eyes tight shut, his face puckered, a drop of blood oozing from the pricked flesh on his finger. His grandfather cast his eyes over the white naked

figure. The boy was well grown. He was going to be lanky.

In his clean nightshirt Shaw asked:—

“Can I have a lamp?”

“My goodness, no! There’s plenty of light. Get to your bed now.” She settled down to her darning.

His grandfather blew heavily through his beard, got up, and stumped to the tall old clock with the red roses on its face. Now the heavy buzz of its winding sounded, its weights began to rise.

At the foot of the stairs Shaw discovered an apron belonging to his mother. She had forgotten it. He buried his face in its folds. It still held the sweet smell of the bread she had kneaded.

“Good night, Mamma,” he said into it, then ran barefoot up the dim stairway.

He said no prayers, but got straight into bed.

Then suddenly he began to cry. He burrowed under the bedclothes and cried as though he would burst his vitals from the wrenching and tearing.

After a while the moon came out and threw the delicate tracery of the dead bough of an elm against the wall, and he was still crying.

CHAPTER II

The next day was Sunday, blue and gold summer weather, and June having parted with only one quarter of her fairness. At four o'clock all the birds were singing. At five they were too busy feeding their young for song. The cows, with heavy udders, were crowding to the gate of the barnyard. New eggs were warm in the nests, the cock's comb and wattles were a furious red as he strutted and scratched in the straw. At six Roger and Jane Gower were downstairs, but their children and grandson were still sprawling in their beds, relaxed for half an hour longer in Sabbath sloth.

Roger combed his beard in front of the little looking glass in the kitchen and stared into the reflection of his wide blue eyes. He mumbled to himself, as though to unloose his vocal cords for the day. Jane's skin was as pink as a girl's, her silvery hair twisted into a tight knob.

"I wish you'd be done with combing your beard, Pa," she said. "Breakfast's ready."

He continued his toilet without response and she urged him no more. Their relations were amiable, she keeping her temper in control where he was concerned, as she had done since the early days of their marriage. Once, in those days, they had had a scene at the breakfast table and she had snatched up the teapot and thrown it at Roger's head in a tantrum. The result had been terrifying. The stolid young husband had been transformed into a raging lion. He had risen to his feet and bellowed at her through his yellow beard. If ever again she did such a thing he would take a horsewhip to her! Yes, a horsewhip—and thrash her till his arm ached! He struck blows on the table that made the flowered dishes, which had been a wedding present, dance. And now let her clean up the mess and make fresh tea!

Jane had learned her lesson. Since then she had borne him thirteen children and grown old, but always she had steered the storm of her temper away from him. Now, over their breakfast, she talked placidly of the doings of her seven children who had left home, of Rose Ann's expected baby, Wilfred's advance as a bank clerk (he would be the manager of a bank some day), of Cristabel's position as housekeeper. She had gratified a hidden craving for romance in the names she had chosen for her daughters.

Soon the sons and daughters straggled in. The girls had done the milking before they dared appear. They were heavy-eyed after their late hours and Beauty could take nothing but tea, for she had eaten something at the social that had upset her.

Shaw still slept.

“Letitia,” said her mother, “go up to Shaw. You’d better pull him out; Cristabel always had to. He’s a terrible sleeper, that boy.”

“He’s as lazy as a yellow dog,” said Mark.

“He came naturally by that,” mumbled Esther, who had either inherited or imitated her father’s way of talking and might almost have had a beard. “His father had no ambition. He just laid down and died for lack of it.”

“You say that because you’re jealous,” said Letitia. “You wanted John Manifold for yourself.”

This was true, but it was unpalatable to Esther. She began to weep with a blubbering sound, not covering her face but leaving the heavy quivering mouth exposed. An embarrassed silence fell on the rest. Then their mother said in her low, gruff voice:—

“You hadn’t ought to have made that remark, Letitia. Never mind, Esther, don’t take on! Letitia, you go upstairs and wake Shaw. Tell him he’ll get no breakfast if he isn’t downstairs in ten minutes. That’ll stir him.”

Letitia, with a self-conscious smile, rose and went slowly upstairs. The Gowers never moved quickly but always with definite purpose. She opened the door of Shaw’s room and looked down on him, his head in a round knob in the twisted sheet. His clothes lay in a heap on the floor.

“Get up, you big lazybones!” she said, pulling down the sheet. “Don’t you think of anything but sleep? Ma says you’ll not get any breakfast if you’re not downstairs in five minutes.”

He looked up at her resentfully. “I don’t care! I don’t want any breakfus’. You let me alone!”

He heard her go down the stairs, the heels of her slippers flapping from step to step. He scowled and dived determinedly under the bedclothes. But his stomach began to clamor for food. It distended itself, then drew itself small. It remembered that on Sunday mornings there were buckwheat pancakes for breakfast.

He leaped out of bed. In two minutes he had pulled on his trousers and shirt. Barefoot he ran down the stairs. He was in time for the last of the pancakes. . . .

He hated going to church. He hated the long drive, sitting stiff in his Sunday clothes on the low seat of the buggy at his grandparents’ knees, the reins flapping against his head. The others had gone on before. Sometimes the mare’s long tail switched over the dashboard against his face.

On these drives he had always felt disgruntled because his mother had remained at home to get the dinner and he had wanted to stay with her. It seemed to Shaw

that he had never been allowed to do what he wanted to. But he would one day! Formless thoughts toward freedom and escape began to stir in his mind. He raised his heavy eyes to the old faces above him and wondered what would happen if these thoughts of his were found out. His grandfather stared solemnly between the mare's ears. His grandmother's lips moved as she calculated the profits from yesterday's market.

The little Presbyterian Church was prosperous. A new strip of carpet had lately been laid the length of the aisle. The pews had been newly varnished. The smell of the varnish filled the hot air. Shaw took a sulky pleasure in ripping himself free of the seat each time he stood up.

From where he sat he could see the minister's two children, Ian and Elspeth Blair, sitting sedately by their mother. Elspeth had a good little round face and two plaits beneath the broad brim of her hat. She wore a red and white plaid dress and Shaw's eyes rested on it a moment in admiration. Then he saw that Ian was staring at him and they exchanged a look of humorous understanding. Ian began to swell himself, first his body, then his face, till his cheeks were distended like balloons. Shaw watched him imperturbably, but when Ian, in addition, began to wag his ears, Shaw was forced to look away.

He was glad of the intervention of a hymn. A thin, wailing voice came from Jane Gower and, out of the depths of Roger Gower's beard, a voice that had a note of his father's that had rung out from the Tower of the Temple.

During the interminable prayer Shaw looked between his fingers at the Blair children. Elspeth's hands were folded before her face, her eyes were shut, but Ian was still staring at him. Now he turned his eyes inward toward his nose and again waggled his ears. Shaw gave a snort of helpless laughter.

The minister opened his eyes, fixed them on the pew where the Gowers sat, then shook his forefinger solemnly three times at Shaw.

The drive home was a miserable one for Shaw, sitting in the little seat, wondering what would happen when they returned to the farm. Nothing could be guessed from the faces of his grandparents; neither of them uttered a word during the long drive. At the gate of the farm Roger Gower stopped the mare, but he still kept his large blue eyes fixed on a point between her ears. He did not speak.

Shaw scrambled over the wheel and ran to the gate. As it swung heavily shut he heard a chirrup issue from the beard and the mare moved in haste toward her hay. Shaw ran after the buggy.

"Grandpa!" he called in dismay. "I'll be late! I'll not be in time for Sunday dinner!"

His grandfather looked round the hood of the buggy. "You're not going to have any Sunday dinner."

His grandmother looked round the other side of the hood, her bonnet far back on her sleek silvery head. "Boys that snigger in church don't get any dinner in my house," she muttered.

Shaw stared after the buggy in consternation. Sunday dinner, with roast pork, with lemon pie, with everything of the best because Uncle Merton and Aunt Becky were to be there! Once a year they came to dinner. All possible show was made to offset their grandeur. And he would not be there! That pig Beaty, that pig Mark, would gobble up the last crumb of the lemon pie! He would have no dinner at all! He ground his teeth and kicked the stones out of his path. Tears filled his eyes. He began to talk to his mother as he went along the lane.

"I will have dinner, won't I, Mamma? You'll make them give me some dinner! I bet you will! You'll make them give me the bigges' piece of pie, won't you, Mamma?"

He comforted himself in this way, so that he stopped crying and at last began to wonder what he could do to fill in the time. He remembered the pool in the woods of the neighboring farm and that he had not seen it that spring. He would go there and perhaps he would find some sort of diversion. Perhaps he would find some adventure that would be just as good as dinner.

He turned from the lane across the fields, climbing the rail fences where convolvulus put out eager tendrils and swung the pale bells of its bloom. He saw an oriole flash its way across the scented sea of a clover field. He leaped to stamp on a small green snake, but it evaded him and disappeared under the moist clover leaves.

Shaw saw no details of the beauty of the day. He only knew that it was fine and that he wanted to do something different, something free and forbidden. He took off his thick cloth cap and raised his face to the freshness of the breeze.

It was a long way to the neighboring farm, which belonged to a farmer who was not on good terms with his grandfather. He did not want to meet the farmer and was satisfied that he and his family would be eating their dinner at this hour.

There was a winding path into the wood and at its end the pool lay dark and cool, with ferns drooping about its brim and an old willow tree hanging above it. Shaw was running eagerly toward it when he saw that someone was there before him. It was a hired man that had lately come to the farm, and he was standing waist-high in the water, moving it gently with his hands and staring up into the treetops.

Shaw had a deep feeling of disappointment and would have run away, but the man called out:—

“Hey, kid! Don’t go! Come and have a swim!” As he spoke he dived into the water and struck out for the bank. He came out of the water dripping and white, one of those superbly made creatures which Nature sometimes wastefully tosses into a class where beauty is no asset. He turned a pair of slanting hazel eyes on Shaw and asked:—

“What’s your name, kid?”

“Shaw Manifold.”

“Lord, what a name!”

“It’s all right.”

“You ought to do something big with a name like that.”

“What’s your name?”

“Jack Searle. That’s not a grand mouthful like your name, but it serves me.”

Shaw didn’t like the man. He was queer. He turned away, but Searle caught him and said:—

“Come along! Have a dip! You look as hot as hell.”

Shaw was shocked by the last word, which he knew was swearing, outside of church, but now Searle began to fascinate him. He wanted to be with him. He began to undress.

They plunged into the water and, in its restricted space, swam and floated. Searle showed Shaw a new stroke. He talked in a jocular, cynical way new to Shaw, but what he said seemed strangely forceful and true.

When they were again in their clothes they lay on the sunny bank gazing indolently into the pool. They could see minnows moving like pale fingers in its depths, and the wavering shadows of water weeds. Searle smoked one cigarette after another. Shaw knew that they were ten cents a packet and he watched an entire packet disappear, with concern.

“You smoke an awful lot, don’t you?” he said.

“Only on Sundays. The food here don’t agree with me, so on Sundays I give my stomach a rest. I go without dinner and fill my system with smoke and philosophy—otherwise I couldn’t face Monday.”

“I like Monday,” said Shaw. “I like school better than home.”

“Does your old man knock you about?”

“My grandpa?”

“No, your father.”

“He’s dead.”

“Where’s your mother?”

“Gone away.” Shaw spoke gruffly. He did not want to talk of his mother to this

man.

Searle looked shrewdly into his face. "Never mind. You'll soon be on your own. Look at the brow you've got. Lots of room for brains there. You work hard at your books and you'll be a professor some day."

Shaw began to tear up the tender grass with nervous fingers. "I don't know what I want to be," he said. "But my mother says I'm to have all the schooling I want. She'll pay for it—if I work hard. What would you be if you was me?"

"What was your dad?"

"A doctor, but I don't want to be one. I want to work outdoors, but not farming. I don't know what."

"Take your time! You're young! Look at me! I'm thirty and haven't settled down yet. But then I hate work. I shall be away from this place soon—it gives me a pain to live among folk that think of nothing but farming. There's other things in the world, believe me! Ships and queer cargoes in them and foreign countries! You ought to do things with that brow of yours and that name and a mother to pay for your schooling. By gum, I wish I'd had your chance!" But there was no regret in his face as the smoke drifted down his chiseled nostrils and his white teeth showed in a smile.

Shaw lay on his stomach watching him, drinking in all he said of foreign countries. He had never met anyone like him before, a man who was free, who was reckless, who stayed nowhere that he did not like. It was this last attribute that moved Shaw most deeply. It had always been his conception of life that you grew up, worked, married and died in your own place, near where you were born. He had liked to hear of other lands in his geography lessons. The thought of a life different from the life led by those about him had stirred him like a troubling dream. His great-grandfather's books had opened the door of his imagination and beyond he saw rich-colored vistas, as he plodded home across the fields.

He was ravenous. By the way he felt he was sure it must be nearly tea time, and yet the sun was still high. As he neared the house he began to run. In the shelter of the shed he saw his great-uncle Merton's glossy black democrat wagon. In the stable the two fast horses would be munching hay.

His uncles were gathered in a group about dapper Leslie Gower, their cousin. He was an only child, always dressed in an attempt at fashion, and with a taste for good horseflesh. His parents drove out with him in trepidation, for nothing less than reckless speed at a reckless clip satisfied him. He called out good-naturedly:—

"Hullo, Shaw! Getting hungry? Go on in! There's a bag of candy waiting for you!"

Shaw's uncles guffawed. Shaw was not taken in. He knew quite well that to bring him a bag of candy was the last thing that would enter Uncle Merton's and Aunt Becky's heads. With a sheepish smile he went round to the other side of the house and looked in at the kitchen window to see the time. It was half-past three.

There was still an hour and a half before tea! He remembered the dairy and the pans of cream that stood there, and the cheese. The dairy was Jane Gower's particular concern. She alone skimmed the thick cream,—no drop of it ever appeared on the table,—she alone patted the sweet-smelling butter into shape and imprinted on each roll the design which distinguished her butter at the market—an acorn and two oak leaves. It was she who made the slightly rubberish but pungent cheese. All the profits from the dairy were in her keeping and she guarded it as an eagle its nest.

Shaw had sometimes ventured there, close by his mother's side, and stolen crumbs of cheese from the wooden platter. Now he peered through the window, then slid through the door and closed it after him. Inside there was a delightful coolness, and a pleasant, faintly sour smell.

The cheeses had been sold at the market yesterday, all but one which would be cut for tea. He dared not put a knife into that. A large crock of thick yellow cream was full to the brim, bubbling at its edge in a rich foam. A wooden spoon lay on the shelf. Shaw dipped it into the cream and began an orgy of something between eating and drinking.

He was in for it! If he were caught, it horrified him to think what would happen. So with his mind a deliberate blank he guzzled the ambrosia till his stomach would tolerate no more. Then he licked the spoon clean, and with his palm wiped up the stray drops. He glided out undiscovered.

He felt a little squeamish, but the gnawing at his vitals had ceased. He slunk into the house, drawn by the fascination of visitors.

The two old brothers and their wives were sitting in the uncomfortable, seldom used parlor, which smelled a little musty and had a red velvet suite in it. On a centre table with fringed cover lay the Family Bible and a great sea shell from Florida. The likeness between Roger and Merton Gower was remarkable at the first glance, but on closer scrutiny it was noticeable how the contrast of their characters was manifest in their persons. In height, feature, coloring, beard, they were alike as twins, though Roger was some years the elder. Each head showed the same smooth dome of baldness. But Merton's beard was less coarse, his skin was fairer, and his full blue eyes had the sweetness and innocence of a child's.

There was real affection between the brothers, but Roger was contemptuous of

Merton for his submissiveness under Becky's domination; also because he had only got one child, and he a little whippersnapper.

There was no affection between the sisters-in-law, neither was there open antagonism. Neither had any obligation to the other; their meetings were infrequent. Jane would, in any case, have had no weapons against Becky's vixen tongue, which had made the last years of Shaw Gower's life miserable.

His farm and what money he had somehow had gone to Merton and Becky. They lived a life of ease and affluence contrasted with the other pair. Becky had had only one child to care for and, during all her married life, had kept the same browbeaten maid of all work.

Now she sat, sprightly and pleased with the contrast between her and Jane, her black silk dress shining with bead trimming, her little black eyes and small black head alert. She was the first to notice Shaw. She surveyed him disparagingly.

"Well," she exclaimed in her nasal voice, "so here is Cristabel's boy! Can't you come and say how-de-do to your aunt and uncle? My goodness, Jane, the child looks dull! Do you think he's bright in his mind?"

"He's bright enough," answered Jane, bridling for her daughter's son, "but he thinks he can do as he pleases now his mother's not here. He'll find out he's mistaken."

Becky's beady black eyes twinkled with pleasure at discovering that already Jane was having trouble with the boy. "What's he been up to, Jane? Whatever it is, I know you'll take it out of him."

Shaw, discomfited, began to back out of the room.

"Don't go!" ordered his grandmother. "You just tell your aunt and uncle what you did."

His head drooped and he stuck out his lips.

"Hold up your head, Shaw, and tell or you'll be sorry."

Somehow he got out the words, "I giggled in church and Mr. Blair shook his finger."

Becky gave a cackle of laughter. "You giggled, eh? I guess the minister thought you were laughing at his sermon. I'd not blame you, if you did. I'd laugh at 'em myself!"

Jane reddened with anger. "Mr. Blair preaches a good Presbyterian sermon and he doesn't preach to empty pews, either."

This was a stab for Becky and Merton. When the power of the Children of Peace had waned Merton had returned to the Church of England, of which his mother always remained a member and of which his wife's family were aggressive

supporters. It was in his religion that Merton Gower was able to feel himself superior to his brother and he never lost an opportunity of flaunting, in his own gentle way, that superiority in Roger's face. Now his voice came out of his beard, muffled like Roger's but without the gruffness.

"You forget, Jane, that in the Church we have two services every Sunday while you have only one."

This appropriation of the name "Church" made Roger's eyes bulge. He grunted scornfully, then said:—

"Our one service is worth your two put together."

Jane gave him a look of encouragement.

"If it comes to the length of the sermon, I dare say it is," said Merton. "I heard your minister preach once and I fell asleep before he was done with it."

"You fell asleep," said his brother, "because you couldn't understand it. You're used to the singsong stuff your minister gives you."

Jane made faces of approval at Roger. Becky's eyes snapped in fury.

Merton combed his beard with short, strong fingers. "It may sound singsong to you," he said, "but our rector is an educated man. He's got the history of the Church and its doctrines at his finger tips. He knows that he doesn't have to talk his congregation off their hind legs to persuade them that he's right. He knows he's right and we know he's right."

"I wish you'd come and hear the Reverend Blair expound the Scriptures," said Roger. "Then you'd find out what real learning is. And he's humble with it all."

"If you call it humble," interrupted Becky, "to shake his finger at a child for making a little noise."

"Shaw giggled out loud," said Jane.

"I'd giggle too," said Merton, "if I had to listen to that man's reasoning. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you know."

Shaw gave a sheepish grin and slid on to the edge of a haircloth chair, drinking in every word of the argument that followed.

Before long the two women went out of the room to view the store of linen being prepared for Esther's marriage. The voices of the young men and women could be heard from the yard. There was a swing on the branch of a great elm and Beaty was being swung by Cousin Leslie. As Shaw listened to the two old men he could see Beaty fly past the window, first her feet in their clumsy buttoned boots, then her buxom body and pink and white face with the mouth open. He even had a glimpse of dapper little Leslie, smiling with satisfaction at her squeals and pretended fright. Inside his clothes Shaw's body still felt damp and cool, his inside a little strange after

the cream.

He wondered if he would be allowed to come to the table, but his grandmother nodded toward a seat beside her and he sat down with relief though with little appetite. The long weeping of the night before, the long spell without food, the dawdling in the cold water of the pool, the surfeit of cream, all combined to make him drowsy. He could scarcely keep his eyelids open.

No one noticed him. All were intent on making a hearty meal except Aunt Becky, who nibbled the food gingerly, implying that it was coarser than she was accustomed to or could more than tolerate. This implication made Jane Gower nervous and she kept casting flurried glances at her swarthy little sister-in-law.

The two old men were speechless after their long argument. They devoted themselves to poking large pieces of hot tea biscuit into their mouths, which opened unexpectedly in the midst of moustache and beard like burrows under a heap of brushwood. Shaw compared the beards, fascinated. Grandpa's collected the most crumbs, but Uncle Merton's showed a trickle of moisture after each drink of tea.

Little was usually said at that table during mealtime. Like the cattle in the stalls they munched slowly and quietly. But, with visitors there, an effort at conversation was made and an attempt, on Jane's part, to boast a little. She told, as though to the teapot, of the good price she had got for her maple syrup that spring, of the price her cheese had fetched in yesterday's market. Becky listened with a superior quirk at the corner of her mouth. When the mild boasting was finished she told of what her bees had brought her in the past season. Her honey was reckoned the best in the township. It was a sum so large that it could scarcely be believed in. Jane looked toward Merton for confirmation. He bent in affirmative so profound that the top of his smooth bald head addressed her instead of his visage.

She gulped. "Hm, well, well," she muttered, "that's a lot of money to make out of bees."

"It was such a lot," said Becky, "that I just didn't know what to do with it. It wasn't as though I needed any clothes for I'd just bought this new black silk and my bonnet with the cherries. And I didn't want to put it in the bank because Merton attends to all that, so I bought a new parlor suite, in curly walnut,—you must come over soon and see it,—and I bought a picture of the meeting of Wellington and Blücher after Waterloo for Merton, and a velvet smoking cap with a gold tassel for Leslie, now that he's taken to smoking cigars."

What pride there was in Roger Gower's family was deflated after this speech. They wilted under the depression of inferiority. Their embarrassed silence was broken by Leslie, who said to Beatrice:—

“You ought to see me in the cap, Beaty. I look a regular dude, I can tell you.”

Beaty began to shake with laughter. She could not control herself. Her shoulders heaved and a rich color flooded her neck. Leslie kept a sidelong tantalizing look fixed on her.

To draw attention from his daughter’s silly behavior, Roger Gower said to Becky:—

“I’ve never had a present from Jane, no matter what she’s sold. I don’t know what a present looks like.”

His family stared at him dumbfounded. He was always so reticent, kept himself so to himself, that to hear him speak of getting a present or not getting a present seemed almost indecent. Jane felt it most deeply of all, for she had indeed once given him a present, and that out of her cheese money!

“You did so get a present,” she said gruffly. “I gave you a cup and saucer.”

He glared at her out of his sky-blue eyes.

“Me? A cup and saucer? I don’t remember.”

With her lips tight shut and holding herself together she rose and went to the china cupboard. She took out a large cup and saucer with yellow roses trailing over it and a china barrier for keeping the moustache dry, and set it sharply on the table beside him.

“There!” she said. “Do you remember it now?”

He picked up the fragile thing in his thick hand. “Well,” he grunted, “I’m not sure. I sort of recognize it but—I’m not sure.”

Merton sputtered through his beard in appreciation of his brother’s waggishness. “Do you mean to say, Roger, that you’ve never drunk out of it?”

“Never,” declared Roger. “As sure as I’m sitting here! I call that a queer kind of present, don’t you, Becky?”

“It’s not the way I give presents,” said Becky loftily. “When I give a thing, I give it!”

Jane, who had sat down again, angrily took up the cup and put sugar, milk, and tea into it, to overflowing. She pushed it toward Roger. “There,” she said, “drink your fill, for goodness’ sake, and let’s hear no more of it.”

With a roguish look over the brim he lifted the cup to his beard and absorbed the tea. “How about my moustache?” he asked of his brother. “Is it dry?”

“Dry as a bone,” said Merton. “It’s a lovely cup. I wish I’d one like it.”

Beatrice and Leslie were the only ones who had not watched this passage with interest. He continued to stare at her and she continued to laugh helplessly.

“Behave yourself, Beaty,” her mother admonished. “You are a silly girl.” But she

was proud of the girl's exuberance. She turned with condescension to Becky, who had one paltry son against her own six strong sons and seven daughters. "My family seemed to get livelier as they went on," she said. "I can't keep the young ones down, they're that lively."

Becky scented the condescension and at once quelled it. "It's a good thing you stopped when you did," she said, "or they'd have been regular jumping jacks. I read of one of those French-Canadian women that had twenty-four and the last was so simple that she did nothing but suck her thumb and giggle."

At this Beaty fled from the room suffocated by laughter; Leslie followed her. This sudden devotion to his cousin disturbed Becky and spurred her on to disparage the girl. She seated herself in a rocking-chair and crossed her feet, exhibiting their extreme smallness and the neatness of her ankle. She said:—

"Beaty's a fine girl. She's the buxom sort that will make a good breeder. I'm glad to see Leslie so kind to her. I guess he's sorry for her. He told me once that if anything made him sorry for a girl it was thick ankles. But I do think it's silly for a young man to expect to find all the things in a girl that he admires in his mother, don't you, Jane?"

Jane was speechless with anger. She moved about the room bewildered, striving dumbly for a retort, unable to find even a word. But nothing that his mother could say quenched Leslie's new-found ardor. He persuaded Beaty to go to the stable with him while he harnessed the horses to the democrat, and there Shaw, who was skulking in the hay-scented gloom, saw him kiss her.

Beaty's head lay on Leslie's shoulder, all her laughter gone, a deep sigh drawn from her breast. Shaw remained hidden. He heard the good-byes, Aunt Becky's cackling laughter, the pleasantries with which she tried to leave a last good impression. He wondered why he had not been sent to bed long ago. There was something sinister in this delay, he thought. He listened to the eager thudding of the departing hoofbeats with foreboding.

He heard his grandfather come into the stable for a last look around before going to bed. He saw the thick figure, with the beard spread fanlike on the chest, silhouetted against the rising moonshine. Then his grandmother's voice came out of the darkness.

"You there, Shaw?"

"Yes, Grandma," he breathed, his heart beginning to pound heavily.

"Come here."

"Say, Grandma,"—the tightness in his throat almost strangled his voice,—“you ain't going to whip me, are you?"

“Come here.” She peered into the corner where he lurked. He saw that she held a short length of broomstick in her hand. He drew himself together into an anguished bundle. “No, no, no, please don’t!” he blubbered, shaken by his fear. “I’ll never do it again! I’ll not laugh in church, Grandma! I won’t—I won’t! I’ll not laugh anywheres, Grandma!”

“I’ll teach you to behave yourself,” she said, and drew him across a table where pieces of broken harness lay and a tin of harness oil. The smell of them filled his nostrils, made him feel sick.

Resentment against Becky’s taunts stiffened her arm, made her inflexible. She beat him on the buttocks till she felt relief. Then she led him out of the stable, past the immovable figure of his grandfather and into the house, to the foot of the stairs.

“Now,” she said, panting a little, “you go to bed as quick as you can! And remember this is what you’ll get every time you need it.”

He scuttled up the stairs like a young rabbit to its burrow. He shut the door of his room and bolted it. For a little he stood in the middle of the room dazed. Then he doubled up, whimpering and rubbing his buttocks. Then rage seized him. He began to kick the legs of the bed. He hurled the pillow to the floor and kicked it furiously.

“You would, would you?” he growled, in his rage. “Well—that’s what *you’ll* get!”

The ticking was tough—his kicks did nothing to the pillow except to make it plumper. He threw himself face down on the bed, clutching the sheet in his fingers, twisting it in his misery.

“I’m alone! I’m alone!” he kept sobbing, over and over. “I’m alone! I’m alone!” He wore himself out and at last lay quiet. He looked pensively at the clear moonlight that poured into the little room. It lay in a brilliant square on the floor, with the crossbar of the window penciled black. He could hear a mouse in the room and presently it ran into the moonlight and sat there poised on its haunches, its eyes like jewels, its plump back silken and silvered.

Shaw began to go over his life, recalling its events in deep reflection, as though he were an old man. He remembered the house where he was born, the smell of his father’s surgery. He remembered how he used to run away from his mother and steal into it, so that he might inhale this strange exciting smell and pass his hands over the backs of the huge leather-bound medical books on the lowest shelf. He could even remember the pale thin young man who had been his father, how he would come suddenly into the surgery, pick him up, set him on his shoulder, and carry him back to his mother. With great distinctness he recalled his resentment at being picked up, and how the resentment had changed to pleasure at being on his father’s

shoulder, and how the pleasure had grown to joy when he was placed in his mother's arms. For a moment he had always clasped her close, rubbed his cheek against hers.

He remembered going with his mother on his father's rounds in winter, sitting snug in her lap, with his woolen cap down to his eyes and his woolen scarf up to his eyes, so that there was nothing to him but his wide stare at the horse's moving flanks, at the glittering fall of the snowflakes. Now he could clearly hear the jingle of the sleigh bells—the little bells along the horse's sides and the big strong one above its shoulders. He could hear the screeching of the runners on the hard snow.

Then he remembered how his father had no longer gone out on his rounds but had always been lying on a camp bed on the verandah with a glass of milk on the table beside him and a basin under the bed. He had wanted to climb on the camp bed beside his father and had felt angry and hurt when he was pushed away by the thin white hands.

"No, no, Shaw, go away! Cristabel, come and take him! He mustn't be here."

Then had come a confused blank in which his father had disappeared but other people had come on the scene and said "Poor child" and given him candy. His mother had often cried in that time, which had troubled him because he had thought he was the only one who ought to cry and he did not like to see a grown-up person doing it.

In this time, too, his grandparents had come into his life and he had run and hid behind his mother from the intimidating beard. Then he and she had come to live at the farm and he suddenly found that he was no longer the centre of the house but a being of no importance—except to her.

And now she was gone! He could not go to her and press his face, for a comforting moment, against her clean print dress that smelled faintly of yeast from the bread she had been putting to rise. He could not, after a bad dream, sit up in his bed and look across at hers, where the outline of her form spelled succor and protection. She was gone! He had only himself—his own thoughts, his uncomforted fears.

The words of the hired man came into his mind. He had said that a boy with a brow like his and a name like his and a mother to pay for his schooling should get on in the world, make a name for himself.

Shaw laid his hand on his forehead. He could feel nothing singular about it except that it was very hot. He said his name over and over till it was meaningless. Boys at school had made fun of it. He did not see how it could help him. Then he remembered how his mother had said—"You must learn your lessons as well as

ever you can and I'll work as hard as ever I can to help you."

The first gratitude he had felt in his life surged up in him. His mother was going to work for him, help him to be whatever he wanted! But stronger than gratitude surged his hatred of the farm, his burning anger against his grandmother, his fierce resentment of the chains that bound him there. But he would be free! He would not stay here a day longer than he was forced to! He would learn everything that the teacher could tell him. He would learn the school books by heart. He would pass the entrance into the high school in a year! He would learn all there was to learn and be free!

"I will—I will—I will," he repeated over and over. "I'll begin to-morrow—I'll learn as fast as the teacher can teach me! I'll get out of here! I'll not stay! I'll do what that man says. Don't you think you can go on licking me, Grandma, for you can't! I'm going away!" As by the reiteration of a prayer he was soothed and fell asleep.

CHAPTER III

“Lazy Shaw Manifold,” the teacher of the country school, Miss McKay, had sometimes called him. “You are lazy,” she had said, “because you have plenty of brains but you don’t use them. You’d sooner play than prepare yourself for the future. You’ll be sorry some day. You’ll be coming to me and saying, ‘Oh, Miss McKay, why didn’t you make me work?’”

“And what will you say?” he had asked, interested.

“I’ll say that I couldn’t make you study and that it serves you right to be ignorant and poor.”

“How old will you be then?” he had asked, to draw attention from himself.

“That has nothing to do with it,” she had answered sharply. “I am talking about how idle you are.”

As he trudged along the country road on this Monday morning his face was set in a mask of seriousness almost ridiculous so imposed on its childish curves. Even his walk was different, with his chest pressed forward in resolution and his feet planted in a direct line toward the school, not straying after everything that caught his eye.

Ahead of him on the road he saw Louie Adams, a girl two years older than himself but half a head shorter. She was the pupil of whom the teacher was most proud, for she was not only intelligent but worked very hard. Already her ambition pointed, with the hard sharpness of a slate pencil, toward becoming a schoolteacher herself. Louie was very poor; the dress on her back had once been Elspeth Blair’s, her shoes were patched, her hair hung in drab uneven locks about her wizened little face.

She was an unpleasing sight to Shaw. He had always avoided looking at her. Her relentless industry, combined with her drab looks, had repelled him. But now he looked at her with acute interest. She was two classes ahead of him and he was calculating how long it would take him to catch her up, to pass her.

He began to run and was soon at her side. She started and gave him a look of suspicion.

“Hullo!” he said.

“Hullo,” she returned curtly.

“You’re in good time for school, aren’t you, Louie?” he said companionably.

“Am I ever late?” she answered tartly.

“Oh no, you’re never late, Louie. You’re almost always first there. And you’re at the top of your class, too, aren’t you?”

Again she gave him a suspicious look and moved to the other side of the road. The two pairs of stubby boots plodded through the dust.

“What would you say if I was to pass the entrance as soon as you, Louie?”

She gave a contemptuous snort. “Hoo! *You!* Why, you’re only nine! And you’re no good at your books. You’ll not pass for years and years!”

He smiled at her enigmatically. “You wait and see. You just wait and see if I’m not in your class by Easter. And then wait a little longer and you’ll see me pass the entrance exam ahead of you.”

She was furious. She did not believe in his threat but it stirred her to her depths. She began to run toward the school as fast as she could. Shaw let her run a little way ahead, then he bounded after her. “I’m after you, Louie!” he called. “I’m catching up!”

She ran frantically, her schoolbag bouncing on her thin shoulder blades, her black-stockinged legs like the legs of a scurrying ant.

“I’m catching up!” he shouted. “I’m right on your heels, Louie! I’m here!” In his triumph he threw both arms about her, clutching her close. Her books fell to the ground. She burst into tears. How skinny she was! He wanted to crumple her to bits!

He heard the thud of horse’s hoofs, the rattle of wheels. The Reverend Mr. Blair drew in his horse and turned his piercing glance on Shaw. Ian and Elspeth were in the buggy beside him.

“Shaw Manifold,” he commanded, “drop that girl and look at me! Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? You behave like a rowdy—yesterday you laughed out loud in church. This morning you ill-treat an innocent little girl on her way to school. But you shall be sorry for it! What did your grandfather say to you about your behavior in church?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing, *sir.*”

“Nothing, *sir.*”

“Or your grandmother?”

“Nothing.”

“*Sir!*”

“*Sir.*”

“Well, if they have no authority over you, I must see what I can do. Get into the buggy! Louie, get in, my child! Give me your hand.”

Grasping Louie’s bony little hand, he heaved her over the step and sat her on his knee, where she hiccuped and sobbed to the jolting of the buggy. Shaw clambered

up and squeezed himself between Ian and Elspeth. He wondered what was going to happen to him.

He felt Ian's fingers creeping up his side, Ian's fingers feeling for the tenderest spots between his ribs. He grasped Ian's wrist and held it. Elspeth's little face was full of anxiety for Shaw. She did not much like Louie, and she resented the sight of Louie snuggled weeping on her father's knee. She looked up into his face pleadingly. Would he tell the teacher of Shaw? Would the teacher punish Shaw?

Mr. Blair saw her upturned face out of the corner of his eye. She was his favorite child and his firm Calvinistic lips softened. He bent his head to hers and whispered—"Supposing it had been you whom Shaw was clutching so rudely on the way to school. What would you have said to that?"

"I'd have liked it," said Elspeth.

Mr. Blair flicked his horse sharply with the whip. Elspeth's answer had startled and shocked him. He frowned, wondering if he had been too lax with her, wondering if she might grow up into one of these modern women he had read of with such distaste. His profile was grim as they sped along the country road, with the fields spread lavishly on either side and the birds darting in quest of food for their young.

A stream of clumsily dressed children was trickling into the school when the buggy stopped before it. Ian was out first. Mr. Blair lifted Louie gently in his hands and turned her, with an encouraging smile, toward the door. He then set his Elspeth on her feet, but more firmly, and laid a heavy hand on Shaw's shoulder.

"Now, my boy," he said, "we'll find your teacher." He steered him through the door, followed by the little girls. Ian detached himself from the group and was absorbed by the other boys.

Miss McKay came forward, anxiety making her plain face still plainer. She was afflicted by pimples, and she had a habit of covering the more conspicuous of them with her hand. Her hands were singularly beautiful. Mr. Blair's mind was suddenly jolted from its mission and he caught himself thinking—"What a face! What hands! If only she could always cover it with them! Truly the whims of Nature are astonishing!"

Resolutely he put his mind into the designed channel and said, in an impressive, ministerial voice—"I have brought Shaw Manifold to you, Miss McKay, for punishment. You must choose what form it is to take. I found him on the road treating Louie Adams very roughly. Her schoolbag was in the dust and she was crying. I am sorry to say that he misbehaved in church yesterday. You know nothing of that, I suppose, since you were not there."

Miss McKay had succumbed to the weakness of the flesh and spent yesterday morning in bed, with a backache and *Robert Elsmere*. She was flustered and could only say:—

“Oh, I’m very sorry, Mr. Blair! I’m very, very sorry.”

“You may well be sorry,” he returned. “I am sure that we are all sorry.” His fine grey eyes swept over the assembled children, including them all in the general sorrowing.

His son, safe in the back row, murmured, “Amen, brother Blair, so be it,” sending the other boys into a state approaching suffocation.

“Why do you think Shaw behaved so to you, Louie?” asked Miss McKay, concealing, in her anxiety, only the less important pimples.

“I dunno, teacher,” answered Louie. “He just came along and told me he was going to get to the top of the class and then he began to chase me.”

“Why, he is not even in your class!” exclaimed Miss McKay. “He is even below little Elspeth. What made you say and do such things, Shaw?” She spoke kindly and his head drooped.

“Explain!” ordered the minister.

“Well,” said Shaw, “I made up my mind last night to be head of the highest class, and when I saw Louie on the road I remembered she was head and I chased her.”

“He is a truthful boy,” said Miss McKay.

“That doesn’t excuse his conduct. What are you going to do about that, Miss McKay?”

“Whatever you suggest,” she answered meekly.

“Then I suggest six on each hand with the strap. If you don’t object, I shall remain while the punishment is administered. It may have more effect.”

Miss McKay began to tremble. “You may take your seat, Louie.” She opened her desk and produced the strap.

“Remember, Shaw,” said Mr. Blair, “that this is being done for your good.”

“A-men, brother,” murmured his son. “So be it. Hit him hard, teacher! He’ll thank you for it!”

“Hold out your hand,” said Miss McKay.

Shaw held his broad-palmed, well-shaped hand on a level with his shoulder. Down came the strap, six times on each hand, stinging with Miss McKay’s flurry, her fear of being thought incompetent. Shaw turned pale. He felt that Mr. Blair’s eyes were boring into him, rejoicing in his pain. He kept his own eyes fixed on Miss McKay’s face, seeing how the pimples were left uncovered, how, with each blow, a fresh wave of color flooded her pale face. His own hands seemed somehow

detached from him; he watched their suffering, ashamed for their humiliation.

“Now,” said Mr. Blair, “go to your seat and let this be the last time you ever behave in this ruffianly way, especially to a little girl whom we should all try to help.” He looked at his large gold watch, exchanged a few words with Miss McKay, and, after a long, compelling look at the assembled children, creaked out. They heard the wheels of his buggy rattle on the gravel.

For a while Shaw sat motionless, nursing his hands, seeing nothing, the rise and fall of Miss McKay’s voice going in and out of his head without meaning. She spared him any questions.

Presently a boy behind him poked him in the back and passed a note under his arm. It was from Ian and it read:—

First spit on them—then blow on them—it takes the smart out.

The Minister’s Son,

IAN

Shaw grinned. Surreptitiously he spat and blew. He made Ian’s note into a pellet and flicked it at Louie’s face. She gave him a look of hate and slowly the ebb of his self-respect turned. It began to flow in on him. It filled his veins with warmth. He raised his heavy eyes and began to listen to what the teacher was saying.

He went on listening. He never took those heavy eyes from her face. She became uncomfortable. She could not forget him for a moment. At the recess she kept him in.

“This is not a punishment, Shaw,” she said. “I simply want to know why you sat staring so. You made me feel queer. Aren’t you well?”

“I’m all right,” he answered gruffly.

“Very well, then—you may go out and play.”

He moved toward the door, then turned back.

“I stared,” he said slowly, “because I didn’t want to miss a word you said. What Louie told you is true. I’m going to be head of her class. I’m going to pass the entrance exam next year.”

“But, Shaw,” she cried, “you can’t! You can’t possibly do it! You don’t know what you’re saying! Whatever put such an idea in your head?” She was worried. Something had happened to the boy. He looked ill. She asked:—

“Where is your mother? I believe I heard that she has gone away.”

“Yes. She’s got a situation as a housekeeper. She’s got to work hard and—so have I. I’m going to pass the entrance first of the school. You’ll see!”

She was touched. She put her beautiful hand to her face. "I'll help you all I can," she said, but she thought that the poor boy was attempting the impossible.

Yet by the time the summer holidays came it did not seem quite so impossible. Shaw showed a stubbornness, a resolve, that almost disconcerted her. His homework was always prepared. He not only listened to what she was teaching his class but she caught him drinking in what was going on in the class above. She saw him form with his lips the answers to unanswered questions. At the end of the term he was easily at the top of his class.

Now that Shaw was in his tenth year his grandfather was determined that he should be more useful on the farm. The holidays were here and consequently he was free for the busiest season. He was set at hoeing. Hour after hour, day after day, week in, week out, he stood in the potato field or among the turnips and swedes, hoeing out the weeds.

It was a hot, humid summer. Even Roger Gower admitted that he had never before seen such a growth of weeds. At first Shaw hoed manfully, even hoping for a word of commendation, but the weeds were too much for him. Uproot them as he would, their fellows, their successors, thrust up, brandished their tough blooms, shook out their down with a million seeds attached, jeered at him above the smothered swedes.

Invariably Luke or Mark came to help him out. Those were the days that filled him with despair. The effort to keep up with the dogged relentless hoeing of these two left him too tired for sleep. He would toss on his little bed the hot night through. But at dawn, when his sleep was suddenly deep and peaceful, Beaty would come pounding up the stairs and wake him.

"Get up, lazybones! My, what a lazy lump you are!"

He would lie stupefied, staring through the small-paned window, pretending that he would not get up. "I won't get up!" he would mutter. "Don't you think you can make me, you mean old Beaty! I'll lie here resting all day long and you'll carry my meals up to me. You'll carry them up on a golden tray with fine white linen, you mean old pig, Beaty!"

Then below, out of the jungle of his grandfather's beard, would come a roar of—"Shaw!"

He would spring up frightened and hastily pull on his clothes, the muscles of his back and arms cruelly sore, and stumble down the stairs.

The best thing on these mornings was the drink of ice-cold spring water from the tin dipper. He would press his dry lips to the dipper and drink as though he would never get his fill. Into this icy liquid the stiff hot porridge fell in a solid lump that his

stomach was incapable of digesting. It lay heavy for a long time, then suddenly he was ravenously hungry, yearning for the pork and potatoes and pie of dinner. He became hollow-eyed, pasty-skinned with a thick yellowish tan. The palms of his hands were ridged by calluses. His hair was harsh and dry. He walked to his dinner bent like a little old man.

Even a day of pouring rain or electric storm did not save him from toil. Stables were to be cleaned or wood to be piled. Only Sunday came as a respite, as a rich refreshment in the barren week. From Wednesday on he strained toward it. From its dawning he cherished every hour.

All the long afternoon he read, lying on his stomach in either orchard or hayloft. He stole candles from the kitchen and, with three nails driven into a square of wood, made himself a candlestick. In his room he read far into the night. He devoured *Gulliver's Travels*, *Livingstone's Travels*, *Kingston's Saved from the Sea*, *Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome*, *Henry Esmond*, and *Great Expectations*. In turn he was the hero of each, transported to a new world. No print was too small, no pages too closely packed. He wallowed through Chapman's *Homer*. Clean out of himself he was lifted by the wonder of *The Tempest*, and the strange music of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He mumbled aloud, in a way that would have been unintelligible to a listener but to him was strong declaiming:—

“When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.”

There was no discrimination in his reading. He liked everything. What he wanted from an author was that the author should take him by the hand and lead him away from the life he was bound to, into worlds unknown. Let that world be the slums of London, the steaming jungle of Africa, the region of Lilliput or of ancient Greece, it scarcely mattered to Shaw. He was away! He was free!

He had no interest in the success or failure of the crops. Where many a boy would have found solace in the playful calves, the lambs, or even the bouncing little pigs, Shaw found none. There was no friendship between him and the collie dog who did his duty fiercely and cared for no man. Shaw slaved in a kind of stupor

during the week, straining toward Sunday. He savored Sunday to its last moment, shut behind the walls of his imaginative egotism.

Through this weekday haze he saw his grandfather, his broad beard like a banner, lead the army of his sons from crop to crop. He saw his grandmother and her daughters plucking poultry, straining honey, making cheese, ironing huge white petticoats and stiff starched blouses. He heard them whispering and chuckling about their partners at country dances, the compliments they had had on their looks and their clothes. Jane Gower, who showed no affection for Shaw, could deny her own children nothing. After a hard day's work she would sit up half the night stitching tucks or making rickrack lace for petticoats.

A married daughter, the one with the new baby, came home for a visit in August. The squalling infant became the hub around which all the women revolved. Shaw overheard whispered references to the "bad time" the mother had had in childbed. He looked at her with curiosity and distaste.

Almost every Sunday Leslie came to tea, and he and Beaty had the parlor to themselves. They sat side by side at table, Leslie very joky and sunburned till he was almost as swarthy as his mother; Beaty as shining as soap and water could make her, laughing at everything he said, showing off before her older sisters, quirking her little finger as she ate.

After tea Leslie would take her for a drive behind his spanking grey gelding. He would drive down the lane and turn through the gate at a speed that left the family gasping, half proud, half alarmed for Beaty's safety. Compared to Leslie, Letitia's slow-going, middle-aged betrothed, editor of a small-town newspaper, seemed tame. He and she would set off arm in arm for their evening walk, she a little disgruntled, he deprecating, talking long-windedly of his newspaper to impress her.

They were all of them unreal figures to Shaw, their doings without interest. But when they began to talk of the annual Presbyterian picnic he became suddenly alive to what the day might mean to him. It might mean hours of solitude, freedom to do as he pleased. He made up his mind that he would not go to the picnic.

He appeared at breakfast with a lugubrious expression, but no one noticed it. No one cared, he thought, how sad he looked, and tears of self-pity suddenly filled his eyes. They rolled down his cheeks.

This his grandmother saw.

"Whatever is the matter?" she asked.

"It's my bad ear," he said. "It's aching so I can't go to the picnic."

She looked concerned. "Well, I declare," she said, "that's too bad! But don't you worry! It will be all right. Just put it out of your mind."

"I can't," he whined. "It's been aching all night."

"I'll put some laudanum in it. Come along to my room after you've had your breakfast."

"I don't want any breakfast." He cupped his ear in his hand and rocked on his chair.

"Let him stay at home if he wants to," said Luke. "It's a good thing to have someone on the place, in case of tramps."

"Yes," chimed in Esther, "let him stay, Ma! It will give us a little more room and he won't have any fun if his ear is aching."

So he was allowed to stay. He watched the feverish preparations of the girls, the packing of picnic baskets with ham and salmon sandwiches, layer cakes and cookies, from the corner where he sat nursing his ear. Not for a moment did he relax his expression of misery, for fear he might be set some work to do during the day.

At last the sound of the wheels died away. He was quite alone. He ran to the window to look after them. It seemed too good to be true. They were gone—every one of them—he was alone!

At first he scarcely knew what to do with himself. He felt dazed. The house which was always so overflowing with activity was empty, except for his small body. The rooms seemed suddenly larger. The quiet was almost startling. The collie came to the open door and looked in at him, then stalked away. It was still early, only seven o'clock in the morning. The picnickers were driving to a distant lake, then taking a steamboat to a pleasure park.

Shaw walked about the house as though he had never seen it before. He felt as though the family had been suddenly swept away by some catastrophe and he left in complete possession. He went into his grandparents' room, saw the hastily made bed, the bottle of pinkish liquid his grandmother used as a hair restorer, his grandfather's nightshirt thrown on a chair. He went through the girls' rooms, helped himself to Beaty's scent, took a "conversation" lozenge from the bag brought to Letitia by her lover. But he was afraid to venture into his uncles' rooms. They would surely be aware of any trespass on his part.

He wondered what he would eat for breakfast. He decided on milk and honey because he had heard Mr. Blair speak of it with great unction in his sermons. He would have milk and honey and he would eat outdoors from the best dishes. He would have a picnic of his own!

He laid a supply of cookies on the best cake plate. He went to the dairy and, from the crock of fresh thick cream, filled one of the best glass tumblers. He filled a blue china bowl with honey. As he arranged these before him on the grass the

morning sun streamed through the broad branches of the maple trees and a light breeze from the south lifted the thick hair on his forehead. He felt like an Eastern potentate.

He ate a little of the cream, to make room in the goblet for some honey. Then he added honey to the very brim. The first mouthful of this was beyond belief delicious. He sat absorbing it, gazing straight in front of him, seeing a procession of camels laden with embroideries and spices entering the shade of an oasis after a long journey across the desert. He himself was the Arab chief, silent, inscrutable, with the power of life and death over his followers. His enormous beard swept his chest and through it his voice came muffled and commanding, like a deep-toned drum.

So dreaming he finished the cream and honey. He ate a few of the cookies. Then he lay on his back, hands beneath head, legs crossed, staring into the sunny treetops. Two red squirrels were chasing each other up and down the trunks, leaping from bough to bough, their red tails flirting like insolent question marks. A chipmunk sat on the corner of the porch watching them, rigid with curiosity and surprise.

Shaw dozed, then fell deeply asleep. When he woke he felt rested and well. A deep silence pervaded the farm. The kitchen clock was striking nine. He had the day before him. He would lie on the grass and read, and when he was hungry he would eat more cream and honey.

He carried an armful of books from his room. He wanted to see them lying about on the grass, to feel the companionship of them. He handled them one after another, feeling his power over them, savoring the thought that he could, when he chose, extract the treasure from each in turn.

Now he began to read *The Merchant of Venice*. He read hour after hour without tiring. The sun rose high, the noonday was hot. Shaw pressed his bare feet happily into the tender coolness of the young grass. He grew hungry again and ate more cream and honey. After that he thought he would like a dip in the pool. The neighbors would be at the picnic. He would have the pool to himself.

But when he reached it he found the hired man, Jack Searle, already splashing about, only his surprisingly beautiful face and classic head visible. He called out to Shaw:—

“Oh, hullo, kid! So you stopped at home too, did you? Good egg! Come in for a swim!”

“That’s what I’ve come for.”

“Why didn’t you go to the picnic?”

“Didn’t want to. Wanted to read.”

“Ha ha, so you’re taking my advice, Mr. Noble Brow!”

“I didn’t want to go.” He made Shaw uncomfortable and sulky.

“Neither did I! Just to stop work is picnic enough for me. They can have their bloody picnic!”

Shaw recoiled from him. He had never heard such language before.

Searle laughed. “Well, you are a good little boy, ain’t you? Come along in and I’ll talk proper, I promise you. What have you been reading?”

“*The Merchant of Venice*.”

“But that ain’t a book! It’s a play.”

“‘Tisn’t a play! It’s a book.”

“It’s a play! I saw it once in Liverpool when I was on shore leave from a coal schooner.”

“You couldn’t! It’s all printed in a book. I have it upstairs. It’s by Shakespeare. It’s about a Jew that wanted to cut a pound of flesh off a Christian because the Christian owed him money and had spat on him.”

“That’s it! That’s the play! Haven’t you ever seen a play, you poor young blighter?”

“No, but I’ve heard of them—*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *East Lynne* and *Colleen Bawn*. I’d not be allowed to go. My folks think plays are wicked.”

“But they let you read ’em!”

“They don’t know.”

“Well, I wish you could have seen this play. That old Shylock would curdle your blood. By gum, he sharpened his knife and showed the whites of his eyes and kept on saying he would have the flesh, till the audience was sitting up like they would at a cockfight. He was right, too.”

“Right!” Shaw gasped. “Why—it would have killed Antonio!”

“What if it had! He deserved killing—him and his friends. Look at the way they’d treated Shylock! You bet I’d have done the same as he did.” He plunged head-first into the pool and for a moment was hidden in a smother of wavelets.

Shaw pulled off his clothes and waded in. The air was balmy, the coolness of the water delicious. Searle splashed him, played with him like another boy, yet he was older than Mark or Luke, who were so solid and staid. Shaw had an idea.

“Say,” he said, “would you like to come home with me and see the book? There’s nobody there but me.”

“All right,” agreed Searle, “I’ll go.” It seemed to Shaw that he did whatever came into his head without a moment’s consideration. Shaw stared up at him, as they plodded across the rough field, in wonder and a sort of wistful admiration.

Searle went into the house without ceremony and stared about him. He put up

his hand and touched the low ceiling. He cast his eyes disparagingly over the room. "Not much of a house," he said.

"It's pretty old," said Shaw.

"I like everything new and glossy. They've a better house where I work."

"But the farmer is sort of mean, isn't he?"

Shaw had a feeling of resentment for this disparagement of his home.

Searle flashed him a look from his fine eyes. "*Mean!*" he repeated. "*Mean!* Mean don't express it! He's as mean as dirt! He'd skin a louse for its hide and tallow. He makes me feel like old Shylock, he does! He's insulted me in every shape and form."

"Has he spat on you?" Shaw asked.

Searle grinned. "No, he hasn't done that! I'd pity him if he did. But he's said everything he can think of. We're parting. This is the last you'll see of me."

"I wish you weren't going."

"Don't you wish me to stay here! I wouldn't wish that on a dog. I'm going—and I'm going to take my pound of flesh! Only it'll be a hundred pounds!"

"*What!* Not off the farmer?" Shaw gave a small boy's delighted gasp at an imagined horror. "There'd be nothing left!"

"I'm talking rot. You forget it," said Searle, suddenly calm. He strolled about the room, inquisitively. "I don't s'pose your grandpa has anything to drink about the place?"

"To drink?" repeated Shaw. "Tea, do you mean? Or buttermilk?"

"Lord, no! Whiskey, I mean, or a drop of gin."

Shaw was horrified. "There's never anything like that in our house," he said gruffly. "I had cream for breakfast with honey in it. Would you like some?"

"You bet I would! You sound like a millionaire! I'll wait here while you get it." He sat down by the table and leant his head on his hand.

He was sitting there when Shaw returned with the cream. He looked dreamy. He roused himself and took what Shaw offered.

"The best is good enough for you, isn't it?" He grinned into Shaw's face. "Cream and honey! You'll be owning a carriage and pair one of these days. You'll be traveling de luxe on the best steamships. Don't forget me, will you? When a ragged chap comes out of a lane to hold your horses or a steward comes to wrap up your legs as you lie stretched in your deck chair—that'll be me!"

"What's a steward and a deck chair and de luxe?" asked Shaw.

"De luxe is the costliest—when you pay through the nose for everything you want. A deck chair is the sort of sofa what rich folks loll in, while the stewards tuck

them up like babies.”

“They couldn’t! Not *men*.”

“They do! You just wait and see!”

The strong “oi” sound in his voice, his cockney knowingness, his queer beauty, made Shaw uncomfortable. At the same time he liked having him with him, entertaining him, listening to his flattering talk.

The cream and honey, Searle said, made him feel sick. He lighted a cigarette and Shaw marveled to see such a thing in that house. Outdoors under the trees he offered Shaw one and taught him how to inhale. He handled Shaw’s books with more respect than he had shown to anything before, but Shaw was shocked to find that he could not read. A feeling of deep compassion for Searle surged through him. He said hesitatingly:—

“I’ll teach you how, if you like. We could meet on the sly.”

“Thanks,” answered Searle indifferently. “I’ll think about it.”

After he had gone Shaw again returned to his reading. The sun began to send its light slanting between the tree trunks. Hens and their broods came close to him, clucking and scratching. The cows came lowing to the gate of the barnyard and he went, as in a dream, and let them through. He saw, as in a dream, the milk trickling from a too full udder, a rump scratched by barbed wire, and returned to his books.

A strange sort of hunger was teasing his stomach. Reason told him that he should not again eat cream and honey. But, stronger than reason, appetite drove him to it. He went to the dairy and once more prepared the fabulous dish.

He cleaned up all traces of the feast and went and lay down on the grass near the pump stand. The air suddenly felt sultry. A feeling of deep melancholy swept over him. He buried his face in his arms and gave himself up to fretting for his mother.

After a while he was sick. He took a long drink of the ice-cold spring water and lay down again. The sun was sunk and clear moonlight made the shadows strange, the small sounds startling. As the day had seemed to belong to him, so he now seemed to belong to the night. He felt weak and afraid. An owl came from the woods and began to walk up and down the path, turning its wide stare at him as though in hatred. Then a whippoorwill called and another answered. To and fro they tossed the haunting words, louder and nearer and faster, till in their haste they stuttered them.

Shaw could bear it no longer. He fled through the dark house, feeling himself pursued. Hands reached out to catch him in ghostly embrace. Each creak of the stairs shot through him like a scream. Without undressing he threw himself on to the

bed and pulled the covers over his head.

After a while he heard the horses stamping below. One in the stable uttered a loud whinny of welcome—Roger Gower's voice was raised in orders. For the first time it sounded comforting to Shaw. He sighed in relief as he heard the girls giggling and whispering in their rooms.

He slept so hard the next morning that Beatrice had to drag him out of bed and stand him on his feet before he would wake. He stood half blubbering, scowling at her.

"Sakes alive," she exclaimed, "you've not undressed! You've slept in your clothes! I'll tell Ma—see if I don't!"

But she did not tell. Esther came to the bottom of the stairs and called:—

"Beaty, come down here! You'll never guess what's happened at the Pages'."

Beaty almost fell downstairs in her eagerness to hear gossip. The Pages were the unfriendly neighbors on whose farm Jack Searle worked. Shaw was instantly wide awake. He hurried down the stairs after Beaty.

At first he could not make out what the excitement was about. Not because there was a clamor of talk. The Gowers never talked loudly or interrupted one another. It was their taciturnity that made it hard to unearth the seed of the disturbance. Luke stood in the midst of the womenfolk. It was he who had brought the news. Shaw could tell that by Luke's superior smile.

"Well—I declare!" ejaculated Jane Gower.

"Who'd ha' thought it?" said Letitia.

"I would," said Luke.

"Have you seen anything?" asked Esther.

"You bet I have! More than I'd tell you."

"I want to know what you're talking about," from Beaty.

"Go on, Luke, do tell!" begged Esther.

"Oh, I've seen things! A feller can't tell his sister everything."

Beaty doubled up with laughter.

"You silly girl," said her mother indulgently. "What're you giggling at? You don't even know what's happened."

"I say it serves old Page right," said Esther. "Look at the way he acted over that boundary!"

"I wonder how her mother's taking it." A smile flickered across Jane Gower's face.

"Terrible," said Luke. "They're all taking it terrible."

"Who told you?" asked Letitia.

“The youngest boy. He came over to ask if any of us had seen the feller. Did you see him yesterday, Shaw?”

Shaw was suddenly cold. “Who?” he whispered. “See who?”

“Jack Searle. The Pages’ hired man.”

Shaw shook his head.

“What’s he done?” asked Beaty, through her laughter.

“Run off with Laura Page,” answered Luke.

At first Shaw could not take it in. This was the first time he had heard of an elopement in real life. He had read of them in books, but had looked on them as impossible to ordinary people.

“Are they going to get married?” he asked.

“We’ll hope so,” answered his grandmother grimly.

The thought of two people living together without marrying was too much for Beaty. She turned crimson and was almost suffocated by her laughter.

The thick-set figure of Roger Gower darkened the doorway. He was twisting his beard in his fingers, a sign of irritation with him.

“Are you going to fool about here all the morning?” he said to Luke.

The young man sulkily went out through the kitchen. The girls, with their father’s large blue eyes on them, began their morning work, but keeping near enough to each other for talk.

“How’s your earache?” Roger fixed his eyes on Shaw.

“My earache? Why—I dunno—I forget.”

Roger Gower stumped to the chest of drawers and opened the top one. He fumbled about in it with his short fingers. Then he turned and faced his wife.

“The seventy-five dollars,” he said, “that I got for the Jersey and her calf. It’s gone . . . it was here . . . under the bankbook, and it’s gone. . . .”

CHAPTER IV

The loss of the money staggered the Gowers. It put the elopement of Laura Page completely out of their heads till, hours later, Esther suddenly connected the two events. Everyone had been saying that the thief was a tramp who had been prowling about and discovered that there was no one at home.

“What about Shaw?” Letitia had asked. “He was here.”

“What use is he?” said Mark. “He’d sit gaping while a gang of thieves robbed the house.”

“Where were you all day, Shaw?”

“Were you deaf and blind?”

“Hadn’t you the gumption to know when a tramp came round?”

The questions came slowly, in the thick, country enunciation. The faces that were turned on him showed scarcely any expression.

“It was my ear,” he said, while his heart beat heavily and a terrible suspicion troubled his mind.

“Well, you’d two ears, hadn’t you?” said Luke.

“I guess I slept some of the time.”

“What if it was that hired man! That Jack Searle!” said Esther. She was the shrewd one. Her opinions were treated with respect.

Luke clapped his thigh. “Esther’s hit the nail on the head! It’s our money the pair have eloped on!”

There was dead silence while this idea was absorbed. Then Beaty began to laugh immoderately. Between outbursts she got out the words—“And they called her their ewe lamb!”

Everyone knew what she meant. The Pages had had six sons, then had come Laura, the youngest, the most precious, a spoilt child, everyone said.

“Run off with a hired man! And she always so stuck-up!”

“And on money stolen from us!”

“Well, I guess those Pages will never hold up their heads again.”

The Gowers were swayed between dismay at the loss of the money and triumph at the complete downfall of their neighbors. Then Herbert, the eldest son, a dour man who seldom spoke, said:—

“You must put the police on their trail, Pa.”

Jane Gower was knitting fiercely in outlet for her emotion, but now her needles were charmed into immobility. “The police,” she muttered; “my goodness, we might

get our money back!”

“And whack the pair of them into jail!” said Esther.

All looked at Roger Gower. His spectacles were pushed back on his bald forehead. His wide blue eyes were fixed on the ceiling. He ignored his family for a space, then his voice came ponderously through his beard:—

“No, I’ll not do that. They’ll not go to jail because of me.”

“But the money, Pa!”

“And how mean old Page was about the boundary!”

“Laura Page has had three dresses to our one.”

“And now we’re paying for her honeymoon!”

“Honeymoon with a hired man!” gasped Beaty. “She always acted as though no one was good enough for her.”

Luke’s attentions to Laura had been nipped in the bud. He was embarrassed. He said, reddening a little:—

“But surely you’ll have Searle arrested.”

Roger Gower was immovable. Something in him rejected the idea of setting the law after his neighbor’s daughter’s lover, even though the neighbor was an enemy.

It seemed to Shaw that the talk about the stolen money and the elopement would never end. He had an oppressive sense of guilt. He remembered how he had gone to the dairy and left Searle alone in the sitting room. It was then that Searle had gone through the drawers of the chest and taken his grandfather’s money. Shaw remembered the handsome little Jersey and her calf, the satisfaction at the price they had brought. If his grandparents knew how he had been thick with Searle he was sure he would get the worst punishment any boy had ever had.

Yet almost as strong as his sense of guilt was his curiosity about Searle and the girl he had run away with. Why did they do it? Where were they now?

According to Mr. Blair they were bound straight for hell. He came to tea one day and, as the Pages were not members of his congregation, he was free to say exactly what he thought of the elopers. The Gowers wondered what he would have said if he had known of the stolen money. It was a bitter thing to Jane and her daughters when Roger forbade them to speak of the theft outside the family circle.

For many nights Shaw tossed on his bed, sleeping only in snatches because of his guilty connection with Searle. If he had not made friends with him on the sly, Searle would never have thought of coming to the house. Had he come with the idea of stealing in his mind or had he been tempted when he was left alone with the chest of drawers? Shaw brooded on the hired man and Laura. Why had she run away with him—left her mother, who had called her “the ewe lamb,” to go off with a

stranger? What were they doing now? Shaw's share in the affair set him still more apart from the family. He was glad when school opened.

He began the term with the fixed resolution to pass into the class above him at Christmas, to pass to the next one at Easter, to achieve the entrance to the high school that summer. Miss McKay saw the resolution in his face and felt sorry for him because she was certain that he could not do it. No child could.

Yet, as the weeks went on, she began to wonder if after all it might be possible. It was amazing how Shaw stored away knowledge. He came to school each morning with the last line of his homework done, word-perfect in what was to be memorized. She could not decide whether he was abnormally receptive or was really working far too hard. There was no color in his face. There were blue shadows beneath his eyes. But he was active physically and at the recess she saw him running and scuffling with the other boys, apparently as strong as any of them. He was growing fast.

It was disconcerting to Miss McKay to find his eyes fixed on her face when she was teaching a senior class. She wondered if, with the crude curiosity of childhood, he was staring at her latest disfigurement. She would lay one of her lovely hands over the spot and return his stare with severity. Then he would smile a little and drop his eyes to his book. But soon she would catch him staring again.

One day she swooped down on him. He was hiding something on his desk, holding his hands over it.

"Let me see what you have, Shaw!"

"I don't want to, Miss McKay."

"You must."

She raised his hands and saw the exercise for the senior class written out carefully. He had been making corrections in it from the lesson in progress. Her eyes filled with tears. She had been teaching for fifteen years and such a thing had never happened to her before.

After that she opened the fount of her learning to him, let him pick up all he could from the other classes. She even began to include him in her teaching of them, for his serious stare fascinated her.

His tenth birthday came and a parcel addressed to him from his mother. He had never before had a parcel of his own and an unaccustomed color warmed his cheeks as he tugged with trembling fingers at the string.

"Here, let me do it!" said Jane Gower, her bony fingers eager above the knot.

"No! I want to! Please!"

The four women stood watching while he undid the parcel.

It was a new suit of navy-blue serge and two pair of long black stockings knitted by his mother. A letter from her was pinned with a black pin to the stockings.

“Well, I call that a fine present,” said his grandmother. “And a good piece of serge. Cristabel must have paid a good deal for that.”

“It’s about time he had it,” said Letitia. “He looks awful in his old one.”

“Look at his wrists! They’re sticking out half a mile!” And Beaty began to laugh.

“This suit must be kept for Sundays,” declared Jane.

“Oh, Grandma, can’t I wear it to school—just once—to show the boys?”

“And spill ink on it! You can not! Go and hang it up and lay the stockings in a drawer. Let’s see what your mother says in the letter.” She unpinned it from the stockings and opened it. “Cristabel hadn’t much sense, wasting an envelope on it.”

He stood with his hands clenched while she read the letter slowly aloud. He wanted to fling himself on her and tear it from her hands. It was his own private letter, written by his mother to him—the first he had ever had!

“DEAR SHAW,

I am sending you this suit for a birthday present and the stockings too. Of course I knit them, but I bought the suit at Bunting’s—”

“My goodness, to think of her buying it at Bunting’s!” exclaimed Esther. “Why didn’t she go to some cheaper place?”

“Cristabel always had big ideas,” said her mother. She read on:—

“It is a good suit and I hope you will be careful of it. When you take it off lay it flat in the drawer and don’t put things in the pockets. I got it a large size because Ma tells me you are growing so fast. I do hope you are being a good boy and trying to help all you can on the farm. It is very kind of your grandpa and grandma to have you there and I hope you are showing them that you are grateful.”

Jane Gower took her eyes from the letter to look at Shaw. There was accusation in her eyes. The three young women also looked at him. Letitia said:—

“I haven’t seen much gratitude in him.”

“He thinks it doesn’t cost anything to keep a big lump of a boy,” added Esther.

“He sleeps while a thief sneaks in and steals our money,” said Beaty.

“Shaw knows he is welcome here,” said their mother, “but it’s just as Cristabel says, he might show a little gratitude.”

Shaw felt the blood rising to his head. He felt dizzy under the scrutiny of the four pairs of pale searching eyes. He looked helpless, like a young trapped animal. Jane Gower finished the letter:—

“You are ten years old and you must begin to look forward to being a man. I do hope and pray that you are working hard at your books. It’s my ambition to see you a respected man and in a good position. I hope to be home for the weddings and I’ll see my dear little boy then.

“Your affectionate Mother”

“Well, that’s good news,” said Jane. “I was afraid Cristabel mightn’t be able to get away.”

“I wonder if she’ll bring us wedding presents.”

“I’ll bet she won’t! She’ll have spent all she can afford on Shaw’s suit.”

“Well, it’ll be pretty mean if she doesn’t.”

“She’ll bring you presents all right. Don’t you worry,” Jane comforted Letitia and Beaty.

Leslie had been forward in his courtship and there was to be a double wedding at the farm in October.

“Can I have the letter?” asked Shaw.

Jane Gower was folding and refolding it in her fingers, which were so used to work that they must constantly be moving. Almost grudgingly she handed him the letter. He had the string in his pocket and gathered the new garments into his arms.

“Grandma,” he said, “can I wear the suit to school to-morrow?”

“I’ve told you—no! Don’t ask again.”

“But I do want to!”

“Then want will be your master!” She turned away, dismissing him.

He carried the new possessions to his room and laid them on the bed. He caressed the navy-blue serge with his hand. He ran to the top of the stairs and shouted:—

“Grandma, can I try them on—just for a minute?”

“Yes.” Her voice came from the pantry. “Come down here and let me see you in them.”

He tore off his clothes, attached his braces to the new trousers, and put on the new suit. He could scarcely believe in himself. His eyes were bright with wonder as he examined what portion of himself he could in the little cracked looking glass.

Cristabel had indeed provided room for growth. The trousers were halfway

down the calf, the sleeves reached his knuckles. There was a new white handkerchief, with a border of blue dots, folded in the breast pocket.

“How good you are, Mamma,” he said, out loud. “How good you are to me!”

He marched proudly down the stairs to show himself.

Jane Gower saw nothing ridiculous in the fitting of the suit. She looked him over with approval. Esther called from the kitchen:—

“Ma, I want Shaw to carry this cake to the Manse! It’s got to go soon if it’s to be in time for the social.”

“He’s all dressed up!”

“It won’t hurt the suit to go that far in it. Ma, my cake will be late if I don’t watch out!” There was a blubbery note in her voice. Jane gave in at once.

“All right, Shaw, you can take the cake to Mrs. Blair, but don’t stay any longer than you need to.”

Shaw could scarcely believe in his good fortune as he trudged down the lane carefully carrying the cake. He could smell its sweet richness, feel a delicate warmth from it. He wondered if possibly Ian and Elspeth would see him, and what they would think of his fine new suit? He thought he must look at least fifteen in it. The lane seemed very long. He broke into a jogtrot, but still holding the cake carefully. His arms ached when he reached the Manse, two miles away. Mrs. Blair opened the door.

“It’s a cake for the social,” he said, putting it into her hands, “from Esther. It’s iced.”

“Thank you, Shaw. Why, how you’re growing! Does Esther want the plate returned now?”

“Yes, please.” It would keep him waiting a little if the plate were returned.

“Come into the dining room. The children are there.” She led him in and herself went on to the kitchen.

The walls of the Manse were newly papered and the brass gaseliers were dazzlingly brilliant to Shaw. The carpet of the dining room was a rich red. Elspeth was sitting at the table drawing pictures and coloring them from a box of water-color paints. She looked sweet and good. A newspaper was spread before Ian and on it he was whittling a boat from a piece of pine. The grain of the wood was rosy in the sunlight. Ian’s freckles stood out on his fair skin, giving him a roguish look.

“Hello! Hello!” they greeted Shaw. “Come and see what we’re doing! What do you think of this for a boat?”

He stood staring, dazzled by the contrast to his own life. Then Ian began to laugh.

“Look at Shaw! Look at the suit! Look at the three-quarter pants, Elspeth!”

Shaw grinned sheepishly. He did not feel hurt. This was Ian’s way of being friendly. They made room for him at the table. He was proud of the long sleeves that reached to his knuckles.

In the kitchen Mrs. Blair discovered that the cake, in its soft freshness, had been joggled to pieces. Some instinct told her that this disaster must be kept a secret from the Gowers. Almost an hour passed before she returned with the plate to the dining room. She found three heads touching above the table. Shaw was in possession of the paints.

“Come, children,” she said, “you must dress for the social. Shaw, won’t you wait and go with us? I see that you’re quite ready.”

Shaw sprang up aghast at the passage of time. “I must go home. I’m not going to the social. I was to hurry home.”

“I don’t think your grandma’d mind if you came with us.”

“I must go home,” said Shaw sullenly.

He was at the gate when Elspeth came running after him. She pushed the paintbox into his hand.

“I want to give it to you,” she said, shyly but firmly. “It’s a birthday present.”

“Give it to me! Why—you couldn’t do that! Your mother wouldn’t let you!”

“She would! I can do what I like with my own things. I want you to have the paints.” Before he could say anything more she had run back into the house.

The gate clicked behind him. He was alone in the road. He felt dizzy with joy. Clutching cake plate and paintbox to his breast, he ran along the quiet road. A flaming afterglow set the seal of the day’s magic on the sky. Everything was transformed. The cedar trees were pointed black towers. The pines were waving black banners. The cattle in the fields were deer grazing in a king’s park. A locomotive, whistling in the distance, sent a shiver of exaltation through his nerves. He would travel! He would go to the ends of the earth! But now, here in his hand was this paintbox, this treasure, this birthday gift! Never before, never in his ten years of life, had he been given anything that was not practically useful,—clothes, boots, school books,—and now, here was this miracle, this box packed with glorious color! It seemed to him that he had been wishing for a long while for a paintbox, that he had wanted one more than anything else. Yet he had no talent for drawing, no definite craving was satisfied by the acquisition of the paints. It was the unexpected munificence of the gift, its complete lack of practical use, that made it so spectacular.

There was the sharpness of coming frost in the air. There was the poignancy of

parting in the sweet scents offered by the dusky earth. A power came upward from it that made walking easy, made a boy's body light as air. The flaming color in the west did not dim till Shaw reached the gate of the farm. Then the lane darkened as he ran along it. He was glad to see the orange square of a lighted window.

Then, remembering how long he had been away, he was frightened. What would his grandmother say? He stole to the window.

Roger Gower was sitting by the dining table, the newspaper spread open before him. He sat, solid and tranquil, absorbing its columns. As his invisible lips moved, the hairs of his beard quivered as though by some electric volition of their own. It was much later than Shaw had thought. Everyone but his grandfather had gone to the social.

He went into the room very quietly, his eyes fixed fearfully on the old man. He found his schoolbag and laid his homework on the table. He brought a chair and slid silently on to it.

Roger Gower's large blue eyes were not diverted from their attention to the newspaper. The delicate vibration of his beard continued without interruption.

Shaw's nerves relaxed in a sigh. He tried to fasten his attention on his homework. But he could not forget the paintbox. It was on his knees and he caressed it as he bent his eyes to his books. He felt that he must see inside it. It was new. The colors were no more than faintly hollowed by the brush. The delicate range of them awaited his exploring. He remembered that he had to draw a map for tomorrow's geography lesson. Like an inspiration the thought came that he would color it. He would hide his work from his grandfather behind a heap of books.

The map was of Asia. He gave himself up to doing nothing else that evening. He would make a map that should be the wonder of the school. Carefully he drew the outlines of the different countries. He brought a saucer of water from the kitchen and set at the joyful task of coloring.

Orange for India, purple for Persia, yellow for China, red for Japan—masterfully he chose the colors. The ocean should be light blue, with a deeper blue at the verge. The mountains should be a lovely green, but cruel Siberia black as night. In one of Shaw Gower's books of travel there was a map with ships and beasts on it.

He had always admired these and now he decided to introduce them into his map. He tiptoed up the stairs and brought down the old calf-bound book. From it he copied the drawing of a tall square-rigger and put it off the coast of Java. He set dolphins at play in the Indian Ocean and a whale in mid-Pacific. He was so absorbed that the passage of time was nothing to him. He forgot his grandfather's existence.

Suddenly he was startled by the old man's voice.

"That's a funny-looking map you've made."

Guiltily Shaw tried to conceal it with his hands.

"Don't cover it up. I want to see it."

"I'm—just coloring it," stammered Shaw.

"Where did you get those paints?"

"They—were lent to me." Fear made him hedge.

"Hmph. I never heard of lending paint. What book is that?"

"It belonged to—I think it was your father, Grandpa. I'm not hurting it."

Roger Gower stretched out a short strong hand and took the book. He felt the smoothness of the cover and stared at the faded signature on the flyleaf. "He was a queer sort of man," he said. "I'd forgotten there were any of his books about."

He pushed the book across the table to Shaw. He took a handful of his beard and twisted it in his fingers. Suddenly his mouth opened wide in a yawn. A sleepy moisture came into his eyes. "It looks," he said, "as if those folks are going to stay the night at the church."

In his stocking feet he stumped across the floor to the tall clock and began to wind it. Never before had Shaw and he had intimate conversation together. Shaw had a sudden feeling of security. He felt older and stronger and as though he had a place of his own in the house. He replied, in a gruff tone:—

"I'd rather stay at home and read or paint than go to a silly old social, wouldn't you?"

"There was a time when I liked them," answered Roger Gower. "And there'll come a time when you'll like them—when you get running after a girl."

Shaw gave a superior smile. "I'll never do that," he answered.

"What about the time you chased Louie Adams on the road?"

Shaw was staggered. He almost dropped the books he had gathered up. So—Mr. Blair had told of him! He stared open-mouthed at his grandfather, who went on serenely winding the clock. Mr. Blair had told and nothing had been done to him!

"I think I'll go to bed, Grandpa," he mumbled; "I'm pretty tired."

"I s'pose you are. I guess we'd both better go."

In his room Shaw gazed in rapture at his map of Asia. He found a pin and pinned it on the wall where he could see it first thing in the morning. He had quite forgotten that he still wore his new suit, but now he took it off carefully and laid it flat in a drawer. He lay long awake repeating in his mind the happiness of the day.

The next morning on the way to school he overtook Ian and Elspeth. He smiled shyly at Elspeth, eager to tell her about his map, but she turned her head away and

began to walk very quickly. She almost ran. Ian took him by the sleeve and drew him back.

“Say,” he said, “you know that paintbox?”

“Yes.”

“Elspeth had no right to give it away. She got scolded. Our Aunt Jean gave the paintbox to her. Why did she give it to you?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t ask for it. I don’t want it much. I’ll give it back.”

Ian looked relieved. “All right. When will you bring it?”

“To-morrow.”

“Bring it to school, will you?”

“Yes. I don’t want it. I don’t know why Elspeth gave it to me.”

They walked on in troubled silence, kicking stones before them along the dusty road. Then Ian threw off his embarrassment and gave Shaw a thump between the shoulders. “I’ll race you to the school!”

Sitting at his desk, Shaw looked cautiously at Elspeth. Her head was resting on her hand, in the attitude of a dejected little woman. He could see tears on her round cheek. Miss McKay went and sat beside her and put her arm about her, but Elspeth would not say what was wrong. Ian spoke for her:—

“She ate too much potato salad at the social.”

A giggle ran across the room.

“Would you like to go out in the air for a little while by yourself, Elspeth?”

Elspeth began to sob and Miss McKay led her outdoors.

Ian sang:—

“After the ball is over,
After the break of day—”

By the time Miss McKay returned there was pandemonium. When she had established order she asked for the maps to be handed in. Shaw’s lay in his desk, the map that was to astonish them all, carefully rolled and tied with a bit of grey yarn.

“I haven’t done one,” he said.

“*Not* drawn a map! I suppose you had too much potato salad too.”

“I wasn’t at the social.”

“Then what is your excuse?”

He had none. And he had done none of his homework. All day he was stupid and careless. Miss McKay could not make him out. The next morning he left early for school so that he should not meet the Blairs. He carried the paintbox wrapped in newspaper. He kept saying to himself—“I don’t want it much. A paintbox is no

good to me. I don't want it at all." He went to Elspeth's desk and put the box inside.

Now he strained toward the day of the double wedding, hoping, hoping that then he would see his mother. He determined to write her a letter. He wrote it on a leaf of his exercise book. He asked his grandmother for a stamp for it.

"Give it to me," she said, "and I'll put it in with mine. I'm going to write this week."

"But I want it to go right away."

"Then want will be your master," she returned coldly.

The next day at school he said to Ian:—

"Ian, I bet you can't jump from the roof of the shed."

Ian stared. "The school woodshed?"

"Yes. I bet you a postage stamp you can't jump off it clear across the mud puddle. I bet you're afraid to try."

"You wait and see! I'll jump across it and land three feet beyond the puddle."

All the boys were impressed. No boy had ever jumped off the roof of the shed. It was steep and high and the mud puddle beside it was edged by a rough stony space. Ian capered like a Red Indian, rousing himself to recklessness.

"I bet Shaw can't jump across the puddle! I bet he can't! He'll fall in on his head! I bet you a postage stamp you can't do it, Shaw!"

"You go first."

School was over. The teacher and the girls were gone. The boys jumped and shouted in their excitement.

Ian mounted the roof from the fence that stood behind. Up there it was slippery and steep. For an instant his courage failed. Then he took a flying leap, his fair hair on end, and landed in the middle of the puddle.

He clambered out plastered with mud, and did a war dance. The other boys were delighted. Only one thing was lacking, to see Shaw in the same condition.

"Your turn, Shaw! Go it! Why are you turning down your stockings, Shaw?"

"I don't want to tear the knees when I land on the stones."

He clambered on to the roof. His face was surprisingly pale and set as he looked down on his schoolfellows. He gathered himself together and, collecting all his strength, jumped from the roof, clear across the puddle, and landed on hands and knees on the dry stony ground. It was well that he had turned down his stockings, for his knees were cut and bleeding. So were his palms. He pressed his hands together and faced Ian.

"I've won," he said. "Don't forget the stamp."

As Ian's landing in the puddle and his capers afterward had endeared him to the

other boys, Shaw's victory and his unsmiling reminder to Ian estranged them. There was something about him they could not understand and consequently disliked.

Ian answered teasingly—"I'm not allowed to bet. It's wicked. I'm a minister's son."

"You bet me," said Shaw fiercely, "and you've got to pay!"

"Skinflint! Skinflint! Greedy-guts!" shouted the boys, beginning to be hostile.

Ian laughed. "Dinna fash yersel', laddie," he said, in broad Scots. "Sairtainly I'll pay."

The next morning he brought the stamp, stuck to an envelope for safety, to school.

"I'm on the steep downward path," he said. "First I bet and then I stole."

"Did you *steal* the stamp?" asked Shaw.

"Well, I sort of took it."

That day Shaw posted the letter to his mother. It read:—

DEAR MAMMA,

Thank you for the new suit. I wore it to the Manse to take Esther's cake. I am working hard at my lessons. I am the head of my class especially in arithmetic and history. I hope you are getting on well too.

Your loving son,

SHAW MANIFOLD

P.S. I hope you will come to the girls' wedding. They hope you will bring them presents.

After the posting of the letter Shaw waited with impatience for some news of his mother. No one seemed to know whether or not she was coming. Every spare moment was given to preparations for the double event. Curtains were washed, windows cleaned, carpets beaten. Masses of muslin, organdie, and homemade lace hung on the backs of chairs and sprawled over tables. It seemed to Shaw that, if he woke in the middle of the night, he heard women's voices talking below. The prospective grooms seemed suddenly of no account. Letitia and Beatrice were everything.

The household was caught up in a strange spell. Shaw might not have existed for all the notice that was taken of him. He worked almost ceaselessly at his school books.

Then, as though without warning, the wedding day was upon them. It was a fair day in October, with ruddy sunshine and a sighing breeze. Along the ditches and in

the corners of the fields the dusky yellow of the goldenrod blazed. Pyramids of red and yellow apples rose beneath the orchard trees. Roger Gower said, at breakfast:

—
“Someone’s got to meet Cristabel. Her train arrives at nine o’clock.”

Shaw’s heart seemed to turn over in its sudden wild beating. “Can I go to the station too?” he pleaded.

Luke put in—“I’ve got a lot to do.”

“I don’t see how I can meet her,” said Mark.

“Shaw can drive the buggy to the station as well as not,” said Herbert. “Let him go by himself.”

At that moment Shaw loved Herbert. Roger Gower considered the matter in deep silence for a space. Then he said:—

“Harness the mare to the buggy, Shaw, and meet your mother. Be there in plenty of time.”

“And no monkey tricks on the way,” said Herbert.

“For goodness’ sake,” cried Letitia, looking at the clock. “It’s six o’clock already!”

Shaw was at the railway station long before the train was due. He could scarcely believe in himself, walking up and down the platform like a man, now and again stopping before the door of the waiting room to glance in at the clock.

The time of waiting did not seem long. As he paced up and down the platform he saw the scattered few who waited like himself look long at his trousers and sleeves, impressed by them. Over and over again he wondered what his mother would say when she saw him. She would scarcely know him, grown as he was and wearing the new suit. She would probably take him for Mark or Luke.

He heard the whistle of the train at the next crossing. The people moved closer to the platform, gripping their packages. Shaw’s heart beat quickly.

Now the wheels spun into view, a shining streak beneath the bulk of the locomotive. The freight cars thundered in, laden with bales and fat steers going to market. There were only two passenger cars and when the train stopped Shaw ran alongside, getting in people’s way, looking for his mother.

He saw her coming toward him smiling. He felt himself suddenly weak at the sight of her, as though he were a tiny child again. But when she put her arm about his shoulder and kissed his cheek, strength surged into him. He tore the suitcase from her hand and led the way to the buggy. He tingled with self-consciousness, knowing how her eyes must be fixed on the new suit.

But when they had reached the buggy and he looked up into her eyes he saw

that they were swimming in tears.

“Mamma,” he asked wistfully, “don’t you think the suit fits me?”

“I think it’s beautiful on you,” she said.

His heart sang as the mare eagerly trotted homeward.

“Weren’t you surprised when I met you at the station?”

“I was awfully surprised.”

“I guess you thought I was one of the big fellows.”

“Well, I pretty near did.”

“I guess you thought you’d a grown-up son when you saw these pants.”

“I guess I did.”

“I guess you were sort of puzzled about who the young man was.”

“I had to think hard for a minute.”

“Oh, Mamma, did you really?” He laughed joyously. He took the whip from the socket and flicked the mare on the shoulder. Her big hoofs sent up a cloud of dust.

“I suppose all the folks are working hard getting ready for the wedding,” she said.

“They’re making a terrible fuss about it.” He spoke patronizingly. “Just as though two women never got married before. They’ve made hundreds and hundreds of clothes, and dozens of sheets and towels, and millions of pumpkin pies and lemon tarts and coconut cakes. Did you bring them presents?”

“Yes. I brought them each six pillowcases with lace insertion. Of course, I crocheted the lace myself.”

“Did you sit up at night doing it?”

“Yes.”

“I guess you got pretty tired.”

“Yes. I got very tired.”

“Is it hard work being a housekeeper?”

“Well, Shaw, I find it pretty hard. I don’t think I’m quite so strong since your father died.”

“My work is very hard too,” he said, making his voice deep. “And I’m at the top of my class and I’m going to try to pass into the entrance class at Christmas.”

“You are a good boy, Shaw.”

Bowling along the road, he felt as though they two floated in a golden haze of happiness. They were enthroned on the seat of the buggy talking freely, intimately, of their lives, unburdening their hearts without fear.

When they reached the gate he flung down the reins, leaped out, bawled “Whoa” in true farmer fashion to the mare as she hastened through; slammed the

gate, clambered back over the wheel, and let her have her head.

Jane Gower met her daughter at the door and kissed her. Jane always moistened her lips before kissing, so their imprint remained a moment as though an affectionate wave had touched the shore. Shaw lugged the suitcase after.

Already the house was swarming and every hour brought more of the old couple's descendants. By midday all thirteen of their children were there, with sons and daughters-in-law. Shaw was always losing his mother in the crowd. When he found her he pressed close to her, rubbing his cheek against her.

"You'd think you were a gatepost, Cristabel, and Shaw was a calf," remarked one of her brothers.

She gave Shaw a tenderly reproving look and gently pushed him away.

He could not stay away. He could not bear her out of his sight. His eyes seemed to her to be always staring into her face. What were the thoughts behind those gravely staring eyes? What was in the mind of her queer little boy?

But she was proud of him. He was different from the other grandchildren, clever, like his father. She took Shaw up to his room when it was time to get ready for church. She carried a jug of hot water and from it filled the basin. "Take off your coat," she said; "I must wash your head. I do think that Ma or the girls might have seen to it. Indeed, you're old enough yourself."

"Ain't I clean?" he asked, surprised.

"You just wait and see the water that comes off you."

He pulled off his jacket and gave himself up. He surrendered himself utterly to the bliss of being handled by her loved hands. She lathered his head and with soapy washcloth sought the intricacies of his ears. He did not mind the suds. He did not mind feeling half drowned under the rinsing. As she vigorously rubbed his hair he looked up at her lovingly like a docile little dog.

"My goodness, Shaw, how you stare! You'd think you'd never seen me before."

"I can't help it, Mamma," he said. "I sort of want to remember what you're like."

"Now I call that a clean head!" she exclaimed, running her fingers through his thick hair. "That's the way I'd like to see you kept."

He caught her hand and turned the wedding ring on her thin finger.

"I wish we could be always together, Mamma."

"I wish we could, dear. You must work as hard as you can. That's the only way. Then some day the two of us will make a home. Unless you'll want to get married as soon as you're grown up, like some boys."

“Not me! I’ve seen enough of weddings to last me the rest of my life.”

The departure for the church was frantic. The brides mislaid first one thing, then another. Their sisters and sisters-in-law, helping them to dress, filled the small rooms to suffocation with starched petticoats and healthy, perspiring womanhood. At the last moment Beauty’s garter broke. She sat down on the stairs, weeping loudly.

“It’s a bad sign,” she sobbed. “I know it’s a bad sign.”

“Nonsense, Beauty, it’s a good sign,” comforted her mother. “It’s a warning you’d forgotten to wear something borrowed. Here, one of you, lend Beauty a garter.”

A garter was pulled from a plump leg; a safety pin substituted. From every room the wedding party poured out. The sunburnt faces of Mark and Luke were like hardy flowers above the stiff white stems of their starched collars. Their hair was plastered flat and parted in the middle.

Jane Gower had a new black silk dress and a bonnet trimmed with jet for the occasion. Against the rich blackness her pink face, her clear light eyes, her snow-white hair, had an air of benign tranquillity. Roger’s beard had been washed and combed for the occasion. He led his two daughters down the aisle of the church with solemnity, as though giving them away were a cause of sadness to him. But, in truth, he was glad to be spared the expense (as he thought) of them. It was Jane who would have to make up for their hard work in house and dairy. She and Esther.

Jane in her black silk was not to compare with Becky in her wine-colored velvet, with cherries nodding on her bonnet and the rosy bow beneath her chin making her sallow little face more sallow. She and Merton, parents of one of the grooms, occupied a front pew. It was many years since they had been in any but a Church of England. Becky wore an expression of lofty unacquaintance with the forms of the Presbyterian Church and Merton’s beard twitched his amused tolerance. Neither felt that their son would be properly wed by the ceremony. Both thought he was making a poor marriage.

Leslie himself was dapper and composed, in contrast to the flurried and somewhat disheveled aspect of the other groom. The faces of the brides beamed beneath their veils like harvest moons through mist. Mr. Blair’s address was so eloquent that Roger was moved to give looks of pride across the aisle at Merton, who stared back with an unconvinced, even truculent expression. Becky sniffed continuously, patting her eyes with a laced-edged handkerchief. Jane’s heavy upper lip quivered in bearable grief at the loss of Letitia and Beauty.

Shaw drank in all that passed, his ears and eyes missing no word or movement, his mind a strange jumble of impressions. And always at the back of his mind was

the aching consciousness that he must part with his mother that evening.

All the way through the wedding breakfast he sat close to her, feeling her nearness in his every fibre. He wanted little to eat and that worried her. She bent over him, urging him and laying tempting bits on his plate. When he found that in this way he could hold her attention he ate next to nothing, nibbling languidly and staring into her face.

“Whatever is the matter with you!” she whispered, under cover of one of Leslie’s jokes.

“When will you come again, Mamma?”

“Oh, bless me, I don’t know!” She could have cried to see the expression in his eyes. “You must sleep on a piece of the wedding cake and wish to see me soon.”

“Will that help-truly?”

“It may.”

“I’ll wish on it every night till you come.”

Inexorably the time for her leaving drew nearer, swallowing up all color and movement in his surroundings, making him feel still and remote and despairing, but not quite without a hope. He hoped to go with her to the station, to see her go away in the train.

Perhaps the thought of Shaw at the railway station was more than Cristabel could bear. Whatever the reason, there was no room for him in the crowded democrat wagon. He kissed her quietly, grasping her suitcase in his hands. He had taken no part in the rice throwing at the newly married pairs. Now they were gone and a subdued silence had fallen on those who were left.

“I hope Shaw will grow up to be a comfort to you, Cristabel,” said Aunt Becky. “But boys seldom do. You fasten all your hopes on them and wear yourself to the bone for them and they disappoint you.”

“You’ll miss the train if we don’t get a move on,” said Luke.

“Good-bye! Roger, that was a terrible sermon your minister preached!”

“Good-bye, Jane, don’t worry about the girls!”

“Good-bye, Pa!”

“Good-bye, Grandpa and Grandma!”

“Good-bye, Shaw! The child looks half asleep!”

He stared after the democrat, then broke into a run. He ran as fast as he could down the farm lane, but he could not overtake it. It became a swiftly moving blur in the frosty twilight that followed the Indian-summer day. The hoofbeats of the two horses rang out loud and clear.

He stopped stock-still. A thought pierced him. He had forgotten something—

something he had wanted terribly to do! He had forgotten to show his mother the beautiful colored map he had drawn.

CHAPTER V

Now Shaw gave his whole mind to his school work except for the brief hour of recreation at noon and on the way home from school. Then he played wildly, almost feverishly, as though he would force his body as he was forcing his mind. He and Ian became greater friends than ever; he and Louie Adams even more antagonistic. He would feel her round avid eyes boring into the back of his head in the classroom, and he would turn and discover her look of hate. In return he would screw his blunt features into as ferocious an expression as he could, forming with his lips the words—"Mean old pig Louie!" He would intensify his efforts to enter her class.

Elsbeth was still a little embarrassed in his presence. She had not forgotten the humiliation of having to take back the paintbox. But she liked him. He was sure of that. She had a clear little voice, and on the Friday afternoons when they had songs and recitations she would look straight at him when she sang, as though, singing, she had a confidence in herself she could not ordinarily attain. And Ian could recite as well as his father could preach from the pulpit. Shaw had a self-depreciatory admiration for them both.

November was here and darkness fell swiftly on the countryside. By the time Shaw reached home from school the orchards and woods were dimly mysterious, the orange squares of lighted windows gleamed in the dusk. Perhaps a horse would come to the rail fence beside the lane and whinny to him in lonely recognition, but he would hasten on without turning his head. He was late. He would be scolded. And there were his chores to do.

When he had finished with the carrying in of wood and water he would open the oven door and take out the large plate of food that had been saved for him from dinner, carry it to a corner of the kitchen table, and eat it ravenously. Then he would drink deeply from the tin dipper and settle himself by the table where his grandfather read, to do his school work.

At first he would sit with his head in his hands, stupefied by violent play, the long walk home, the heavy meal. He would pull off his sodden boots and rub his stocking feet together to warm them. Between his fingers he would study his grandfather's face, the smooth dome of his head, the strong flaring beard, the tranquil eyes fixed on his newspaper or on the glowing stove. From the contemplation of that face the desire to work was quickened, but whether from the transmission of purely physical energy or from an antagonistic stimulus against all his grandfather stood for cannot be said. Whatever the reason, Shaw would take out his books and not raise his eyes

from them till he was sent to bed.

The house was not so quiet since the departure of Letitia and Beatrice as had been expected. One of the married daughters had come home to visit, bringing with her an ailing girl of four years. The child coughed and coughed. It was sick after the paroxysms, Shaw was told that it had whooping cough.

“Look out you don’t catch it,” said Esther, “or you’ll have to stay home from school.”

Shaw was aghast. The thought was horrible to him.

“Isn’t there anything I can do, so I’ll not catch it?” he asked.

“Eat lots of red pepper on your porridge,” said Leslie. He and Beatrice had come to dinner.

There was a guffaw from Mark and Luke. Beaty rocked with laughter. Shaw looked sullenly at his plate. He had no fun in him, they said.

He was, in truth, filled with apprehension. What if he took whooping cough and had to stay away from school? It would mean that he could not pass the entrance exam next summer. It would mean an extra year of the life he was now leading. He had a feeling of hate toward the whooping little cousin. She unfortunately took a fancy to him. She would follow him about, coughing and then making a noise like a cock crowing. He scowled at her and once got his ears boxed by her mother for giving her a pinch.

His desire for learning amounted to greed. He learned whole chapters of the history and geography textbooks by heart. He did the homework of two classes. He came downstairs at five in the morning and worked by lamplight in the kitchen while the milking was done. But he began to ail.

First he grew feverish and had a feeling of nausea. Still he did not suspect the cause. With his cheeks flushed and eyes glistening he pressed on in his pursuit of the textbooks, of everything that Miss McKay could teach him. Then one day she looked at him strangely and said:—

“Shaw, I think you are making yourself sick. You are working beyond your strength.”

“No, I’m not,” he denied. “I’m all right.”

“I wish I could talk to your mother.”

“But she wants me to work hard! She wants me to work as hard as ever I can!”

“Very well. But I think you’re overdoing it.”

That night he began to cough and the next day he was not allowed to go to school.

“How long will I be at home?” he asked miserably.

“Six weeks.” Jane Gower looked at him with some compassion. “Perhaps if you study at home you can keep up to the others.”

“Grandma, I wonder if I could find out what the homework is, every night.”

“You couldn’t every night, but perhaps we can get Miss McKay to let us know on Sundays.”

“She’d help me if she could, Grandma, I’m sure she would. Ask her, please, Grandma! I do want to pass the exam!”

“Well, I never did see such a boy! Fussing about exams when you’ve the whooping cough!”

But Jane had a certain pride in his bookishness. She saw Miss McKay and the result was that every Sunday the teacher brought an outline of the week’s homework to church and handed it to one of the Gowers. Shaw was feverish from excitement as he waited for the return from church. He would stand by the window watching for the buggy long before the time when it should come. He felt that he could not bear it if the paper were forgotten. But it never was. Week by week he did the work of the two classes.

Roger Gower had seemed oblivious of the coughing of his grandchildren, but one evening, returning from a visit to the village, his beard powdered by the first heavy snowfall, he brought two bottles of cough mixture and set down one in front of each child.

“There,” he said. “I’ve brought you a bottle of cough medicine apiece, so don’t quarrel over it.”

Jane was annoyed by the needless extravagance of the second bottle. She laid the supper table with her lip pushed forward and the back of her neck stiff. Roger buried himself in Dr. Chase’s next year’s almanac, which he had got at the drugstore, conning the dates of the births of famous people, the great fires, the battles and expositions. Shaw could scarcely endure the waiting till he might have possession of the almanac. “I know more about those things than Grandpa does,” he muttered to himself. “I bet he doesn’t know what he’s reading about!” Roger Gower looked up, met Shaw’s eyes, and buried himself still more stubbornly in the almanac. Jane drew a pan of tea biscuits from the oven and the delicious smell of them was mingled with the smell of the scorched oven cloth.

Shaw was glad when word came that Ian had whooping cough. If Ian had taken it perhaps other children would take it! Perhaps so many would take it that the school would be closed and he would not be far behind the others after all!

All this happened. The school was opened barely in time for the examinations shortly before Christmas.

Shaw was so happy that he scarcely knew what to do with himself on the morning when he first went to school. The sun was dazzling on the snow. The air was so deliciously, so cruelly sharp that it stung his nostrils, tender from coughing and hot indoor air. The lane was an arch of glory, with the snow-laden boughs meeting above and the untrodden whiteness below. His were the first steps to ruffle the lane's purity and he ran along it leaping and bounding in his joy, watching the snow dust drift on the golden-blue air.

By the time he reached the gate he had a stitch in his side, his legs trembled from running. He wondered what had made him so weak. The two miles to the school along the snowy road seemed very far in prospect. He wished he might get a lift. He looked back along the road and saw approaching a team belonging to the neighboring farmer whose daughter had run away with the hired man, Jack Searle.

The team, red-roan in color, looked wild, dashing through the snow with their blond manes flying and steam curling from their nostrils. The farmer sat, whip in mittened hand, his ruddy face looking out between the lugs of his fur cap, a buffalo skin across his knees. The sleigh bells rang out joyously.

Shaw advanced to the side of the road and looked ingratiatingly into the farmer's face. The man seemed not to see him, but the hand holding the whip was raised, the lash cracked lightly near the team's flanks, and they broke into a gallop.

Shaw scowled. "He thinks he'll keep me from hooking on behind!" he thought. "Guess he's mistaken—mean old farmer!"

Timing the moment, he sprang on to the back of the sleigh, at first precariously, then edging his body on firmly, placing his schoolbag and his packet of lunch in safety, uttering a grunt of satisfaction.

He saw then that he was not the only one who had "hooked on." Louie Adams was clinging desperately to the sleigh, her thin legs, terminating in overshoes much too large for her, dangling helplessly, a crocheted red woolen hood accentuating her mauvish pallor. Her round eyes rolled toward him appealingly.

"I'm falling off," she whined. "I can't get a good hold. My sakes, Shaw Manifold, give me a boost!"

He put out his hand and grasped her between the skinny shoulder blades. "Pull me on!" she whined. "Quick!"

He had a vibrant sense of power. He could pull her on or let her go, just as he chose. He pictured what she would look like sprawling in the snow with her schoolbag and the packet of bread and molasses which was invariably her lunch lying beside her.

But he was too happy this morning to be unkind to anyone, even Louie. He gave

her a heave and she scrambled up beside him. They grinned into each other's face.

"Did you have the whooping cough?" he asked.

"Did I? I nearly coughed my head off!"

"I nearly coughed myself into little bits. I had it first. I gave it to the whole school."

"Where did you get it?"

"Off my little cousin. She nearly coughed herself to bits too. We had a special very bad sort of whooping cough."

"If you were so sick I don't s'pose you did any homework."

"Homework, Louie! I did tons and oceans of homework! I'm going to pass into your class. I'm going to pass the entrance ahead of you next summer, see if I don't!"

The grin faded from her face and again her eyes were hard with hate. The sleigh bells shattered the crisp air with their crisper jangling. One of the horses blew out his breath with a great b-r-r-r and the spray from his lips rose freezing. Coming from behind they saw the Blairs' wine-colored sleigh and long-legged bay mare. A deep-toned bell rang from her breast. Little bells jingled all round her.

"That horse's name is Lady Belle," said Shaw. "That's her name—Lady Belle."

"She shall have music wherever she goes," said Louie, out of her tight little mouth.

"You talk like a baby," said Shaw.

Instead of being still more annoyed Louie looked pleased. The Blair children shouted and waved as their sleigh sped past. Ian made a grimace of horror at Shaw's propinquity to Louie. Shaw smiled sheepishly and wished he had let her fall off the sleigh.

As they neared the schoolhouse the farmer looked over his shoulder at Louie and Shaw. Two icicles hanging from his big moustache looked like the teeth of a walrus. There was a malicious twinkle in his eyes. He flicked his long whip across the backs of the team and they sped swiftly forward past the gate of the school.

"Oo!" cried Louie. "He's taking us way past! Oo—I daren't jump!"

"You've got to!" shouted Shaw. He snatched up his schoolbag and leaped to the road.

Desperately Louie jumped after him. She rolled over and over in the snow, clutching her packet of lunch and her bag of books. She gathered herself up and came stumbling toward Shaw over the gleaming prints of the sleigh runners. Together they turned and shouted after the farmer:—

"Did you ever get left? Did you ever get left?"

Then they trudged back to the school.

“That man’s daughter,” said Shaw, “ran away from him. She ran away with the hired man.”

“My father’s a hired man,” said Louie aggressively.

“Well, that’s all right. But a girl wouldn’t want to run away with one. A farmer’s daughter wouldn’t.”

“What are you going to be? I mean when you grow up.”

“Oh, I don’t know yet. Perhaps a doctor. But anyhow something a long way from here. I’m going to do something out in the world.”

“So am I.”

“You couldn’t. You’re only a girl.”

She hung her head.

The Blairs were waiting for them. At noon Ian wrote on the wall of the shed —“Shaw Manifold loves Louie Adams.” The words were chanted up and down the yard, producing a peculiar satisfaction in Louie and nothing but hilarity in Shaw. He was so happy to be at school again that nothing could trouble him.

He was beside himself with impatience for the examinations. He compared notes with Ian and found that he had never opened a book during his isolation. But Ian was already in the entrance class; it was a foregone conclusion that he would pass into the high school at midsummer.

Miss McKay smiled proudly at Shaw when she announced that he had passed both the examinations. He now felt himself the equal of any in the school, the equal of the big boys of fifteen who were head and shoulders taller. He was growing, too. Before the winter was over the trousers and coat of the new suit were not so ridiculously long on him. But he was pale. Many of the children were pale after the long bout of coughing. Many of them had colds as they plodded long miles to school through snowdrifts and piercing winds. The windows of the school were white with frost. Outside the windows hung long icicles as thick as a boy’s wrists. The stove at the end of the room was almost red-hot and the woolen scarves and hoods of the girls, the mittens and the knitted caps with pompoms on the tops, of the boys, hung round it to dry, gave off a strange oily odor.

Miss McKay announced that at Easter she would give a prize for the best map drawn by any pupil in the school. It was the first time a prize had been offered and it was felt by children and parents that a new element of worldliness had entered into their lives. Shaw knew that he would take the prize with the beautiful map of Asia he had colored from Elspeth’s paints. He had nothing to do but wait for the day of handing in the maps. He heard the others talk of theirs, with tolerance. He pictured their astonishment when his was hung on the wall. He hoped the prize would be a

book.

When the day came the school was aquiver with excitement. The rolls of clean white paper were handed in to Miss McKay. After the children were gone she pinned the maps to the walls of the room. She was proud of her pupils' accomplishments.

When the children crowded into the room the next morning the first thing that challenged their attention was Shaw's brightly colored map, with its square-rigger, its dolphins and its whale, the crowding colors of its countries, the lovely blue of its sea.

"I know when you colored that!" exclaimed Ian. Elspeth turned scarlet.

It was Louie Adams's map that took the prize. It was of Asia too. It was plain black and white, but Louie had spent many hours in laboriously inserting the names of a multitude of rivers, capes, and towns. The map was covered by them. There was not room for another.

As she returned to her seat carrying the prize, a twenty-five-cent edition of *A Basket of Flowers*, her eyes met Shaw's. On her side there was triumph. On his a challenge. From then on he worked harder than ever.

But his boy's body chafed at the long hours of sitting. On the way home from school he gave himself up to play. It seemed that he could not play violently enough. Races, leap-frog, hop-skip-and-jump; in that hour he strove to rid himself of his pent-up energy, to capture some of the joy in which Ian was so carelessly secure. Shaw laughed a great deal in his play but his eyes were always grave. When the laugh had passed his lips they resumed their line of set endurance.

After the Easter holidays Miss McKay told him that she had great hope of his passing the entrance examination. He was himself positive he could do it but it was pleasant to have this assurance from his teacher. He relaxed a little his work at home and drew out the enjoyment of the after-school play. He and Ian and two brothers named Scott found a deserted "root house" on a neighboring farm. It was still solid, with a good roof, a small-paned window, and a broad shelf. You went down two stone steps into it. You could bolt the door. The little building was almost hidden by weeds and creepers.

The boys discovered it on the first spring day when the warmth of the sun put a kind of madness into them. They clambered up the mossy roof and slid down shouting. "It's a pirates' cave!" declared Ian. "Let's have it for a pirates' cave!" There was a small wood between it and the cultivated land. If they were careful in their comings and goings there was little chance of their being found out.

The cave became the focus of their thoughts, their secret joy, their extravagant dissipation. The four boys were inseparable that spring. Ian was twelve, Shaw ten,

and the Scotts eleven and thirteen years old.

The Scotts' father was well off. He was the most prominent member of Mr. Blair's congregation, representing the constituency in the Provincial House. The brothers brought an old quilt and a pillow, a rush mat, and a few dishes to the cave. Ian brought candles and a candlestick, a three-legged stool, and an old tin bread box to hold the spoils of their pirating. He brought clean paper for writing out their rules and messages of warning, which he delighted in making as bloodthirsty as his imagination could invent.

Shaw had nothing to bring to the cave but his colored map, which he fixed to the wall, and a particularly delicious sort of russet apple with which he stuffed his schoolbag each morning, taking care that no one should see him. One munificent store he had to draw from was the memory of all he had read from Shaw Gower's books. He stole the dilapidated red table cover from the table in his bedroom, cut it into four strips, and bound these about the smooth brows of himself and his fellow pirates in traditional fashion.

Snug in the cave they lay and crouched, when their violent activities were over, while Shaw repeated all he could remember of the adventures of his heroes. His memory was abnormally good. Sometimes he recited pages by heart. Sometimes he and the other boys were stirred by utterances they only half understood. Imperceptibly he became the leader, and this pleased him because at home he was as nothing.

When the Scotts talked of having pestered their father for something they desired till he gave in and humored them, when they told of their mother's bribing them to practise their music lessons, or when Ian told of how his grandmother gave him what his parents refused, could deny him and Elspeth nothing, Shaw's eyes were sombre. He wondered why such pleasant ways were not bestowed on him.

Now that the spring was opened there was work on the farm that he could do. Yet he was later and later coming home from school. Suddenly one night Jane Gower was angry. She was waiting for him inside the door, and the moment he appeared she took him by the arm and asked, in her low voice:—

“Where have you been so late?”

“Just coming home from school.” He looked anxiously into her face. “Truly, Grandma, I was coming home all the time.”

“You're lying to me. You've been getting later and later. It's got to stop. Do you think you're going to get out of doing your chores? Do you think you can live in my house and never do a hand's turn?”

“No, Grandma, I'll get up early and work.”

“You’ll come straight home from school or I’ll know the reason why.”

She led him into her bedroom. He saw that she had a piece of a broom handle in readiness. He looked desperately about as though for a way of escape, but he knew there was no escape. She pressed him face downward on the bed and thrashed him with the stick.

He was silent under the blows, but when she let go of him he sprang up and faced her with rage in his heart. His face was distorted by rage and pain.

“Now,” she said, “how do you like that?”

He did not answer.

“Do you want some more?”

“No,” he gasped.

“Then come straight home after school. This is what you’ll get every time you’re late.” The delicate color of her skin was flushed a deeper pink. A strand of silvery hair hung across her forehead. She set the piece of broomstick in the corner behind the door. “We’ll just keep that handy,” she said.

He tore upstairs to his room and in its shelter gave himself up to crying. He knelt on the floor, rocking himself. He marveled at the supply of tears he had. They ran right down on to the floor. He thought what if he should kill himself and the blood should run through the floor and drip on his grandmother’s head at the supper table. The thought pleased him and he stopped crying. He pressed his hands to the sorest spots on his back and buttocks and knelt motionless for a space. Esther’s voice came up from below:—

“You did lay it on to him, Ma, and it served him right. It’s the only thing that will do him any good.”

“He didn’t cry,” said Jane. “He’s a stubborn boy—not like any of mine.”

“I’ll bet he’s crying now.” There was satisfaction in Esther’s dry voice. “He’ll not come down again to-night.”

By this time Shaw was at the top of the stairs listening. He retorted in a growling whisper inaudible to those below:—

“He won’t, eh? He won’t come down? You just wait and see, my ladyship! You just watch the stairs and see if he doesn’t come down!”

He set his blurred features in an expression that he believed was intimidating and marched resolutely down the stairs.

His grandmother did not look up from her knitting but Esther gave him a taunting smile. He found his schoolbag and flung his books on to the table and, planting his elbows on it also, rested his head on his hands and bent his eyes on his homework. He worked till tea time.

His grandfather and uncles came in and the meal was begun. It was eaten in silence except for cryptic remarks about a sick cow. Shaw was buried in his own thoughts. He saw himself seated at a desk trying the entrance examination. He saw himself scanning the papers, knowing the correct answer to each question, writing out the answers in a clear, legible hand. He ate little.

He was dismayed to find how early he began to be sleepy that night. A gentle spring rain dripped from the eaves. He sat studying at the table between his grandparents. Roger Gower was already nodding, a whistling sound coming through his beard, which rose and fell tranquilly on his breast. Jane paused now and again in her knitting to count the stitches in a moist whisper. Shaw's feet dragged as he went to the kitchen to get a drink of cold water.

Resolutely he set himself to master the intricacies of the Family Compact, but Canadian history of that period was dull. He found himself nodding. The room swam with him. He went to the outer door and softly lifted the latch.

"Where are you going, Shaw?" asked his grandmother.

"I'm just going out for a minute, Grandma." He stepped out into the darkness and closed the door behind him. A faint smell of the manure that had been spread on a near-by field that day came to him. The rain was running out of the eave, down a pipe into the rain-water barrel, with a musical gurgling sound. He raised his face to the rain and felt its cleansing sweetness on his hot cheeks, his sleepy eyes.

When he returned to the room Jane looked at him suspiciously over her spectacles.

"What were you doing so long?" she asked.

"Just cooling my head, Grandma."

"Hmph. I should think it would be your other end you'd want to cool." She smiled a little grimly but not ill pleased by her own humor, and returned to her counting of stitches.

He was wide awake now and studied with a clear mind till his grandfather wound the clock and he was told to go to bed. But his sleep was restless and in the morning he found it hard to drag himself from his bed. After the milking he had to take the cows to a distant field.

It was a close, wet morning and it was heavy walking on the muddy country road. He was late for school and was told he must be kept in. He sat disconsolately at his desk, his head resting on his hand, paying little attention to the lesson in progress. But when his homework was examined and commended he roused himself. "I've got to work," he told himself, "or I'll be in this school another year. Everything would be just the same for another year." He shut his hands till he felt the

sharpness of his nails and stared into Miss McKay's face.

At noon the four pirates gathered together for lunch in the shade of a young maple tree whose boughs were still rosy-tipped and, for the first time, bore the distinction of a bird's nest. The two Scotts opened their packet of ham sandwiches and gingerbread, Ian his hard-boiled egg and cookies, Shaw his two thick slices of bread, with a wedge of cheese and a slab of dried-apple pie. The Scotts, whose mother had opinions on diet, were never given pie for their lunch. They now traded their gingerbread for Shaw's sodden pie. Douglas Scott said, with his mouth full:—

"You can't guess what we've brought. We'll have fun in the cave to-night."

"I'm afraid I can't come," said Shaw.

The other boys stared. "Can't come? Can't come to the cave? Why?"

He flushed. "I got a licking last night."

"You did! Who from?"

"My grandmother." He wished he might have said his grandfather. It would have been more impressive. But he added:—

"It was an awful hard one."

"What for?"

"Being late."

Ian said judicially—"You wouldn't think an old lady like that could give a very hard licking. Not the same as my father can give."

"What's your father lick you with?" asked Shaw.

"A slipper."

"Pooh!" came from Ronald Scott. "Ours uses a cane, but by the time he's hit us about three times we've screeched so loud Mother runs in and stops him. What did your grandmother lick you with, Shaw?"

"A broomstick."

They looked impressed.

"She's a terrible strong woman," went on Shaw. "I guess she's the most powerful woman for her age in the whole country."

"Say, it must have been awful!" said Ian.

"She's stronger than a man," declared Shaw with solemnity.

"Gosh, I guess it hurt something awful," exclaimed Ronald.

Shaw looked at them sombrely. "I don't suppose that any of you have ever been hurt half as bad."

"It's a darned shame," said Douglas, "that you can't come to the cave, because we've got fireworks. We've spent a dollar each on fireworks for the twenty-fourth of May and we've brought quite a lot of them to set off to-night."

Three pairs of bright eyes were fixed invitingly on Shaw.

“I’ll come,” he said. “I’ll get licked, but I don’t care if I do.”

His spirits rose. He felt happy and reckless and light. The little girls were dancing about the schoolyard, their pinafores and pigtails swinging. They sang:—

“The Twenty-fourth of May
Is the Queen’s Birthday!
If you don’t give us a holiday,
We’ll all run away!”

Shaw darted into the midst of them. He caught Louie by her dress, between her bony shoulder blades.

“Leggo,” she screamed, “or I’ll tell teacher!” She looked at him over her shoulder like a little gargoyle.

“I’ll pass ahead of you at the exams!” he shouted. “Tell teacher that!”

Then he spied Elspeth. He threw both arms about her and held her fast. “I’ve got you, Elspeth!”

She laughed confidently into his face. The hand bell jangled its summons to the schoolroom.

The four pirates had never had a better time. The Scotts had brought oranges. While sucking these, plans were discussed for attacking a merchant ship laden with rich goods from the East. All unsuspecting she lay in the quiet bay of the clover field, her crew playing games on the deck. It was at times like these that Shaw took the leadership. His eyes glowed as he unfolded the design of action. The fireworks lay in readiness.

Necessarily dusk must be waited for. Not till then could the beauty of rockets unfold. But firecrackers were set off, as cannon, causing the little songbirds to fly twittering through the trees and a heavy owl to flap bewildered into the sun. Then in the twilight the sparklers, the Catherine wheels, the rockets, starred the sky, and at last the pirates rushed from their cave and captured the merchantman.

The passage of time had been lost to Shaw. His spirit was drawn clean out of him in reck-nothing joy. He did not care when he went home. It was Ian who suddenly looked serious.

“Gosh!” he said. “I must go. My mother’ll be getting scared about me.”

The Scotts looked at each other and nodded. “You bet, we’ve got to go too. There’s company to supper and we’re having cream puffs.”

“What are they?” asked Shaw.

“Don’t you know? I’ll bring you one to school to-morrow,” said Douglas.

The three vanished and Shaw was left alone. He sat in the cave a while thinking. He wished it was his own little house where he could live all by himself. He would not be afraid. He arranged it in his mind, setting his belongings in the most advantageous positions. He wondered if his mother could give him a little money for food and let him live there.

He was still exhilarated as he trudged homeward. He did not worry over what would happen to him. He looked at the dusky woods, the little spring stars shining out, and sniffed the clover-scented air. Even when the lighted windows of the farmhouse threatened him at the end of the lane, he was not afraid but walked steadily on.

The collie barked loudly when it heard his step, then recognized him and came toward him with dignity but no friendliness. Shaw suddenly thought with bitterness, like an old man—"Nobody ever welcomes me here."

He went into the dining room. The evening meal had been cleared away. His grandfather was sitting by the table writing a letter in answer to one from a married son in the West who had asked for a loan of money. His blue eyes stared solemnly through his spectacles, he gripped his pen as though it were an agricultural implement, his moustache, puffed out by his heavy breathing, took for once precedence over his beard.

Roger Gower did not glance up but Jane fixed her pale gaze on Shaw.

"Late again," she said. "A deal later."

"Yes," he agreed, returning her look.

"Well, you'll find that it won't pay to defy me, young man." She grasped him by the arm and dragged him violently, though he made no resistance, into her room. She threw him across the bed and got the broomstick from behind the door.

It was a worse thrashing than on the night before. Shaw was determined not to cry. He hurried through the room where his grandfather sat and ran up the stairs. In his room he huddled himself in the corner behind some clothes that hung there and pressed his clenched hands against his mouth. He stayed there till he was calm.

After a while he found that he was very hungry. He stole downstairs and went to the kitchen, where a plate of meat and vegetables was always kept warm for him in the oven.

"You needn't go looking in the oven," called his grandmother's voice from the dining room. "Folks who don't come to meals in time don't get food in this house."

"I don't want any," he answered sullenly.

He brought his books to the table and sat down to work, shielding his eyes with his hand. His body felt bruised and weary, but he was not sorry he had remained at

the cave to play. Between him and the page swift rockets soared and broke into fountains of pure light. He lived over again the rush from the cave and the capture of the anchored merchantman.

Roger Gower held his letter over the flame of the lamp to dry it. He blew through his moustache. "There," he said. "I've written the letter."

"What did you say?" asked Jane.

"I told Jared I couldn't lend him the money."

"Hmph." She put a world of disapproval into the monosyllable.

"He didn't pay back the last loan."

"The drought ruined his crops."

"I had no one to help me."

"You had good land and a hard-working wife. Jared hasn't either."

"I didn't tell him to marry her."

"Jared's always been a good boy."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"It's got a deal to do with it."

There was a long silence. Roger combed his beard with his stubby fingers. He stared wide-eyed at his wife. She said, in her dry voice:—

"No man ever had thirteen such good sons and daughters. You ought to be proud of them and not grudge them a little help."

"What about this boy?" said Roger. "I'm keeping him for Cristabel. What about the wedding presents for Letitia and Beatrice? What about the way some of them are always visiting here?"

"That doesn't help Jared," returned Jane. "If you won't lend him the money, I'll give him all I make from my bees. And I won't ask to have it back, neither."

Then Roger said something he had been wanting to say for twenty years. He said:—

"All the thirteen are just like you. I don't think much of a wife who doesn't have one child to resemble her husband. Not one out of thirteen."

Jane took this in slowly, her eyes fixed on Roger, her knitting suspended. Then she began to cry. She cried quietly, with a snuffling sound, her heavy upper lip trembling.

Shaw peeped at her between his fingers. He was glad to see her cry. She cried for next to nothing, while he had not cried for all her beating of him. He said to himself:—

"Go on, Grandma! Cry! I don't care how much you cry—but you can't make me cry. Go on! Go on!"

Presently Roger stretched out his hand for his letter. He tore it across. "Very well, Jane," he said. "I'll lend Jared the money." He padded in his stocking feet to the clock and began to wind it.

Jane wiped away her tears with her knitting. She encountered Shaw's eyes glinting between his fingers. "What are you peeking at?" she said. "You go straight to your bed."

The next day Shaw was a hero to his three friends.

"I've had the worst licking you can imagine," he said. "She nearly broke the broomstick on me. But I don't care. I'm going to the cave to play. Nothing can stop me. You wait and see."

They waited and saw.

They saw him come to school each morning pale and heavy-eyed, his hands trembling as he turned the pages of his books. They saw him spend the lunch hour, after bolting his bread and cheese, face downward in the shelter of the school shed, sleeping. They saw him recovering his strength during the afternoon and when school was over leading the way to the cave with a shout. He was the youngest of the four. He was only ten, but they admired him for his spirit that would not be broken.

One hot day they went to the pool to bathe. Then the other three saw the bruises on him. The Scotts examined his discolored back and buttocks with morbid pleasure, but Ian Blair said:—

"I don't think you ought to go on with it, Shaw."

"Don't you worry. I'll go on with it," answered Shaw.

"Does she lick you every night?"

"Yes. Don't I look like it?"

"But you'll get sick! My mother said after church that you look like a sick boy."

Shaw was pleased that Mrs. Blair had noticed him. He smiled but said—"You tell your mother I'm all right. I've got so I don't mind being licked."

"She doesn't know that," said Ian. "If she did she'd stop me coming to the cave."

But Shaw did feel himself getting weak. He had moments of strange dizziness. He had nosebleed. He felt that if there was not a respite in the struggle between him and his grandmother he would succumb. Suddenly one evening he made up his mind that he would spend the night in the cave. He would have one beautiful, peaceful night away from the farmhouse. He would find out what it was like to be free. He would sleep under a roof of his own!

He did not reveal his plan to Ian and the Scotts. He wanted them to be able to say, if questioned, that they did not know where he was. He went with them as far

as the road and waved good-bye, shouting their pirates' password after the retreating small figures soon lost in the dusk. They had played later than usual. A young moon was just showing her pale curve above the wood.

He returned to the cave. It was quite dark inside and had an unfamiliar air but not unwelcoming. Toward it he had a new feeling of possession. To-night it was his own. He lighted a candle and opened the biscuit box where they kept their supply of food.

It had a musty smell and the cheese sandwich, the two doughnuts, and the slab of raisin cake inside looked disheveled. But Shaw asked for nothing better. He had not had an evening meal of late. Now he seated himself on the three-legged stool and began to munch the food with composure and enjoyment. He thought how, at this moment, his grandmother would be getting angrier and angrier, and a smile illumined his blunt-featured little face. He felt scornful and free and safe.

By the time he had finished his supper the moon was bright above the blackness of the trees and seemed to have tilted from her curve a single star. A whispering breeze stirred the long grass. Frogs began to croak in the swampy brink of the pool. Shaw blew out his candle, took the one cup, and went to a spring in the near-by field for a drink.

The field was wide and friendly. The moon touched many little faces of buttercups and cast a dim shadow of the boy on the grass. He lay down by the spring and drank the chill pure water. He held his hands in it and then put his hands to his face. There was not a living soul near him. Only the voices of the night took possession of the silence. He lay by the spring till the dew began to wet him.

When he returned to the cave he did not dare light the candle but wrapped himself in the quilt and lay down on the wide shelf they called the bunk. Scenes from books he had read swam before him like crystal-clear tableaux. Huskies racing across the ice drawing a sleigh carrying mysterious fur-clad figures toward a dazzlingly bright North Pole. A great ship with canvas spread rounding Cape Horn, her captain grandly pacing the quarter-deck. Prospero on his island with Ariel and Caliban flying to do his bidding. Jacques Cartier sailing up the St. Lawrence with Indians gazing in awe from its bank. Always Shaw was the central figure—the captain, the chief, the magician.

He slept soundly and heard none of the shoutings of his name or saw the light of lanterns. At daybreak they were dragging the pool for him. The other boys held their tongues in a sudden panic of fear.

Shaw had not gone halfway to school when he was overtaken by Mr. Blair in his buggy. He drew rein and called out sharply:—

“Shaw Manifold—come here!”

Shaw turned and looked up into his face.

“Where were you last night?”

“I was hiding.”

“Hiding! Do you know that your folks are almost distracted? We’ve searched the countryside all night. Now they’re dragging the pond. I was on my way to the police station.”

Shaw stared up at him inscrutably.

“Have you nothing to say for yourself?”

“No.”

“Don’t you care that you’ve frightened your folks nearly to death?”

“No.”

“Get into this buggy with me and I’ll take you home. We’ll see what your grandfather has to say to you.” Mr. Blair stretched out a long arm, gripped Shaw by the wrist, and heaved him into the buggy. He looked keenly into the child’s face.

“What’s the matter, Shaw?” he asked. “Aren’t you happy?”

The sudden kindness in his voice frightened Shaw. It made him afraid of himself. He was going to cry. He clenched his hands and stared straight in front of him.

“Yes,” he answered steadily. “I’m all right.”

“Shaw, my lad,” pursued Mr. Blair, his Scottish accent deepening, “you are not happy. You have something on your mind. Maybe some sin. Let me help you. Let me pray with you, as I would with Ian.”

Shaw writhed in embarrassment. He was dumb. No words could move him. But when the minister leant and looked into his eyes and asked in a low voice, “Are you afraid to go home, laddie?” he pulled himself together and answered gruffly:—

“No. I’m not afraid of anything.”

Shaw found his grandfather standing in the middle of the kitchen drinking a glass of barley water. He turned his eyes on Shaw, seeming to look through him rather than at him. He made spluttering, incoherent noises in his beard. Then he again raised the glass of barley water to it, as though it were something quite separate from himself which he nourished.

Shaw watched him fascinated till the glass was emptied, then he asked:—

“Where’s Grandma?”

Roger Gower pointed with his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the bedroom. “Waiting,” he said.

CHAPTER VI

She was standing in front of the looking glass rubbing dandruff cure into her scalp. She had been far too anxious to settle down to her work and had found so unusual an occupation, at this hour, steadying. Shaw was surprised to see her white hair, which was always so sleek on her round, pink-skinned head, upstanding and ruffled. It startled him.

The expression of her face too was startling. He had felt dogged and calm when he came into the room but now his heart began to beat violently. She set down the bottle and asked, after licking her lips, which had been too dry for speech:—

“Where have you been?”

“I won’t tell you.”

“Do you know that we’ve been up all night?”

“Yes.”

“What do you think you’re going to get?”

“A licking.”

“Yes. And if I don’t skin you alive it’ll be a wonder. Bring me that stick.”

He brought her the stick. “You can’t make me cry,” he said.

But he had never felt anything like this! The blows rained down on him. His eyes were fixed, fascinated, on his reflection in the glass. Then the stick caught him on the point of the elbow and he cried out.

The bedroom door was thrown open and his mother stood on the threshold.

“Ma!” she screamed. “What are you doing?”

She rushed at Jane Gower and tore the stick from her hand. She thought her mother, who had never laid a hand on her, had gone out of her mind.

“Why, Ma,” she said, “you’d kill him if you went on like that!”

Her mother was speechless. She put her hand to her mouth and pulled nervously at her heavy lip. Cristabel turned to Shaw.

“What is the matter? Why is Grandma treating you like this?”

“I didn’t come home. I stayed away all night.”

“He frightened me near to death,” said Jane, in a harsh voice.

“But what’s it all about?” cried Cristabel. “Why did you stay out all night?”

“I don’t like coming home.”

Jane broke in—“Herbert and Luke, they’re dragging the pond for him now. Mark’s scouring the countryside. Your pa’s worn out. Shaw’s a heartscauld, I tell you. I can’t do anything with him. He’s a bad, obstinate boy, and I don’t know

where you got him.”

“He’s not bad! I won’t have him treated like this! Oh, Ma, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! You that were so kind to your own children! Shaw is all I’ve got in the world.”

She took him by the hand and led him out of the room. As they passed through the kitchen she lifted a lid from the stove and thrust in the stick on to the hot coals. She led him out then, through the orchard, holding him tightly by the hand.

“Where are we going?” he asked, hoping she was taking him away forever.

“I don’t know. We’ll go to some quiet spot for a while. I’m all upset. I just don’t know what to do.”

He thought a moment and then said eagerly:—

“I’ll show you the cave! It’ll be a real treat for you.” He spoke in a queer, thin voice not like his own.

She looked down into his face and the color blazed into her white cheeks.

“You look awful, Shaw. You don’t look like yourself. What’s come over you?”

“I don’t know. What do I look like?”

“You look sick.”

“Do I look as though I was going to die?”

“My goodness, no! But you look—ill-used. Have you ever been beaten before?”

He was embarrassed. He could not answer. “I’ll show you the cave, if you like,” he said. “I stayed there last night.”

She took his face between her hands. “Tell me the truth. Has Grandma taken a stick to you before?”

“Look, Mamma!” he exclaimed. “There’s the path. You go right through the orchard and cross two fields and then through the woods and you’re there! I’ll take you.” He pulled his head from between her palms.

Cristabel gave a deep sigh and allowed herself to be led to the cave. Its mysteries exhibited, she sat down on the stool, watching her son as he talked eagerly of his treasures, her heart heavy with pity for him, longing bitterly to be able to make a home for him.

When he showed her where the food was kept, the water suddenly ran into his mouth and he pressed his hand to his stomach. “Oh, Mamma,” he said, “have you anything to eat with you? I’m as hungry as a bear.”

She opened her handbag and took out a paper poke of gumdrops. “I brought those for you, Shaw. Sit on my lap and eat some.”

He dropped into the primitive comfort of her lap, her knees apart, her serge skirt

strong beneath him. He put a gumdrop into his cheek and clasped her neck tightly. The bliss of her nearness dissolved his sorrows as the sun mist. He sucked, he clasped, his soul was at peace.

Bit by bit she questioned him and drew from him what she could of his unhappy life.

“Mamma,” he said shyly, “if you could spare me just a little money for food, I’d live here in the cave and I’d like it fine. Do you think you could spare about a dollar a week?”

“Don’t talk like that, dear! It isn’t sensible. You can’t live alone in a cave, but if they won’t promise to treat you better I’ve got to find a position where I can have you with me.”

All the way back to the farmhouse he was hoping they would not promise. There was nothing he wanted so much as to have her take him away. He said:—

“I don’t believe they’ll promise, Mamma. I’m pretty sure they won’t. I think you’d better take me away without any talk. I can pack my things in a jiffy. Will you do it, Mamma?”

“You must be patient, Shaw. It’ll be far easier for us both in the long run if I can leave you here. But they’ve got to promise.”

She left him outside the house, sitting on an old chair in which his grandmother sometimes sat after her work was done. He felt strange sitting there at peace, unafraid yet oddly lightheaded, rather like an invalid.

Cristabel stayed long in the house. Shaw could hear her voice and his grandmother’s and Esther’s. He smelled something burning in the oven. He wondered what was going on at school.

When his mother came out she was carrying a plate of bread and butter and a jug of buttermilk and a mug. She looked as though she had been crying but she was less agitated. She dropped to the grass beside Shaw and put a slice of bread into his hand.

“Have they promised?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Aren’t I going to be licked any more?”

“No. But you’re to be home in time to do your chores.”

“If I’m not will they lick me?”

“No. But you must be home before dark. You will still have time to play. You must study hard, Shaw, so you can go to the high school. Then, almost before you know it, you’ll be earning money. You won’t be dependent on anyone.”

Shaw filled his mouth with bread. “I’ll study harder,” he murmured through it.

“You bet I will. I’ll eat the books.”

She smiled at him tenderly. “I’m real pleased,” she said, “that you’ve passed into the entrance class. That shows you’ve worked.”

“I’m the youngest in the class,” he said proudly, “and Louie Adams is the next youngest and Ian’s the next. Some of them are fifteen. But I’ll beat them all. You’ll see, Mamma. Now tell me what we’ll do when I’m grown-up.”

They talked, making plans for the future. Cristabel drank from his mug and they said it was the best buttermilk they had ever tasted, so fresh, so flaked with bits of creamy butter. But her heart was sad at the thought of leaving him. She had been given this unexpected visit by her employer, who had come that way to a sale. She had looked for a day of happiness with her child and been disappointed, but she was thankful she had come. As they talked they saw Esther peeping between the curtains at them.

When his mother was gone Shaw felt more lonely than he had before. He now seemed more than ever an alien in the house, if that were possible. He sat silent at supper. No one noticed him. Jane Gower preserved a hurt silence. Esther and her brothers talked of the coming church picnic. Roger Gower brooded on the loss of a cow.

Now and again he blew through his beard and muttered, “There was no reason why she should have died,” or, “I tell you, the beast was as sound as a nut,” or, “I said to the vet, ‘Physic will be the end of her,’ and it was.”

Shaw was too sleepy that night for study. He went to bed early and no one looked in his direction. He lay very still in bed, thinking of his mother, talking to her: “I’m lonesome for you, Mamma. I want to see you. If you were here I’d give you the biggest hug you ever had. I’d make you say—‘My goodness, Shaw, don’t hug me so hard!’ I’d bring you up to my room and shut the door and we’d not talk to the other folks. . . . Mamma, I do want you. I think you’re mean the way you go off and leave me alone. . . . If I had a boy that worked hard and was the youngest in his class, you bet I wouldn’t go off and leave him alone. . . . I’d stay right beside him and when he came home from school I’d be waiting for him with a big piece of cake in one hand and a dish of strawberries and cream in the other.”

With the ceasing of the struggle between him and Jane Gower, Shaw’s mind was clearer for his school work. Now his play was less feverish and he came home without fear of thrashing. He knew the lessons so well that often it irked him to keep his mind on what Miss McKay was saying.

He passed, not only first in his school but first among the candidates for the high school. From the examiners Miss McKay received a letter of commendation on her

teaching.

With the coming of the six weeks of summer holidays Shaw was given more farm work to do. He was considered no longer as a child but as a tall lump of a boy, going on for eleven. He must be up at dawn and work till dark. He grew tough and strong, yet he was always tired, his eyes lost their brightness, his skin was sallow, and he had dark shadows above his prominent cheekbones. His mind was dull.

The school work ahead of him was a mystery. There was nothing for him to study. The books that had once opened the gates of wonder to him now left him listless. The weeks to him were arid deserts to be endured, over them hanging, like a faint mirage, a rumor that his mother might be coming.

When she did come she sent no word ahead. She came into the house one blazing August afternoon without warning. She had walked the two miles from the station carrying her suitcase because she wanted to appear unexpectedly. Bitterly she had nursed suspicion against her family since the last visit. She must know how her child was being treated.

Shaw was hoeing in a field with Luke. They put him to work with one of themselves, otherwise he wasted his time. The two worked side by side without speaking, their hoes rhythmically striking into the hard parched earth, the sweat running down their faces, their necks burned leather-brown, their palms calloused.

August had been a stormy month and was now drawing to its close. A few days before had known one of the worst storms of the summer. Trees had been uprooted. A thunderbolt had buried itself near the house. There had been a deluge of rain that had blotted out the farmlands for hours, then the sun had come out and burned all day long in sultry rage, hardening the soil to cement, searing the rain-soaked foliage. A million locusts shrilled their thin dry song; a million ants scurried in and out of the cracks in the hot earth. The air was a palpable quivering essence, vibrating with the song of the locusts.

A field of Indian corn had been flattened by the storm and was now rearing its stocks upward again, its heavy ears ripe, its leaves dry as parchment. It had been beautiful but had lost all its dignity. It looked disheveled, wasted, like the wreck of a fine woman. Through this Cristabel walked toward her son, her coming half concealed by the corn, her eyes fixed searchingly on him long before he saw her. Ants and locusts scurried from her path and the corn rustled against her skirt, dry as parchment.

Shaw looked like a pigmy, she thought, working in that great field beside the bulky figure of Luke. There was an abnormal growth of weeds that summer. Their rankness rose about the child's knees as though they would drag him down. He

hacked at their tough roots in a feverish effort to keep up with Luke. His shirt clung to him, black with sweat. Cristabel stood among the corn staring, her mouth open, her hands heavy at her sides. Luke raised his eyes and saw her.

“Hello, Cristabel!” he said, surprised.

“Hello, Luke!”

Then Shaw looked up.

“Hello, Mamma!” He leant on his hoe, staring at her.

She came toward them, her dark cloth skirt grey with the dust of the long road from the station.

“How did you manage to get away?” asked Luke.

“The doctor has gone to visit his son in Michigan for a week. I knew I could be a help at home, with the threshing coming on and all.”

“Will the doctor pay you your salary for the week?”

“Why, Luke, he’s not such a fool as that!”

Luke laughed. “Then I guess you wish you hadn’t got the holiday.”

“It’s nice to get home,” she said. Her eyes devoured Shaw. “Can’t you stop working for a minute and talk to me?” she asked.

“If you call it working,” said Luke, “leaning on his hoe, the way he is, then he’s hard at it.”

“Well, I’ll see you at tea time.” She turned away and retraced her steps through the corn that rustled in on her and at last concealed her.

She sat down on the sandy soil and laid her face against her knees. A cricket at the very edge of her skirt chirped loudly. Pictures moved before her closed eyes. She saw herself all in white standing up to be married, the tall pale young doctor by her side. She felt the cool golden flow of her wedding ring as he slid it on her finger. She felt his hands tremble. She saw their house, their home, their little nest they had made. The parlor suite, the carpet almost too good to be stepped on, the dining room with the silver cruet, the silver spoonholder, and the silver “butter-cooler” gleaming on the golden-oak sideboard, the drawer full of forks and knives whose lustre had never yet been dimmed by food. She saw the kitchen with its glossy black range, its bright utensils, its table whose top she meant always to keep scrubbed so clean. She felt again the mystery of the surgery, the unfathomable learning of those shelves full of books.

She let her mind dwell in this remembered happiness till its security was shaken by the poignancy of remembered fears, fears which came even before the birth of Shaw. But through the tremor of these fears she felt Shaw’s little head nuzzling at her breasts, felt his tiny hands pressing their fullness. Then remembered grief blotted out

all else, and the cornfield sank beneath her and she hung in an abyss, with the metallic cry of the cricket magnified to ringing blows on metal.

She gave herself up to grief, embracing it like a lover, seeking for half-forgotten pains to draw them into that surrender. She wound her fingers together till her wedding ring cut her flesh. Her dry eyes opened and saw the cornfield and between its harsh stalks the dimly glimpsed figures of Luke and Shaw.

When she returned to the house her mother had a cup of tea waiting for her.

“Did you find Shaw?” she asked.

“Yes, Ma.”

“I s’pose they’ll soon be quitting work, then you can have a good talk with him.”

“Yes.”

“You drink some tea now. It’ll do you good. I’m afraid you work too hard, Cristabel.”

“There’s a lot to be done in a doctor’s house. He’s got a good practice.” Cristabel poured herself a cup of strong tea and drew a deep breath. She straightened her back as though taking a fresh firm hold of an old burden. “Ma,” she said, “I’ve knit two new pairs of stockings for Shaw and made him two new shirts. To-morrow I’ll buy him boots. Later on I’ll get him a winter coat and cap. He’s got to look respectable at the high school. He seems terribly young for the high school. Not eleven yet.”

“He’s clever at books, like his father,” said Jane graciously. “It’s a pity his father went off in such a hurry.”

“Yes. It is a pity.”

The two women were silent, while the pity of young Dr. Manifold’s death washed back into the room like a slow ebbing tide, reluctant to be gone. His big, clear grey eyes, when they were almost all that was left of his face, kept looking at Cristabel from a corner of the room.

When she had finished her tea Cristabel went up to Shaw’s room and set about putting his clothes in order. She laid the small shabby garments in a heap on the bed, after examining them with a mother’s appraising eye. She turned back the quilt and tried to plump up the lumpy mattress. Evidently Esther wasted little time on Shaw’s bed.

She was darning one of his stockings when he came into the room. He stood looking at her from the doorway. He scarcely seemed able to see, coming in from the dazzle of the sun. He stood silent a moment, then a slow smile brightened his face.

“It looks funny to see you here, Mamma,” he said.

“Are you pleased?”

“You bet. I’m glad you’ve come.” He came to her and leant against her shoulder.

“Kiss me, Shaw.”

He pressed his lips to her cheek.

“My goodness, your lips feel hot and dry! Are you well?”

“Yes. I’m well. Feel my muscle.”

He thrust his thin arm in front of her and she pressed her fingers on the hard round muscle. “You have got a muscle! You really do help all you’re able to, don’t you, Shaw?”

“I calculate,” he drawled, like a little old man, “that they’d have to hire an extra man on this farm in the busy season if it wasn’t for me.”

She was always letting things hurt her, she thought. Now, instead of being pleased with her son, she wanted to cry. Well, after all, he was too small for that kind of talk. He wasn’t having a proper childhood.

“They don’t whip you now, do they?” she asked.

“No. Just an odd box on the ear, or a push. That don’t hurt a fellow.” He leant against her and played with the close curl on her temple.

All that evening he scarcely took his eyes off her. He was so sleepy that he could barely keep his eyes open, but what sight they had was his homage to her. When finally he must go to bed or fall from the chair he walked backwards from the room, his lingering gaze still holding her.

There was a storm that night and Cristabel lay awake listening to the ponderous roll of the thunder and the beat of the rain on the roof. The thunder rolled on and on, its volume fading in the distance, as though in great dignity it departed. But always it returned. And with each return the lightning burned more fiercely, a sharper thunder marked the violent reunion of the clouds. Without tiring through the August night, lightning, cloud, and thunder played this elephantine game, till toward dawn a clap came that sent a thousand responsive pricks through the more sensitive of the bodies under the farmhouse roof. The rain ceased and there was a hollow silence.

He will be afraid, thought Cristabel. He was always afraid of those wicked claps. I believe I ought to go up to him. If I go softly no one will hear me. She did not realize that it was not so much Shaw’s fears as her own longing that drew her from her bed. Her bare feet made no sound on the stairs. Her father’s snoring was already beginning again, the snores pompous, as though to reestablish themselves after the interruption.

“Are you awake?” she whispered, bending over her boy.

“Yes, Mamma. What did you come for?”

“I thought maybe you were afraid.”

“Storms don’t frighten me now.”

“You don’t want anything then?”

“No.”

“You should have shut your window, though. It’s so close to your bed. Why, the quilt’s damp!” Her hands moved dexterously over him, stroking the covers.

He put out his hand and caught hold of her nightdress. He held her fast. His breath began to come hard and quick.

“What’s the matter, my dear?”

“Don’t leave me! I’m afraid.”

“But you said—”

“I’m afraid.”

She slid into the bed beside him and put one arm underneath him. His head rested against her breast. She felt his body shaking with sobs.

“Don’t leave me alone!” His voice came blurred from her breast.

She made cooing noises to him, as she had when he was a baby. Her arms tightened on him, as the wings of a bird on its nestling. He is so thin, she thought, I can feel every rib. What can be the matter with him? She felt his hair, harsh and dry on her neck. He began to stroke her bare arm with his calloused palm, as though he were comforting her.

“Are you feeling better?” she asked.

“Hm-hm. Tell me about when I was a baby.” He had never asked such a question before.

“My goodness, you were a funny little baby! You had eyebrows from the time you were born. But you were pretty, too.”

“Me pretty!” He laughed and pressed closer to her. Rain was falling gently on the roof.

“Yes. You were plump and white and your teeth were pretty when they came.”

“And when I could run about what was I like?”

“Well, you went to visit your other grandma and she was Scotch, and you came home talking like her and wearing a little plaid dress and you said you were a bonny wee bairnie.”

“Oh, sakes alive, Mamma, you’ll make me laugh so I’ll wake everybody! What a silly little chump I was!”

“No. You were a dear little boy.”

“What am I now?”

“You’re a dear big boy but I wish you had some flesh on your bones.”

“I eat like a horse. Herb says so.”

“And your body twitches. I don’t like that. I knew a very thin boy and he got St. Vitus’s dance.”

“Gee, I wish I would! Then I’d not have to work.”

“Don’t say such things. . . . Listen, Shaw, I’ve made up my mind. I’m going to take you to see Dr. Clemency to-morrow. I don’t care what the folks say, I’m going to take you to the doctor.”

“Right after breakfast?”

“Yes. I’m worried about you. You’re all I have, you know.”

“We can tell the doctor my ear aches.”

“Does it ache?”

“Yes. Terribly. And if I get a box on it, it nearly jumps off my head. Honest it does, Mamma.”

“We’ll tell him about it, dear.”

She stayed with him till he slept, then crept back to her own bed, but it was not worth while going to sleep. She lay thinking till she heard her mother about, then she dressed and went downstairs. No one opposed her taking Shaw to the doctor. If she was fool enough to waste her money on doctors, that was her affair. If she chose to take Shaw away from his work at the busiest season, well, they had their opinion of that but kept it to themselves. They were sorry for Cristabel.

Dr. Clemency was the oddity and the pride of the village. There was no one like him. He had a singular and distinguished appearance. In his youth he had had an experience that had changed him, moulded him into a pattern very different from his stay-at-home neighbors. He had not got on well with his father, a well-off, irascible man who wanted to domineer over his five sons as well as his wife and daughters. This son, Morgan, had run away from home during the American Civil War, joined the Southern forces and fought throughout the struggle. The war over, he had taught school for a time, become deeply implicated in American politics, taken to wearing black clothes, a black tie, and had grown a black imperial on his haughty-looking chin. Finally he had tired of the life and returned to his home and made friends with his father. The old man was proud of him. Morgan became his favorite, before his more dutiful brothers.

The youth had been associated with an American doctor during the war and acquired a taste for medicine. It was easy to persuade his father to send him to the medical college. He had a manner which inspired confidence, and when he set out to practise in the village near his birthplace the whole countryside was ready to flock to

him for medical advice. Before many years his rivals were driven from the field. He became even more arrogant than before.

He married well, his wife bringing him an agreeable amount of money. But she gave him no children. She became his child and his thwarted fatherhood found outlet in shielding her, pampering her in every way possible. The life pleased her and in response to the pampering she became so delicate that it was necessary to her. It was the scandal and pride of the village that Mrs. Clemency never raised her hand to do anything for herself. Her servant and her husband waited on her hand and foot. They were now elderly people.

Cristabel and Shaw sat waiting in the surgery. It was the first time he had been in a doctor's office since his father's death. The smell of drugs, of leather-bound books, a faint odor of anæsthetic, almost overpowered him. His mind flew back to infancy and he saw with a young child's blank eyes. The things in the room towered before him, pressed close to him, but had no meaning. The only thing that had meaning was the smell. It made him dizzy with its strange hidden meaning. To him it was the smell of death because he associated it with his dead father. He took short quick breaths of it, scarcely letting it enter his lungs till he pushed it out again.

"Don't sit humped so," said his mother.

"Am I humped?"

"Yes. Dr. Clemency will notice it. He's so straight."

"Why is he so straight, I wonder."

"He's that sort of man. Shaw, I asked you to sit up."

"Oh yes." He straightened his back.

They sat silent, Cristabel's hands folded in her lap, Shaw drooping a little more each moment till at last he was curved as before.

"He is coming. You must answer his questions as well as you can."

Dr. Clemency came into the room.

"Good morning, Mrs. Manifold," he said in his formal, rather hard voice, but with the shadow of the Southern accent he had acquired in his youth.

"Good morning, doctor. This is my little boy I've brought to see you. He's not well."

Dr. Clemency shook hands with them both and his piercing dark eyes looked into Shaw's.

"He ought to be well," he said. "He's famous, isn't he? He's the boy who passed first into the high school. He ought to be bursting out of his skin with health. But isn't, of course. These clever boys. . . . Put out your tongue!"

Shaw put it out.

“Clean. Let me feel your pulse.” He took Shaw’s wrist in his long thin fingers and still looked into his eyes.

He’s a queer-looking man, thought Shaw, and stared in wonder at the ivory-colored aquiline face, the inky brows, the pointed imperial that was now white. The scent of cigars, strange to Shaw, came from his clothes. Shaw thought, he is like people in books, not like real folks.

Cristabel looked proudly at Shaw, now standing up straight with his wrist in the doctor’s hand. She had sponged and pressed his suit. His shirt was clean and his hair tidy. It was known everywhere that he had passed first into the high school.

“What are his symptoms,” asked Dr. Clemency, “besides a superfluity of grey matter in his brain?”

“He seems so tired, doctor. He twitches in his sleep. His eyes look heavy and he says his ear aches. You can see every rib.”

“Well, that’s about enough. Strip off your shirt, my boy, and let’s see those ribs.”

Shaw stood, divested of his shirt, wondering if Dr. Clemency would like to feel his muscle. He clenched his hand, hoping the doctor would notice it. But he only brought out his stethoscope.

A feeling of nausea passed through Cristabel. That instrument. The verandah where her husband lay ill. The eternal listening to the creeping-on death. His quiet cough, like the ticking of a clock, marking the passing of his life. For a space Shaw was blotted out. Then the doctor’s voice:—

“All right, in that quarter.” He looked reassuringly into her eyes. He had attended her husband.

“Is his appetite good?”

“Oh yes.”

“Does he drink lots of milk?”

“Just buttermilk.”

“It’s good, but he should have whole fresh milk as well. Is he active? Enjoys his play?”

His play! Before her eyes rose the picture of the little old man hoeing in the turnip field.

“He helps on the farm.”

“Good man!” Dr. Clemency smiled his approval but his eyes were sombre. “He helps a good deal, eh?”

“All day,” put in Shaw. “Feel my muscle.”

The long sallow fingers pressed his arm. “Hard as iron. What a man! All sorts of

work, eh? From eight, let's say, to four?"

"Pooh!" said Shaw. "From five to dark!"

"Well, you are a worker!"

"Do you think maybe," asked Cristabel timidly, "that he works too hard?"

"I think that's what's wrong with him."

"Do you mean he's working far beyond his strength?"

"I do."

She drew a deep breath. "I don't know what I'm to do, doctor. You see, I'm in this position—my folks are keeping Shaw for me while he gets his education. They expect him to help. Can't you give him some medicine to make him stronger?"

"Mrs. Manifold, you know how little power there is in medicine."

It was like a stab to her. How well indeed she knew that medicine could not cure! She raised her sad eyes to his. "Could you talk to my father?"

"I will. I'll do that."

"Thank you. I've been terribly worried. You know what my life has been."

"Yes, yes, I know." For a moment the two of them looked back into her past life as through a door into a shadowed room. Then the doctor began to talk on his favorite subject—diet. He was far in advance of his time and was called a crank, in this respect.

"Now your boy's diet! I can imagine it. Stiff porridge and skim milk, fried potatoes, for breakfast. Salt pork or beef stew, more potatoes, pie, for dinner. Fried potatoes,—yes, my dear woman, fried potatoes,—hot biscuits, preserves, and cake for tea. Perhaps a little cheese. It's enough to discourage God. It's enough to make Him sorry He gave us this fine fertile country. It's enough to make Him send a blight on us. He has sent a blight or the beginning of one. Wind on the stomach, costiveness, rheumatism. Who is there among us who hasn't got one of these?"

His eyes pierced her. She returned his look dumbly.

"What are we to do, you ask. You do ask that, don't you?"

"Yes, doctor."

"My answer is—eat spinach! Eat it twice a day. It is served in my house twice a day. Hot for dinner. Cold for tea. Spinach. Lettuce, greens in any form, but particularly spinach. When did you last eat it?"

"About a year ago, doctor."

He threw himself back in his chair and closed his eyes. With his ivory skin, his inky brows accentuating the closed lids, his imperial pointed upward, he looked a dead man. Cristabel and Shaw gazed at him.

"I'll try to get spinach for him," she said.

“Where will you get it? Nowhere but from my garden. Ma’am, you couldn’t pick a blade of spinach within five miles of it. But I’ll give you a mess of it and if your boy will come here twice a week I’ll keep him supplied. You should eat it too. You look anæmic. It will give you iron.”

“Yes, doctor. What about my boy’s ear?”

“Put a few drops of laudanum into it. If it doesn’t get better, bring him to me and I’ll cut it off.” He smiled with humorous threat at Shaw.

They crossed a small close-shaved lawn and passed through a white wicket gate into a flower garden. Shaw had never seen a spot like this. It was thronged with roses, asters, dahlias, mignonette; flowers, flowers everywhere. A useless place. Did Dr. Clemency sell them? But who would buy flowers? He must be crazy to give all this good land, and the time to grow them, to flowers. But they looked pretty. They crowded close, pouring out their scent, tossing down their petals, pointing their buds sunward.

“What a lovely garden!” said Cristabel. “Oh, doctor, you’re lucky to have such a garden!”

“I do it all myself,” he said proudly. “It keeps me well. Gardening and spinach. And my wife enjoys it. She must have flowers. She’d die without ’em.”

Die without flowers! Shaw could scarcely restrain his derisive laughter. Certainly they were crazy. He knew that now. He saw the little figure of Mrs. Clemency coming toward them, in a fresh black and white dotted-muslin dress, though it was morning. She wore gloves and carried scissors. In her hand was a bunch of sweet peas. She was sandy-haired, pale-eyed, her features insignificant, but she was as self-contained as her husband.

“I’m getting spinach for Mrs. Manifold,” he said eagerly. “This boy of hers is ailing. I’m going to feed him on spinach till he’s a Goliath.”

“I’d rather be David,” said Shaw.

“You shall! You shall be David and slaughter the Goliath, Ill-Health, with spears of spinach.”

His wife added in a colorless voice—“It is very good. I’m sure it will improve your little boy’s health.” She looked vaguely at Shaw.

“I’m sure it will,” agreed Cristabel, as though humoring harmless imbeciles. “What lovely sweet peas!”

Mrs. Clemency at once gave them to her.

Cristabel flushed. “I wasn’t hinting for them.”

“But I have so many! I get tired cutting them. But I couldn’t live without flowers.”

On the walk back to the farm Shaw said:—

“What funny folks!”

“They are very kind.”

“But they’re funny, aren’t they, Mamma?”

“Well, they’re sort of funny. But I’d not mind having a garden like that.”

“I’ll get you one. When I’m grown-up. You see if I don’t.”

She laid her hand on his arm. It was the first time they had walked so. On his one arm the bag of spinach, on his other his mother leaning. He felt strong with pride, yet almost melting into tears. He asked, in a husky voice:—

“How old must I be before I’ll be called grown-up?”

“Well, a boy is supposed to be grown-up when he’s twenty-one.”

“Gee, Mamma, that’s a long time! Ten years from now. Don’t you think I might manage to be grown-up at seventeen?”

“You might—if you worked hard.”

“I will. You’ll see. I’ll work so hard that I’ll skip a lot of being a boy.”

“Shaw, don’t say that!”

“Why?”

“Because I don’t like to hear it. It makes me sad.”

“Sakes alive, Mamma, you’re funny! I don’t think you know what you want.”

“I want you to be strong and well.”

The walk had been two miles each way. The storm, instead of clearing the air, had made it sultry. Cristabel felt the drag of her long cloth skirt. She felt the weight of life pulling her downward, the remembrance of death darkening her mind. She raised the flowers to her face and felt their cool freshness against her cheek. Shaw clutched the spinach.

Jane Gower brought her best blue china vase with the fluted edge to hold the sweet peas and Cristabel set it on the dinner table. The three women stood admiring the effect, Jane’s forearms white with flour, for she was making bread, Esther’s cheeks fiery from the heat of the oven. She had made twelve pies for the threshing. They were cooling on the table in front of the window and their syrupy smell made it necessary to put one’s nose close to the sweet peas to get their scent.

Cristabel said—“Mrs. Clemency says she couldn’t live without flowers. Fancy that!”

“Hmph,” said Jane. “She’d live without them right enough if she had to, and do a good day’s work like other women, if she was forced.”

“Shaw did think it was funny, a woman not being able to live without flowers.”

“No wonder, considering how he sees his grandmother work.”

“What can I do to help? Would you like some thick ginger cookies?”

“Yes. The threshers always like them.”

Roger Gower was halfway through his meal before he noticed the flowers on the table. He leant back, blew through his beard, his china-blue eyes protruding.

“Wh-h-h—” he exclaimed, “sweet peas on the table! Where’d they come from?”

“Mrs. Clemency gave them to Cristabel. She told Cristabel she couldn’t live without flowers.”

Roger’s beard and moustache assumed the peculiar quirk that was his smile.

“She’d better come over to our house,” said Jane, “and I’ll show her how to live without them.”

“Becky grows flowers,” returned Roger.

Jane got red. “Becky has a servant. She’s had only one child.”

Sometimes Roger was tired of having his thirteen children thrown at his head. He said:—

“She was a sensible woman.”

Jane was tongue-tied, stupefied by anger. She pushed out her upper lip. She crimped the edge of the tablecloth in trembling fingers.

Luke uttered a shout of laughter.

Cristabel said—“Pa doesn’t mean that. He’s only teasing you, Ma.”

Roger, to change the subject, asked—“What’s that green stuff?”

“Spinach. Shaw’s to eat it—Dr. Clemency says.”

“The man’s crazy,” said Roger, and added as a sop to Jane’s vanity, “and his wife too.”

Beatrice and Leslie came to help with the threshing. Also two of the married sons. Sixteen men sat down to dinner, their shirts wet with sweat, chaff clinging to their hair, their nostrils, their eyelashes. Shaw sat among them listening to their talk, being waited on by the women, but he experienced no small boy’s pride in this situation. There was no love of the land or of farming in him. Even as he heard their talk he withdrew into the retreat of his own mind, thinking his own thoughts of books he had read, of strange countries he would visit. He saw ships sailing under a stormy sky, islands peopled by majestic beings endowed with fabulous powers, and himself their leader.

His work in the threshing was inside the barn just behind the machine. When night came and he stumbled up to bed he was a little grey gnome, the fine dust ground into his clothes, his hair, his very pores. He threw himself on his bed, drinking in the cool night air, taking deep breaths of it, trying to push the dust from his throat,

his lungs. His thoughts were like the chaff, light, dizzy, without form. His body pressed into the mattress in its weariness.

He heard the stair creak. His mother came into the room and shut the door after her. She carried a basin in her hands and a clean white cloth. She looked very tired, for the washing-up was just finished. She came to the bed and looked down on him anxiously.

He looked up at her out of his bloodshot eyes.

“What are you going to do, Mamma?”

“Bathe your poor eyes.”

She knelt by the bed and, wetting the cloth, laid it across his face.

“How nice it feels! But it smarts a little, inside my eyes.”

“It has salt in it. It’s healing.”

Again and again she wrung out the cloth and laid it fresh and cool against his lids. He lay relaxed, absorbing in all his nerves the comfort of her ministering. When she left him she said, “I’m coming back,” and he remained relaxed, resting.

She returned with fresh warm water, soap, and a towel. He surrendered his body to her hands, as when he was an infant, while she bathed him, stroked him dry, and put a clean shirt on him.

“Do you say your prayers regularly?” she asked.

He considered a moment, then told the truth.

“No, Mamma. I’m too tired.”

“Never mind,” she answered. “I’ll say them for both of us.”

As she drew the sheet over him he caught her hand.

“How kind you are, Mamma!” he said. “I wish you could stay by me always.”

“If only I could!”

But how soon her week was up and she was gone! She came and she went, disappearing into her mysterious other life as though a door were shut behind her. This door, this barrier between them, opened to let her through to him, bringing light and comfort with her, then after a little while shut, leaving him belonging once more to no one but himself.

Dr. Clemency had had a talk with Roger Gower and now Shaw was allowed to stop work at tea time. Twice a week he went to the doctor’s house for his supply of spinach. In the farmhouse it was the subject of joking. “Stuff down all the spinach you can, Shaw,” Luke would say, “and perhaps you’ll be able to dig a few more turnips.” Leslie would say, “My goodness, Shaw looks energetic since I saw him last! If he keeps on he’ll be a real boy yet.” Leslie would look at Beaty for appreciation, which she never failed to give in loud laughter.

Mrs. Clemency liked the gravity of the small boy. She liked the solemn way he inquired after her health each time they met. She took him one day into her parlor and showed him the great shells her husband had brought from the South, the gilt-framed picture of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort with their lovely children about them, and let him hear the little French clock strike. Shaw thought it was the most beautiful room he had ever seen.

Strangest of all was the sight of Mrs. Clemency's poodle, sitting on a little gilt chair before the pier glass, staring at his own reflection. It was so unreal that Shaw could not believe in it. He tried to picture himself living in that house and could not. Yet he told himself—"When I am a man I'll have a parlor just like that, and a flower garden for Mamma and a phaeton for her to drive in."

In the farmhouse he had nothing to say of the Clemencys. He could not bear the thought of hearing them talked about there. Esther would ask:—

"Well, did you see Mrs. Clemency to-day and did she say she couldn't live without flowers?"

He would shake his head glumly and turn away.

Esther threw the spinach into the pot, as though the cooking of it were the last straw on the heavy load of her day's work. She never washed it, so Shaw's teeth gritted on sand when he ate it. But he ate it doggedly and, either because of it or because of the shorter working hours, he seemed stronger when the high school opened and he was entered as the youngest pupil.

CHAPTER VII

He had never before been on a train. He could scarcely believe in himself as he pushed his way among other boys up the iron steps and found a place on one of the dusty crimson-velvet seats. His season ticket was in the breast pocket of his coat, on his back his schoolbag filled with new textbooks, clean exercise books, a new pencil, new nibs for his pen. The heavy soles of his new boots were not yet soiled. His eyes were full of wonder as the train drew out and he saw the familiar cluster of sheds, yards, and then fields wheel past.

He sat between Douglas Scott and Ian, with the students from surrounding rural schools filling the near-by seats. Across from him sat Louie Adams, her wizened little face tense with excitement, clutching her satchel of books, a dress several sizes too large for her accenting her leanness. She leant forward, oblivious of those about her, as though she would urge on the locomotive with her own will to advance. At every station more children clambered on to the train, some of them experienced, with several terms of such travel behind them, talking loudly and greeting acquaintances with an ease that made the younger ones envious.

The half hour in the train seemed a journey to Shaw. He was moving forward into a different life. The farm was receding; new shapes and new voices were resolving themselves into the world that was to be his. Though he had never seen the place where his mother worked, she somehow seemed nearer to him. He felt that he was moving in her direction. He would work hard. It was easy for him to learn. By the time he was seventeen he would be a man, able to keep his mother. He set his small face into a stubborn line and drew his already heavily marked brows together.

“Hooray!” shouted Ian, as they clambered off the train. “We’re here because we’re here because we’re here! Everyone follow the minister’s son, who will lead you, yea, in the paths of righteousness.”

The children streamed across the platform and through the narrow streets of the town, bringing their own separate life with them, flowing through it like a clear impersonal stream, climbing without fatigue the steep hill that led to the high school.

Roll call was held in a large room, with a platform at one end on which stood a piano. There in an armchair sat the principal of the school, Mr. Greerson, an untidy rugged-featured man with a rough loud voice. He called the names like a drill sergeant. He spoke with a broad Scots accent.

In a half circle behind him the other members of the staff were seated. Mr. Bentley, a quiet grey man whose features relaxed only when he had worked out a

difficult problem in algebra or physics for his class. Then a smile of infantile pleasure transformed his face. He lived in his work and in the hope that he might one day go to Europe and the Holy Land and there follow the steps of Saint Paul in all his journeyings.

Mr. Jewell, who sat next him, was a contrast. He was much younger, had a fair fresh complexion, and his eyes wandered constantly, particularly in the direction of the young women of the sixth form. He taught arithmetic and Euclid to the lower forms.

Next to him sat the lady member of the staff, Miss Willing, teacher of modern languages and English. On her Shaw's eyes dwelt longest. He had never seen a woman like her. She was such a contrast to colorless, pimply Miss McKay that he could scarcely think of her as a teacher. She was more like figures he had glimpsed in the rare fashion books his aunts had been able to borrow. To begin with, her dress was yellow, a strange color for a dress. It was embroidered and at the back of the neck was a large ribbon bow. She wore a bangle bracelet from which dangled a heart, an elephant, a cat, and an owl, in silver. She wore high heels. Her figure was flowing, her thick black hair and large black eyes seductive. Shaw was afraid of her.

On her left was Duncan Dow, the classics master. He was always spoken of as Duncan Dow by the boys, Shaw discovered. His young brother, the oldest, strongest, most popular boy in the school, was Jack Dow. The brothers were extraordinarily alike, with thick-set figures, harsh yet oddly attractive features, and curly brown hair.

As the headmaster called the names of the new pupils each rose in his turn and displayed himself for an instant to the school. It was a moment of confusion, of awkwardness. Ian alone stood up with a jaunty smile and made himself a favorite at once. When it was Shaw's turn Mr. Greerson said:—

“Here's a name for ye! Shaw Manifold! Now, let's see what like ye look, my mannie.”

Shaw only half rose. There was laughter.

“Stand up! Stand up! Don't be ashamed.”

Mr. Greerson surveyed him critically.

“How old are ye?”

“Eleven—next month, sir.”

The headmaster gave a hoot of mirth.

“Well, I'd like to know what this school is turning to. A kindergarten! I should think ye'd be ashamed to show yourself here. Why did ye not restrain yourself till ye were as big as yon lump of a girl?” He jerked his head toward another newcomer, a

girl of fifteen nearly six feet tall, with spectacles and tow hair about her shoulders. She blushed unhappily.

Mr. Greerson now turned his attention to the new girls. He arranged them, as he had already the boys, in order of height. He fixed his eyes on Louie Adams, the smallest.

“And you,” he said, “I suppose you’re about five?”

“I’m twelve, please,” she answered, not much above a whisper.

His face softened as he looked her over. “Well, well, you’re no sae small. You’ve a big forehead and I’ll wager there are plenty of brains behind it.”

Louie’s ordeal was not over. A bouncing girl of fourteen whose well-off parents were given to acts of charity came forward as the roll call was over. She put five dollars into Louie’s hand.

“This is for you to buy books or clothes with—anything you need. I was to give it to you.”

What she said was audible to those near by. Even those at a distance saw the money, the smug pride of the giver, as she bounced back to her seat.

Now Mr. Greerson bent his grizzled head and growled an unintelligible prayer. The whole school repeated the Lord’s Prayer. A sedate older girl mounted the platform and struck the first ringing notes of “Soldiers of the Queen,” and the lowest forms, led by Louie and Shaw, after thunderous orders from the principal, began the march toward the various form rooms. In the passage they were joined by the Roman Catholics, who held aloof from the prayers.

Descending the stairs, Shaw had a sudden feeling of compassion for Louie. He saw the five dollars clutched in her skinny little hand. He wished she would put it out of sight. It made him ashamed for her. He saw that her eyes were full of tears.

Ian said, into his ear:—

“That girl didn’t hide her light under a bushel. Poor old Louie! Never mind. The meek shall inherit the earth. Do you like this school, Shaw? I do.”

“Yes. Is Elspeth coming here later on?”

“Not she. She’s going to the Presbyterian Ladies’ College when she’s old enough. The ewes shall be separated from the goats. Isn’t the lady teacher a peach? But I’m not sure she’s a good influence for me.”

They jostled their way into the classroom.

The new life spread like a river before them. Buoyant and helpless on its surface, they were carried through the days, the weeks, the months. Shaw had his friends, Ian Blair and Douglas Scott. He made no others. He felt himself too young. These two were enough for him. But he was not enough for them. They craved the

companionship of boys more knowing than themselves. They were full of gossip about the older pupils and the teachers. They told Shaw how the head boy, Jack Dow, was in love with Miss Willing and saw her home after school, how he even went to her lodging house and had help from her with his French. Ian had told his mother this and she had disapproved. Ian grew so excited when he talked of the affairs of the school that the words tumbled over each other, his color came and went. He was enthusiastic about everything except study. He was taken into the Glee Club, where his high soprano outsoared the voices of the girls. It was discovered that he could recite, and on the Friday afternoons of the Literary Society he would mount the platform with confidence and deliver himself of recitations heroic, melodramatic, and comic. Shaw, proud of being his friend, applauded with all his might.

Douglas Scott was not such a favorite. Already his handsome mouth had a sarcastic curve, his eyes were cold and appraising. But he was going to be athletic and played football when he had the chance. He was fourteen and half a head taller than Shaw. He brought no lunch to school now, but money to buy it. The things he bought made Shaw's mouth water. Chelsea buns, curled sweeter and softer to the central sticky core. Plump red bananas. Meat paste from a pot spread on biscuits. Once he bought more cream puffs than he could eat and hurled the remainder at boys in the basement of the school, plastering the walls with cream.

There was a lawlessness in this school, though Mr. Greerson sometimes came down heavily on offenders. But there was more noise and bluster to him than discipline. His favorite form of punishment was more ridiculous than painful.

"Follow me for a week!" he would shout, and whoever it was must spend the lunch hour, the recesses, and half an hour after school in pursuing him from post to pillar, even to his own private cubbyhole to witness the furious devouring of his lunch. This spying on him did not inconvenience the principal at all. He seemed to enjoy it and, with his cheek distended and a bottle of cold tea grasped in his hand, would give a grin of triumph at his embarrassed follower.

The pupils gave small attention in the classes he took. He mumbled through the lesson incoherently but pleased with himself, his feet supported on a chair, one dirty hand—he gardened each morning before school and was always too late to wash—pulling his ragged moustache. The school had a sort of contemptuous pride in him.

These boys and girls had a strong individualistic life outside the school. They were moulded to no pattern. No two of them were alike.

At first the teachers scarcely noticed Shaw, except that Mr. Greerson would exclaim—"Hello, baby! Ah, to think that I'd sink to be a kindergarten teacher!"

But before long Mr. Bentley discovered him. Here was a new boy who hungered for work, whose pale face and sombre eyes seemed lighted by a fire within. When a problem was elucidated Mr. Bentley began to turn to Shaw for sympathetic appreciation. Their eyes met and an æsthetic fire was struck. Soon Shaw surprised even Mr. Bentley by his grasp of mathematics.

Then Duncan Dow began to notice him. Shaw's translation was always done. He was always asking questions. His attention never wandered. For so young a boy he seemed unnatural. Duncan Dow hated prodigies and he was gruff with Shaw. But the boy's memory fascinated him and he enjoyed putting it to the test. To him and his brother Jack, Shaw gave no hero worship as the other boys did. He watched the fierce combination of their play on the football field without admiration. He had seen so much hard work done on his grandfather's farm, he had done so much hard work himself, that it seemed to him futile and wasteful so to exert after a ball.

Pink-cheeked Mr. Jewell was a mystery to Shaw. It was his first experience of a bad teacher. He soon discovered that Mr. Jewell was always consulting a little key book for answers to problems, that he was anxious that the boys should do well in the form examinations but that he could not make them work. He was afraid of them and his classes were often an uproar. Shaw was amused to see how Louie Adams cornered the master and drove him relentlessly to explanations that bewildered everyone. But when Mr. Jewell was giving Indian-club drill to the young women of the sixth form he was a different man. He was self-possessed, authoritative, and when he directed the movements of an attractive girl he touched her shoulders and her back with hands that were more than confident.

For all her looks Shaw contrasted Miss Willing unfavorably with Miss McKay. There was none of Miss McKay's anxious eagerness about her. Her face did not light, as Miss McKay's did, when she read poetry or noble prose. Instead she looked sentimental and put on a plushy voice that embarrassed Shaw. Also he considered the elbow sleeves of her blouse immodest and disliked the way it always looked moist under the arms.

Miss Willing took a great fancy to Douglas Scott. She would lean over his desk and scold him playfully for his inattention, her full bosom just touching his glossy hair while his bold eyes were fixed on her face.

The days shortened, melting into a dreamy haze that flared to strange bright sunsets. The late apples reached their maturity—the spicy, sweet-juiced Northern Spies, the Greenings that turned to a delicate fluffiness when baked, the hard dark Baldwins that had their own nutty flavor, the greasy-skinned Pippins that made applesauce as smooth as vaseline. The rosy Snow apples with their pure pink-veined

flesh and flowerlike fragrance were best of all, because they were good only for eating. The other boys might be richer, Shaw thought, but none of them had better apples than he.

As winter came he was up in the dark, with no promise of day, to do his chores. The lantern he carried cast his shadow on the first snow. The cattle turned in their stalls as they heard his step and their breath hung heavy on the icy air. Their dung steamed as he shoveled it out into the passage. He broke the ice in the stable well for their drink.

Beneath the snow the mud of the lane was frozen into ruts that made him walk unevenly. He wore old patched boots and changed into his good ones for school. At breakfast the lamplight shone on the faces about the table. They munched in silence while the winter drew closer about them. The kitchen range threw out its benign heat, solemn beneath the bubbling kettle with its flourish of steam. Was his mother eating breakfast now, Shaw wondered. He wished that he could see the house where she lived, so he might picture her there.

She had now got a new position where she earned a little more money. This was necessary because of the increasing cost of Shaw's education and his clothes. She did not want her boy to go to the high school shabbily dressed. But her work was harder, too. She was keeping house for a widower with four children. In a letter she had told Shaw the names of the children and their ages. The eldest, a boy, was ten, about Shaw's age, and a nice boy, but the two girls were rude and unmanageable. There was a baby boy who was ailing and cutting his teeth. He cried most of the time. She lost her sleep because of him. The house was inconvenient, with steep stairs, but the widower was a kind man.

"Cristabel might as well marry him and settle down," Esther had said.

Shaw had bitterly resented this remark. In his heart he hated the four children, the boy because he was nice and about his own age, the girls because they were rude to his mother, but the baby most of all. The thought of his mother walking the floor at night with the crying baby held in her arms filled him with a deep, jealous hurt.

At Christmas his mother sent him a packet. In it were a new cap, scarf, and mittens she had knitted. There were a bag of molasses bull's-eyes and a walking stick, in stripes of red-and-white candy, tasting strong of peppermint. He was happy with these things. He lay on the bed in his own room, wrapped in the quilt, sucking the peppermint stick and reading *Tristram Shandy*. Outside the snow danced beneath a low grey sky, to the keen music of a north wind. The dance was whirling upward rather than downward. The dancing flakes never seemed to reach the

ground. Yet they did reach the ground, for deeper and deeper the snow lay, leaving only blurred ridges where fences had been, making a humped white figure of the pump, mounding itself high against the doors. After a while Mark's voice came from the foot of the stairs, calling him to help shovel the paths.

After that there was always shoveling of paths through the rest of the winter. Sometimes the snow was dry and fluffy, so that Shaw shoveled for a long time before weariness overtook him. Sometimes it was wet and heavy and his back and arms ached cruelly before ever he set out on the long walk to the railway station. By night the paths were again hidden and the struggle against the smothering whiteness was resumed.

In February the coldest spell of the winter came and for ten days no snow fell. Then the air sparkled like a diamond. It had the cruel purity of a steel blade. As Shaw plodded along the road to the railway station his steps made sharp crunchings on the glittering snow. The shadow of each twig lay blue on its purity. He wound the warm scarf round and round his head, so that only his eyes could be touched by the cold. Shaw hoped they would not freeze. He had once heard of this happening to a man's eye and it had swelled till it was like a glass ball and he had lost the sight of it.

It was a rare morning at the school when there were not frozen ears, noses, or chins. Twenty below zero and the air pointed and still as an icicle.

"James Boles!" Mr. Greerson would call the roll.

James's seat was empty. The boy in the next chair would bob up.

"Boles is in the basement, please, thawing his nose."

A few more names. Then:—

"William McLane!"

Another empty place.

"He's in the basement, sir, thawing out his ear."

Mr. Greerson was amused by these rigors. He would show his discolored teeth in a grin of hilarity at each report of frozen members.

The never-strong discipline became laxer still. Boys jostled each other in the halls. Windows were broken by snowballs. When a teacher left a classroom, hubbub reigned. An exhilarating irritant of gossip and antagonism was stirring the fresh emotions of the boys and girls: Jack Dow was in love with Miss Willing. . . . Mr. Jewell had been cut out by him and could not conceal his chagrin. . . . As though Miss Willing could bear the thought of Jewell with Jack about! Jack Dow's heavy face was darkened by a sneer when he encountered Jewell. . . . Jewell, it was said, had made himself disagreeable to Miss Willing. One of the girls had overheard him speaking bitterly to her after prayers. All the rest of the day she wore an expression

of hurt, and the boys rallied more keenly to her side. . . . As the teachers sat on the platform at roll call the pupils scrutinized them with primitive ruthlessness, trying to probe their very souls.

Old Greerson, what did he know of what was going on? Was there a malicious quirk beneath his ragged moustache? Did he cast a look of encouragement on Jack Dow? What did old Bentley think sitting grey and inscrutable and prim, with knitted wristlets half covering his chalk-dried hands? Certainly Duncan Dow knew all, for his brother must have told him. The girls stared, round-eyed and wistful, into his ugly face that fascinated them. . . . And there at the top of the sixth-form row sat Jack Dow, his brother, his replica, who could go down a football field like a bullet, use a lacrosse like a battle-axe, leap over the high bars in athletic grace, who could make love.

Of all the teachers Mr. Jewell, the unpopular, and Miss Willing, the admired, were the only two who seemed to feel anything unusual in the air. As they sat on the platform, exposed to wonder and speculation, his color changed from pink and white to rosy pink and back again, her languorous eyes were raised toward the ceiling as though she could not face the troubling world about her.

Only Shaw did not admire her. When she stood before the form declaiming

‘Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all,
In my hand—”

he felt somehow ashamed for her and remembered pimply Miss McKay as a superior being. He saw Louie Adams’s eyes, moist with adoration, fixed on Miss Willing.

One day, at the hour of lunch, Douglas Scott, Ian, and Shaw went down a lane that led to a pond which was frozen solid and swept smooth as glass by the north wind. The pond was set round by evergreen trees powdered with snow and at this hour was a solitary place. Douglas had heard that Miss Willing and Jack Dow came here to skate. He led the others, like conspirators, to a group of cedars.

“They can’t see us here. Look, there they are! I was right, wasn’t I? They skate every day. Isn’t he a fine skater? He can do all sorts of figures.”

He was indeed transformed from a hulking young man to a creature of grace, his rough-hewn face handsome beneath his black lamb cap. Miss Willing wore a long scarf of vivid red that floated over her shoulder. She surrendered herself to Jack Dow’s guidance as they skimmed over the ice. On the sharp air the clear ring of their

skates could be heard. Ian said:—

“I wish I could skate like that.”

“They must have skipped a period, to be here and skating already,” said Douglas. “I remember now. It’s sixth-form Latin. Duncan Dow would never notice Jack not being there. And Miss Willing—well, she must have skipped something and run all the way.”

“I wish he’d do some figures,” said Shaw.

“I wish he’d kiss her,” said Douglas.

Ian chuckled. “If he did, I’d throw a snowball at them.”

“I’d pity you if Jack caught you,” said Douglas. “Look, he’s going to do figures!”

Miss Willing now stood, hands in muff, her red scarf blowing across her cheeks, while Dow skimmed, whirled, dipped, in the grapevine, the figure eight. He swept far down the pond as though deserting her, glided back, then wheeled round her and again took her hand in his. But no more to skate. He led her to the bank, knelt, and began to undo the straps about her ankle. It was almost time for afternoon school.

Going up the hill, the boys saw Mr. Jewell ahead of them, both hands held to his ears beneath his hard felt hat.

“Look at him!” said Douglas. “Isn’t he a namby-pamby? I’d like to fire a snowball at him.”

The words had scarcely left his lips when Ian, who had been packing a hard ball of snow between his palms, let it fly at Mr. Jewell’s head. It struck him on the back of the neck, his hat flew off, he stood dazed an instant, then wheeled and looked after the boys, already running down a side street. He raised his hand threateningly.

They huddled into the doorway of a tobacconist, doubled up with laughter.

“Gosh!” gasped Douglas. “That was a neat one!”

Ian danced in triumph. “What a wonder I am!” he exclaimed.

“Do you think we’ll get into trouble?” asked Shaw.

“Why, you are a young coward!” Douglas stared scornfully at Shaw. “What are you afraid of?”

“Nothing.”

“You are!”

“I’m not.”

“Shaw’s no coward,” said Ian. “Look at the lickings he took for playing in the cave.”

“Then what’s he talking about?”

“We might be suspended,” said Shaw.

“Good little boy!” retorted Douglas. “Jewell’s pet!”

“I’m not.”

“You are.”

“I just don’t want to be suspended.”

“I’d be mighty glad to be suspended for a month.”

Shaw was silent and they turned again into the street.

“It must be awful always to be thinking of not losing time.”

“It is—sort of.”

“And to be a coward too.”

“Oh, shut up!” said Ian.

“If you’re not a coward fire another snowball at Jewell to prove it.”

Shaw’s face was sullen. He packed a snowball and darting after the teacher threw it and hit him on the back. Jewell turned sharply. The three boys halted, the elder ones grinning, Shaw sullen. Jack Dow and Miss Willing appeared walking swiftly along the snowy road. They had seen what happened. Jack Dow gave a sneering laugh and Mr. Jewell’s discomfiture was complete. He hastened on.

As he passed the small boys Dow put his hand on Shaw’s shoulder. “Good for you, kid,” he said.

“Oh, Jack, how can you?” exclaimed Miss Willing.

“I repeat it,” said Dow. “He’s a good kid.”

She scolded him laughingly as they went on. Douglas looked enviously at Shaw. To have been commended by the great Dow! Shaw’s stature was increased in the eyes of both boys, but he had no pleasure in the distinction. The life of isolation, of self-reliance, of bitterly hard work, had hardened him into a different mould. He could give no hero worship to Jack Dow. He had little sense of the importance of school life. He was intent on growing up, on cutting short the period of boyhood. His smile had already a shadow of gravity. He seldom laughed, and when he gave himself up to play he did so with a kind of hungry violence.

He wondered what Mr. Jewell would do to him for throwing the snowball. But Mr. Jewell did nothing. He stood pink-cheeked at the blackboard, as mildly as though nothing had happened. He asked a question of Shaw with no hint of anger in his eyes.

The extreme cold moderated. A wind rose and with it came the blizzards of February. Layer upon layer of snow was heaped in the ditches, on the roadways, added to what had already fallen. But this, by the violence of the gales, was blown into great drifts making the roads impassable. There were no motorcars to defile it. The snow in its purity muffled the countryside, the villages, and the towns. The

milkman's bell sounded clear and mournful as his grey mare struggled from door to door through the drifts. The milk was lifted solid from the can.

Those pupils who came by train were late each day. Those who walked had to make an early start and arrived with fur or woolen caps and scarves packed with snow. It might have been thought that the extreme purity of the air, the submerging beneath the chastity of the snow, would have put an end to gossip. But it flourished as though in tropic heat. Even Shaw, the youngest pupil in the school, was conscious of the strain between Jack Dow and Mr. Jewell. The teacher had been seen talking to Miss Willing, as though pleading with her. She had gone with him to a church social and for two days Jack Dow's face had been dark with jealousy.

One morning the train could not move because of the drifts. It stood just beyond the station till the snowplough could open the way. Inside the train the boys and girls could see nothing through the furry white frost on the panes. They chaffed each other, laughed at countrified jokes, sang "Two Little Girls in Blue" and "A Bicycle Built for Two." The close air was thick with the smell of wet wool and healthy, not too well washed, youth.

An hour passed before the rails were cleared. Then they saw, through small spaces scratched on the frosted pane, the snowplough fly past on the parallel track, like a ship in a wild sea. From its bow the fine snow sprang like foam and lay in blue-white ridges on the banks. The locomotive whistled. The children were jerked almost from their seats. They were off.

They were in irresponsible good humor as they trudged through the town. They were late but they were not to blame. Their faces were scarlet from the bite of hard particles of snow. Shaw inhaled the not unpleasant woolly odor from his breath-warmed scarf. He planted his feet, one after the other, in the footprints made by the boys who preceded him.

When they went into the school they were surprised to find that the hall was full of boys standing about talking excitedly. Some girls were standing on the stairs looking down at them. There was a belligerent threatening air about the boys. The girls looked exhilarated yet frightened. Shaw and his friends pushed their way into the coat room and took off their coats and caps. A boy of fifteen was there, holding a handful of snow on his nose.

"What are they doing now?" he asked.

"They're in the hall," answered Douglas. "What is the matter?"

"It's Jewell. They're after him."

"Why?"

"Haven't you heard? He's been saying things about Miss Willing and Jack

Dow.” He uncovered his nose, which was dead waxen white. “Is it thawed?” he asked anxiously.

“Pretty near,” answered Ian. “Give it another dose of snow. What did Jewell say?”

The boy again thrust his nose into the snow, muttering—“Damn this nose! I want to be out there with them.”

“But what did Jewell say?”

“He said it to the woman he boards with and she told it to the other boarders. Jack found out last night. Gosh, I pity old Jewell!”

“But what did he *say*?”

“He said that he was walking by the pond Sunday evening and he saw Miss Willing and Jack among the trees. They were lying there hidden—” He took the snow from his face and his mouth had a sudden lewd look. “You know what—” He added a few crude words. “Jack has it in for him.”

Shaw’s heart began to beat uneasily. He was suddenly conscious of being younger than the others, of wanting to be away from all this. A sustained murmur came from the hall, like the murmur of a gathering tide. A boy ran in and began to collect the overshoes that stood in rows on the snow-spattered floor. He filled his arms and then ran out. Over his shoulder he said:—

“You fellows bring the rest.”

The boy with the frozen nose decided to leave it to its fate. He threw down the snow and snatched up an armful of overshoes. Douglas and Ian, quick to discover that these were ammunition, did the same. Shaw picked up a pair of enormous overshoes that surely belonged to Jack Dow and looked questioningly at the older boys. They led the way to the hall. It was now densely packed. Boys were coming out of the cloakroom opposite carrying the girls’ overshoes.

In a moment Shaw was helpless, squeezed in between two tall youths, one of whom showed an incipient moustache. He took the footgear from Shaw’s hands. He opened his mouth under the budding moustache and uttered a deep roar.

“Bring him out! Bring out the sham Jewell!”

The murmur increased. The bodies of the boys moved in a troubled surging up and down the hall. The stairway was near Shaw and he saw the girls move aside and press to the wall to make room for two figures to pass. They were Jack Dow and Mr. Jewell. The youth had the teacher gripped by the collar and the seat of the trousers. They seemed a struggling mass of arms and legs as they plunged down the stairs. Dow’s face was dark red and he wore a gargoyle grin on his heavy lips. Mr. Jewell was ghastly. He gazed down into the vortex of boys like a man drowning.

Jack Dow's massive legs carried the two of them into the waiting crowd. The big fellow at Shaw's side hurled an overshoe at Mr. Jewell's head. It hit Dow instead and he turned with a savage glare.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" he roared.

Furious and ashamed, the youth flung the second overshoe, this time with true aim. Now the air was full of the missiles. Dow hustled Mr. Jewell toward the front door. It stood wide open and the arch of the wintry sky shone bright. The boys began to yell in savagery. Shaw could see nothing. His arms were glued to his sides. He felt the pressure of his ribs on his lungs.

Then a lull came and boys poured through the open door.

"What have they done to him?" Shaw asked timidly of the big fellow beside him.

He made no answer but shouted—"Good for you, Jack!"

The boys surged forward and Shaw was borne to the door. He saw a great snowdrift, seven feet high, that rose beside the steps, and up from the middle of it Mr. Jewell's feet and legs weakly kicking. Jack Dow stood on the steps, his gargoyle grin widened to hilarity. The other boys crowded about him gazing with speculative cruelty at Mr. Jewell's struggles. Shaw stared fascinated, feeling rather sick.

At last Mr. Jewell extricated himself. On hands and knees, snow ground into his hair, ears, and eyes, he knelt humbled and unmanned at Jack Dow's feet.

"Do you apologize?" asked Dow.

"Yes."

"Are you a liar and a scandalmonger?"

"Yes."

"Do you wish you'd never been born?"

"Yes."

The boys made a path for Mr. Jewell to pass through. Shaw had only a glimpse of him as he mounted the stairs. He walked as though his legs were weighted. On the landing Mr. Greerson came out of his study, like a wary old lion from his den.

"I'd like a little conversation with you, Mr. Jewell," he said.

The two disappeared into the study.

Out of the teachers' room Duncan Dow and Mr. Bentley came side by side. Mr. Bentley wore the childlike smile he had when a stiff problem was solved. Duncan Dow looked straight before him. He carried an armful of books and, stalking to the desk of the sixth form, threw them down and, turning to the class, said in a dry tone to his brother:—

"Dow, you will begin with the Latin translation."

Miss Willing sailed into the first form with a look of innocence vindicated. Shaw had a feeling of distaste for her. He did not like her at all. He compared her with Miss McKay and with his mother, to Miss Willing's disfavor. But all about him he saw admiring looks turned on her. He saw Louie Adams's pale eyes bright with admiration, her thin lips trembling with eagerness to answer Miss Willing's questions.

At recess the halls were a hubbub of excited boys. Jack Dow was a hero. Unmindful of the cold, boys ran out on the snowdrift where Mr. Jewell had been chastised and jumped into it, as though on to his body. Shaw was sent by one of the teachers with a note to the principal's study. Coming out into the quiet upper passage, he discovered Mr. Jewell talking in a corner to three young girls. He was saying:—

“Miss Roberts, you will speak in my favor if you are questioned by the trustees, won't you?”

The girl nodded dumbly, shaken by his unashamed weeping.

“You will tell them how interested I was in my work and that I always had a kind word for everyone?”

“Yes, Mr. Jewell.”

“And, Miss Henderson, you will tell how anxious I was over your exams, won't you?” He saw Shaw and turned to him with shaking lips. “Manifold, you will tell the trustees how hard I worked for your Christmas exams, won't you?”

“Mr. Jewell,” said Shaw, asking a question that he had pondered on, “why did you set us the very same questions for the examination that we had worked out that week? We knew the answers already.”

Mr. Jewell looked at him bitterly. “You are a mean little fellow, Manifold. You want me to lose my position. The big boys have poisoned your mind.”

Shaw hurried away. He was confused. He had had no answer to his question. He was ashamed for Mr. Jewell, ashamed that he had hurt him.

Mr. Jewell never appeared before the classes again. Duncan Dow and Mr. Bentley divided his work between them to the benefit of everyone. Spring came. Summer came. Shaw worked in the fields. His hands and feet grew larger. His face took on new contours. One fleeting visit from his mother was all he saw of her. And winter with its blizzards, its snow-bound days, was on them again.

In their monotony and their power the seasons wheeled over Shaw, carrying him along with them in the appointed work that was their burden. Plodding through deep snow, shoveling the ever-obliterated paths, cleaning the acrid-smelling stables, studying by lamplight. Plodding through icy slush, the ditches miniature torrents; the spring cleaning of cellars and outhouses; the sharpening and cleaning of implements.

The sowing; the increasing heat of the sun. The calves, the lambs, the litters of pigs to be cared for.

“Darn you!” he would shout to a struggling calf. “Why don’t you drink the milk and not bunt me all over the place?” And he would strive to hold the bucket steady while the calf thrust its wide wet nostrils and open mouth everywhere but into the pail. Shaw would push his milky fingers into its mouth and feel the big teeth of the lower jaw and the hard toothless gums of the upper nozzle in vain search for a teat.

But as the humid heat increased and the weeds like a frenzied mob strove to take possession of the land, Shaw’s mind became dulled to everything but the struggle with them. From morning to night he fought them side by side with Mark or Luke. But where the men hoed doggedly, with easy, monotonous movements that took not half their strength, Shaw hacked furiously at the weeds in hatred and exhaustion. Scarcely a word was exchanged. Only the uprooting hack-hack of the hoes and the thin metallic trill of the locusts broke the silence.

At night Shaw dreamed of weeds. Wherever he went they seethed about him, thrusting up through the cracks in floors, pushing in through crannies of walls, sometimes growing to such height that they darkened the sun. He would escape them and, light as air, board some great ship sailing for foreign lands, but scarcely were they out of the sight of land when weeds would spring up from the ocean, weeds with great wet leaves and rubbery stalks, clogging the progress of the ship. There was always a hoe at hand. He would snatch it up and hack frantically at the weeds. But he knew from the first that it was hopeless. Thicker and thicker they grew, ever stronger, ever more agile to escape his hoe, with a sneering triumphant life all their own. He knew that they would drag him down, smother him, and he gave up struggling. They had sucked the sea dry as a bone; it was swarming with locusts. He woke.

He had no language of violence at his command. The Gowers were a quiet, temperate-spoken family. But if he had had such a language he would have cursed the slowness of his growth, this long-continued thrall of being a boy.

In his twelfth and thirteenth years he saw little of his mother. She remained in the same position, which gave her little leisure and no holiday. Twice she came to the farm and each time brought the widower’s baby with her. To Shaw she seemed scarcely his own mother, with the ailing creature clambering over her, pulling her hat askew, pressing wet kisses on her face. He could see that she loved it and his heart was torn with self-pity. For the first time he was not sorry when she left, though he mourned her when he was alone in his bed.

But when he was nearly fourteen she wrote to him that she was going to take

him to the great Exhibition in the nearest city. She had a week's holiday. They would spend two days in the city, go to Niagara Falls, and be back at the farm in time to help with the threshing. She was bringing him a new suit, new boots, and a new hat like a man's. He was in a daze of happy expectation.

He got on to the train at the country station and she had a seat waiting for him. He was embarrassed that she should kiss him in front of people, but that was over in a moment and they sat smiling, facing each other. He thought how clean she looked in her starched cotton dress, white with a black spot and a black ribbon round her neck, with the brooch like a little basket of flowers which his father had given her and a brown straw hat with white flowers on it. She gazed at him in wonder, he had grown so. Even the measurements her mother had sent for the new suit had not made her conscious of the reality. He was changed, yet he was the same. Her boy, all she had of her very own. She leant forward and whispered:—

“I hope the new boots will fit. Your feet look pretty big.”

He glanced at her suitcase. “Are they in there?”

“Yes. And the suit too.”

“What color is it?”

“Navy blue. I think that's best for a boy. The hat is brown.”

“My sakes, I'll look a swell! Mamma, I don't see how you'd any room left for your own clothes.”

“I don't need much.”

He wanted to tell her she looked nice but he was too shy. He asked:—

“Are we going straight to the Exhibition from the station?”

“Yes. Elspeth and her parents are going too. I saw them get on the train.”

Shaw had not seen Elspeth that summer except in church. Ian, who was now sixteen, was off on a canoeing and camping trip with the Scotts. At every station Shaw put his head out of the window hoping that Elspeth would do the same, but he had no glimpse of her.

All day, from one great building to another, Cristabel and her son pressed their way among the crowds of sweating sightseers. It was Agricultural Day at the Exhibition and the grounds were thronged with farmers and their families. Through picture gallery, horticultural show, the carriage building, where they gazed in wonder at the first motorcar they had seen, through exhibits from Australia and India, through exhibits of embroidery and needlework, through the machinery exhibit and the exhibit of pianos and organs mother and son pressed their way, he collecting the cards, the paper souvenirs, that were given away, he never wearying of the novelty, the strangeness of it all, her pleasure hampered by the aching of her feet.

They had no regular meal but stopped at little stalls and bought currant buns and lemonade and popcorn and ate them standing. In late afternoon, dropping from weariness, Cristabel sank to the grass on the great lawn near the bandstand where the band of the Coldstream Guards sent its silver music on to the sunny air. Blazing beds of cannas glowed against the grey-green grass, the Exhibition buildings rose in ephemeral grandeur, the lake lay sparkling and unconcerned, a few white sails bending before the breeze. Shaw took the last piece of popcorn from the paper bag.

“Mamma,” he said, “I wish we could go on like this forever and never go back to work.”

“You’d soon get tired of it,” said Cristabel. “It wouldn’t do to play all the time.”

All too soon for her he asked—“Are you rested, Mamma? Can we go on?”

“Where do you want to go now?”

“To the Midway.”

She drew on her shoes, which she had slipped off under cover of her long skirt.

From side show to side show they moved through the magical, straw-smelling strangeness of the Midway, to the music of phonographs, of showmen shouting outside their tents. They heard of Fire-eaters, Conjurers, Strong Men, Fat Women, Ghost Trains, Scenic Railways, but never went inside. As darkness came on there was the flare of torches, electric lights. They bought waffles, fresh from the pot of boiling fat, rolled in sugar, and ate them standing in the straw. And still the day was not over. There was the grandstand performance.

Shaw had not believed there were so many people in the world as he beheld in the grandstand. Tier upon tier the seats rose, and the thousands of white discs that were faces. Yet there were people left over for the performance in the three rings that lay spread before the stand. Cristabel and he, sitting close together, tried to take it all in. The aerial acrobatics, the clowning, the trained elephants, the dancing, the Musical Ride of the Dragoons from the barracks, the horses daintily stepping, the uniforms of the riders splendid. The vast audience sat entranced, the unaccustomed white collars of the men wilting about their sunburnt necks, their womenfolk absorbing glamorous confusion of events to last them for a year, children startled wide awake by the flaming rockets, the roaring cannon of the Siege of Sebastopol.

Suddenly Cristabel saw before her a fine profile that was familiar. She pressed Shaw’s arm.

“Look, there is Mr. Blair! And Mrs. Blair and Elspeth!”

Shaw wondered how he could have sat so near them and not discovered them. He bent forward and touched Elspeth’s shoulder. She looked round, startled, and then smiled.

“Hello, Shaw!”

“Hello, Elspeth! Do you like the Exhibition?”

“Yes. Do you?”

“I think it’s great.”

The minister and his wife were talking to Cristabel. Mr. Blair passed a small basket of peaches over his shoulder. “Do help yourselves. They’re good ones. I can vouch for that. I’ve eaten four.”

Cristabel and Shaw each took a peach. They were large and juicy. “Eat it carefully,” she whispered. “Keep your handkerchief handy.”

The fruit refreshed them. They felt happy to be near the Blairs. What must it be like, thought Cristabel, to have a strong man always by your side making things nice for you, buying things to please you? Her eyes turned to Shaw. He was growing. He had a good kind look on his face and he was clever. She was proud of him.

After the Siege set pieces of fireworks were shown, a glittering head of Edward the Seventh shone against the night sky. The concourse rose to sing “God Save the King” to the accompaniment of massed bands. After the last notes Cristabel leant forward and said—“It seems strange to sing ‘God Save the King,’ after always having a Queen.”

“It does indeed,” agreed Mr. Blair. “I am afraid we shall never see the good Queen Victoria’s like again.”

“Did you go on the merry-go-round?” Elspeth asked Shaw, as they moved toward the gates.

He shook his head. “I’m too old.”

“What side shows did you see?”

“My mother doesn’t like side shows. They give her a headache. I don’t much like them either.”

The Manifolds reclaimed their suitcase, which they had checked at the entrance. Shaw grasped the handle and its weight swung heavily against his legs. The Blairs were swept in a different direction.

“Mamma, shall we take a streetcar?” asked Shaw.

“I think we can walk. There’s no object in throwing money away. I’ll take a turn with the suitcase.”

“It’s not heavy.”

They trudged on together through streets that, at first, were peopled by the returning fair-goers, then almost deserted. Beautiful streets, Shaw thought, as they passed under the spreading boughs of maple trees and saw green lawns with neat borders of geraniums in the light of the electric street lamps. Here and there a garden

hose had been left out, with the sprinkler slowly turning and a silver spray of water falling on the flowers and grass.

Shaw would not relinquish the suitcase and it seemed very heavy when they reached the house where they were to spend the night. It belonged to Cristabel's brother-in-law, a real-estate agent. His wife, Jane Gower's eldest daughter, opened the door. She was a quiet, prim woman who already looked old though she was only middle-aged. She kissed her sister affectionately and smiled dryly at Shaw.

"You look tuckered out, Cristabel," she said. "Come right in. I've a good cup of tea waiting for you."

Shaw had never seen a house so orderly, so quiet, as this. The furniture, the carpets, the gilt-framed pictures, filled him with awed respect. When they sat about a table eating cake and fruit and drinking tea, the sisters talked together in subdued voices. The husband, with a hollow-cheeked face above a very high white collar, rarely spoke. When he did it was to try Shaw with a ticklish date in history or question regarding the products of some remote country. While the women cleared away the supper things, he continued his questioning of Shaw and then said:—

"When you've passed your matriculation I might take you into my office."

"Would I live here, in this house?"

"No. You'd board somewhere near my office. You'd just earn enough to pay your board for the first year. Your mother would have to dress you."

"I'll talk it over with my mother," said Shaw judicially.

He had a camp bed in her room. He was curled up in it almost asleep when she came to bed, but he opened his eyes.

"Mamma, Uncle Henry says he might take me into his office when I've got my matric."

"So that was what all the talk was about!"

"Do you want me to do it?"

"Do you want to?"

"I don't know. Would there be money enough in it?"

"I don't think it's what your father would have wanted for you, Shaw. He and I set our hearts on a university education for you. I'd like you to have a profession. And your Uncle Henry's pretty near, though dear knows I shouldn't say that under his roof."

She had taken off her dress and now she threw forward her head and let her abundant brown hair fall over her face. She began to brush it with a graceful movement. It had always fascinated Shaw to see her do this. Gazing at her, with the tranquil feeling in his heart which her presence inspired, he fell asleep.

The next day they went to Niagara Falls, Shaw wearing the new suit and hat Cristabel had brought. He scarcely believed in himself as he sat on the deck of the little steamer eating doughnuts and drinking hot coffee. The lake stretched, grey and smooth like polished pewter, to the wooded horizon. For a long way gulls followed the boat, swooping and crying. An Italian took a harp from a green baize bag and played music that filled Cristabel with pensive happiness. She gave Shaw a copper for the musician. It was the first time he had given charity.

The stupendous jade-green Falls with the thunder of their descent impressed him less than the crossing on the steamer, which on the return trip was rough and wild. Uncle Henry and Aunt Matilda were sick and somehow seemed to blame Cristabel and Shaw for it. But for them they might have been safe at home.

Sitting in the fresh cold wind, on the lunging bow, Cristabel wrapped her coat close about herself and her boy. A strand of her hair was blown across his cheek. The flaming sunset gave a glow to their faces and turned the foam-edged waves to rosy pink.

“Just think,” she said, “we must catch the train at nine o’clock and to-morrow is the threshing.”

CHAPTER VIII

Roger and Jane Gower were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary and from distant places, even as far west as Manitoba, children and grandchildren came for a great reunion. A dozen sons and daughters, of whom only three were unmarried, and of the married only one widowed, brought nearly thirty children, some of whom were grown-up, for the celebration. Pantry and cellar could scarcely contain the roast meats, the pastries and cakes, that Jane and Esther had prepared. The anniversary came at a propitious season, for the summer work was over yet the weather remained fine and warm. A gentle bluish haze softened the brightness of the sky, and pumpkins and squashes strung on the sun-baked vines, ripe apples and plums dropping from laden trees, were eloquent of harvest and the fulfillment of hopes.

Roger Gower began the day by kissing his wife of fifty years. This was their third kiss.

Jane was not expecting it. She was taking the two best tablecloths from a drawer in preparation for the feast to be spread later in the day. Her daughters stood about her and her daughters-in-law, their eyes approving her store of clean fresh linen. At the other end of the room the menfolk talked together.

Suddenly the stocky figure of Roger detached itself from the rest. He advanced resolutely, his wide blue eyes fixed on Jane, his body strong in his stiff Sunday clothes. His sons and sons-in-law ceased talking and watched him with twinkling curiosity. They felt the purpose in his progress toward their mother, were conscious that a rite was to be performed.

Roger laid a square hand on each of her shoulders. She was taller than he. Suddenly his beard advanced, her lips were lost in the jungle of it. Each was mirrored in the other's eyes. They stood transfixed, inarticulate, a little dazed by the sudden intimacy of a sort not enacted in forty-nine years, since their first child lay on Jane's arm.

Now a charming pink flooded her cheeks. She looked at her daughters, shamefaced yet proud.

"I guess you think your pa's pretty silly this morning, don't you?" she said.

"I want to show you young ones I haven't forgotten how to kiss," said Roger.

"I'll bet you could give us lessons in making love," said Leslie, and Beaty rocked with laughter.

Even the least affluent of the descendants brought some offering, a basket of

peaches or jar of thick cream. Cristabel had crocheted a shawl of fine white wool for her mother and a scarf with fringe for her father, though his thick beard made it scarcely necessary. Those who came from the greatest distance were lodged in the farmhouse, the others in the houses of near-by relatives. Letitia and Beatrice, the brides of five years ago, had three children each. Two of Beauty's were twins, with a depressing resemblance to Leslie. She was seldom without one of them at the breast, though they were more than a year old. The women talked almost exclusively of babies.

Shaw and two cousins of his own age attended to the placing of horses in stalls, their watering and feeding. Shaw scarcely knew these cousins and they found little to say to each other. They thought themselves superior to him because they came from the open prairies and had lived the life of the West. He found that they knew little of books and had no ambitions beyond successfully running a farm. Farming and everything connected with it were distasteful to him. He felt himself an alien among his kin. He thought that they looked on him with suspicion and dislike and he was not far wrong. There was something about this tall, heavy-browed, sully son of Cristabel's that roused antagonism in the family. He gave himself superior airs, they thought.

The exception was Aunt Becky. From the moment of arrival she singled him out for attention and praise. Her oily black hair still showed no grey. She was corseted tightly into a maroon velvet dress and wore long gold earrings in the shape of fans.

"Do let this lad sit beside me at table!" she exclaimed, as they were disposing themselves for the two o'clock dinner.

"The young ones are waiting till we've finished," objected Jane Gower.

"He's not a young one," said Becky. "Look at the brow on him. Look at the way he's matriculated at fifteen! He's no child. If there's anything I admire it's brains, and Shaw's got 'em."

Jane pushed out her upper lip and stood irresolute, a flush of annoyance at her sister-in-law's interference dyeing her cheeks.

Roger Gower settled the matter. He made sounds through his beard that were translated as agreement with Becky, and, not for the first time in their fifty years of marriage, Jane faced him at table with a feeling of annoyance.

"Now, Shaw, sit right here," said Becky, drawing him to a place at her side. "When the conversation begins to be dull we can talk to each other."

"I suppose you'll converse in Latin, eh, Ma?" said Leslie.

She turned her beady black eyes on him. "Well, one thing is certain, we'll not converse in guffaws and grunts, the way you and Beauty do."

The couple were discomfited. A chuckle ran round the table. Jane looked rather more put-out and Shaw slid into the chair beside his great-aunt. He was glad to be there, because opposite him was his mother and he had seen little of her in the past two years. Now his grave eyes scarcely left her face till she shook her head at him, smiling a little sadly, and he looked away.

Roger Gower began to cut slices from the roast of veal stuffed with sage dressing. Jane added potatoes and parsnips. Brown gravy was handed about. From outdoors came the shouts of the waiting children and in a near-by bedroom Letitia's baby kept up a steady whimper, though it had a sugar cookie to comfort it.

Merton's large blue eyes were fixed on his brother. When his mouth became sufficiently empty for speech, he said oracularly:—

"Fifty years is a long time, Roger, but I well remember your wedding day and the feast we had afterwards. Goodness me, what a yellow beard you had then and a shock of hair too!"

"Well, I haven't done so badly," mumbled Roger. "Look at this tableful and listen to the riot outside and the squalling in yonder! No man can say my quiver isn't full."

"I guess I've helped a little," put in Jane.

"Thirteen times in childbed!" exclaimed Becky.

"And you only once, Beck," said Roger.

"Look how I've kept my figure!" She gave him a sprightly glance.

"There is nothing the matter with mine," said Jane, and she looked upright and spare in her new black silk with lace at the neck.

Roger said to Merton—"You'll never show such a tableful as this on your golden wedding day."

"We'll have to make it up in grandchildren," returned Merton.

This set Beaty laughing, and until her gasping subsided no further conversation was possible. Then Becky asked of Cristabel—"What are you going to make of this clever boy, Crissie?"

Jane interrupted—"You shouldn't call Shaw clever in front of him. He's conceited enough."

"I don't think he is a bit conceited and, if he is, he's got something to be conceited about."

"I want to put him through the university," said Cristabel, "but it will be hard to manage."

"What do you want to be, Shaw?" asked Merton.

"I don't know," answered Shaw. "Except I don't want to be a farmer."

"I'd pity the land you'd farm," put in Mark.

"He can scarcely tell a cow from a steer," added Luke.

"Make a doctor of him, like his father," suggested Becky.

"He doesn't take to medicine."

"Well, we'll need a doctor after this feast," said Merton, his eyes fixed approvingly on the wedges of pumpkin pie that the girls were handing about.

But the meal was not lingered over, for there were the waiting children to be fed. When the table was reset they swarmed into the room, scarcely able to wait for the food to be placed on their plates. They snatched pieces of the crumbly homemade bread and began on it.

A rare mood of joviality descended on the two old brothers. They began to chaff each other about escapades of their early life. They made veiled references that could only mystify their wives and families. Suddenly Merton threw both arms about Roger and, hugging him close, danced him round the room, both of them surprisingly light on their feet, their luxuriant beards flying in defiance of their years, their blue eyes wide in surprise.

As Merton felt his brother's body close against him, a remembrance of early manhood came to him with strange vividness. All about him faded and he was left with Roger in his arms, Roger smooth-faced and fair-haired, crying bitterly for love of a girl he could not have, sobbing over and over that he could not live without her, threatening to kill himself if she refused him again. And then—he had ended by marrying Jane!

They came to a standstill, out of breath.

"Man alive!" said Roger. "You've got me winded!"

"It's good for the folks to see what we can still do," declared Merton.

The young ones about the table were staring astonished. The two old wives grinned in exhilaration at the display of vitality.

Later friends and neighbors called. The Blairs with Ian and Elspeth, she at fifteen tall and slim and pink-cheeked. Shaw found that he could talk to her without shyness. Her flowered organdie dress was beautiful, he thought, and the new dignity she had acquired at the Presbyterian Ladies' College.

Dr. and Mrs. Clemency also called, she looking smaller, paler, and more pampered than ever; his skin of a deeper ivory tone, his back still straight and his air of haughtiness not softened by age. He had assisted most of the young Gowers into the world.

"I want to talk to you, Mrs. Manifold," he said, taking her arm. "Shaw, you walk along with my wife. Lead her to our phaeton and mind the rough spots. Her shoes

are very thin and she's as delicate as a bit of gossamer.

"Now," he continued to Cristabel, "tell me about your boy's health. Is it good? Does he still eat the spinach I ordered?"

"I'm afraid not, doctor, but his health is good. At least, he doesn't complain."

"Do you see much of him?"

"Very little. It's not easy to get away."

"What about this matriculation? Are you going to send him to the university?"

"The authorities won't take boys of fifteen. I wish you'd advise me what to do with him in the meantime."

"Why don't you let him study forestry? Reafforestation and the conservation of our forests is going to be an important thing in this young country. Let your boy take a course in forestry at the Agricultural College and then go in for a postgraduate course in the United States. He'll be able to help himself through by outside work." On a subject that interested him, Dr. Clemency was eloquent. He talked on and on.

Shaw waited with Mrs. Clemency beside the phaeton. Her poodle sat on the seat beside her and, as soon as the wheels began to turn, broke into hysterical barking. Mrs. Clemency produced a small whip and began to beat him on his woolly sides. He paid not the least attention, seemed only to scream the louder. The doctor ceremoniously took off his broad-brimmed black hat and bowed to Cristabel.

"Think over what I've suggested," he said, "and don't let the boy work too hard."

Dr. Clemency and Cristabel had other talks. He procured a prospectus from the Agricultural College for her. The outcome was that Shaw began the next term as a student there, in years much the youngest, in ambition a senior.

Now for the first time he was free of the farm. He was in a way his own master, for his future, so his mother and Dr. Clemency told him, lay in his own hands. He looked at his hands, seeing, as it were, a globe held in them, and a sea with ships sailing on it, and dense forests climbing up the sides of great mountains.

On the first night in the house where he was to board he could not settle down to work. He was too conscious of the new life about him and the strangeness of freedom. There was an electric light in his room and he could sit up as late as he liked. In the morning there were no chores to do.

There were other boarders in the house, but they were on the floor below. He had a small back room at the top next to the one occupied by the daughters of the house. Olive waited at table. Her mother did the cooking and the elder sister, who was weak-minded, the work of housemaid. Shaw had a glimpse of the father sitting on the back porch peeling vegetables, a vague loose-jointed man, subservient to his

stocky, hard-working wife. Shaw could hear the young girl Olive moving about in her room and wondered if it was as nice as his, with a white counterpane, a dressing table with two brackets, on which were two china vases that would not hold water. A picture of a female figure clinging to a cross hung on the red flowered wallpaper.

Shaw was now separated from his former friends; Ian and Douglas Scott were at the university, Ian taking an engineering course, Douglas expecting later to enter on the study of law. Ronald Scott was at the Royal Military College in Kingston. But they were sworn friends, had promised themselves reunions in the holidays.

The Agricultural College was fifty miles from the farm, on the outskirts of a market town. Like the town, it was built of grey stone, and the country about was hilly and traversed by a river that ran through wooded gorges. Shaw liked the hills and valleys. He liked to wander through the town staring into the shop windows. He chose things he would like to have bought for his mother and Elspeth. He would stand staring at a workbasket, lined with blue satin and fitted with sharp bright scissors, odds and ends of ivory, a silver thimble, and he would feel himself giving it to his mother, feel the touch of her astonished hands as she took it from him. He would hear himself say casually—"Look, Mamma, here's something I thought you'd like." But he must stop calling her Mamma. She must be Mother from now on. "I sort of thought you'd like this little workbasket—Mother."

For Elspeth it was generally something to wear, perhaps a white silk parasol with a ruffle round its edge, a smooth polished handle with a crook. The presenting of this was more formal. "I hope your parents will allow you to accept"—he grew hot at the mere thought of it. Better leave the parasol in the shop than to go through that ordeal.

In truth he had nothing in his pockets beyond what was necessary for mere existence. Every week Cristabel wrote to him and sent the money for his board and a little over for stamps and having his boots mended and to buy notebooks. She was resolutely saving up for his postgraduate course in forestry. Now they were both satisfied that this was to be his work.

From the college library he got all the books he could discover on this subject and devoured them. When the work connected with lectures was done he read these till midnight, keeping the dark blind of his window drawn and laying a towel across the crack below the door, so that it might not be seen that he was using so much electricity.

But the young daughter, Olive, could hear his movements through the thin partition. She said one morning as she placed his porridge before him:—

"You work pretty late, don't you?"

“Well, not so very late,” he answered, anxiety shadowing his eyes. “What made you think I did?”

“I heard the papers rustling.”

He stared. “But you couldn’t! Not through the wall.”

“It’s an awful thin partition. Can’t you hear me?”

“Hear you doing what?”

“Oh, just heaving a sigh or two. I’m tired when I go to bed. Well, not so tired as just lonesome.”

“I don’t hear anything when I’m studying. I don’t stay up as late as you think.”

Olive smiled. “If you think I’m worrying about electricity you are mistaken. I don’t care how much you burn. I’ll never mention that you study late.”

Relieved, he turned to his porridge, but Olive lingered. “Have some more sugar,” she said.

He added a large spoonful of brown sugar to the dish before him.

“I could help you with your lessons,” she said.

“Sakes alive!” he exclaimed irritably. “I don’t have lessons, Olive. I have lectures.”

“Well, lectures then. I could help you learn things by heart.”

“I don’t learn things by heart.”

“Whatever you do learn then. Can I come into your room and sit quiet and watch you study?”

He was flattered. He looked into her odd, dusky face. She was not pretty but there was something in her face that he could not put out of his head. That night he heard her, as she had said she did, heaving a deep sigh on the other side of the partition. He rapped on the wall.

“Hello!” she answered.

“What’s the matter with you?”

“Nothing. Just lonesome.”

“You can come in if you like.”

“All right.”

In a moment she opened the door.

Her black hair was hanging about her face, she was in her stocking feet. She came in and sat on the foot of the bed.

“That’s what I read,” he said, and showed her a ponderous volume on diseases of trees.

She laughed. “My goodness, aren’t you clever!”

“If you like, I’ll tell you what I know of the different species of trees of British

Columbia.”

“I’d love to hear.”

She sat cross-legged on the bed while Shaw, with boyish pedantry, poured out his accumulation of facts about the redwood, the spruce, the pine, and the fir.

“I don’t see how you can possibly have learned so much.” Olive’s eyes were bright with admiration. “I guess you’ll be a teacher, won’t you?”

“No. I’m going to try for a Government job.”

“I’m glad you let me come in. It’s better than being in bed with Nellie. She’s so restless.”

“Well, you’ll have to sit quiet while I study,” he returned not very graciously. “This may be fun for you, but I can’t waste my time.”

But even though she sat still, Olive’s eyes followed Shaw’s every movement. He grew to like her presence, and on the nights when she spent the evening out he missed her.

Olive showed a deep interest in trees and in all the experiments connected with them which Shaw laboriously explained to her. Her eyes widened when he told of the white-pine weevil and the methods tried for its control. Her lips parted in wonder, showing her pretty teeth, when Shaw described the damage done by forest fires and the enormous cost of fighting them. She seemed never to tire of listening to Shaw and when he talked to her he felt himself stronger, older, more important than ever before.

He made no friends in the college. He was so much younger than the other students that there was little in common between them. He was outside the circle of their social life. The snatches he overheard of their gossip, their flirtations, raised a still stronger barrier. When the day’s lectures were over he was still a young boy running home from school. He never had had a mother to run home to. Now he had Olive. He began to think of her as soon as he neared the boarding house. He began to control in his mind the facts he would deal out to her that night.

Olive’s gratitude found free expression in giving him the best that the kitchen afforded, in feeding him to the limit of his capacity.

There he was, the youngest boarder of all, occupying the cheapest attic room, yet for him was the best cut from the joint, the plumpest sausage, the largest piece of pie, cream on his porridge! It did not stop even there. Olive began to carry titbits to his room at night—sultana biscuits, wedges of chocolate cake, sandwiches with a filling of maple sugar. She brought a share for herself too and, spreading a table napkin on the little table, arranged their feast.

Perched on the foot of the bed, she listened to all Shaw had to say, her dark

eyes glowing into his, the even edge of her white teeth showing between her red lips. Olive had never heard of such a thing as make-up, but her face might well have been the product of a sophisticated beauty parlor. When Shaw said anything that gave her an excuse to laugh she snatched at it with primitive eagerness. Once she began it was difficult for her to stop, yet she must never laugh above a low note for fear of being heard in the room next door.

One night her sister did hear her and suddenly appeared in the doorway wrapped in a plaid shawl, her imbecile face contorted into a pleased smile.

“Huh!” she said, smiling at them.

“Oh, Nellie,” said Olive, “you mustn’t come in here! Go back to bed!”

“Huh!” said Nellie, coming into the room.

Shaw stared at the strange girl, half afraid, but Olive snatched up the cakes she had brought and pushed them into her sister’s hands. She took her by the arm and led her back to her room. Shaw could hear her scolding Nellie, and Nellie’s whimpering.

When Olive returned Shaw asked:—

“Will she tell?”

“Never. She’s eating her cake now as happy as can be.”

“Will she come again, do you think?”

“I’ve told her I’ll slap her if she does. It’s a shame I had to take away your cake, Shaw.”

“I don’t mind. . . . Now, Olive, about the process of the manufacture of pulp and paper, I was just going to tell you . . .”

“Oh yes, Shaw, do tell me!”

They settled down to serious exposition on his part, tireless receptivity on hers.

One night toward the end of the term Olive said:—

“Guess what I’m doing.”

“I’m no good at guessing.”

“Go on, try to guess!”

“I can’t. Tell me.”

“It’s something nice.”

“What?”

“I’m making a Christmas present for you.”

“A Christmas present! What like?”

“Oh, awfully nice—and useful too. I’m putting a lot of work on it.”

“Well, that’s kind of you, Olive.”

“I’ll tell you what—I’ll give you my Christmas present up here, the night before

you go home, and you give me yours at the same time.”

“Me give you mine?”

“Yes. Your Christmas present to me. You are going to give me one, aren’t you?”

“Oh yes. Of course.”

But the thought of it filled him with dismay. He lay tossing in his bed. How could he possibly get the money for a present? It was impossible. He must tell Olive that it was impossible. Then she would not give him the present she was making. But he wanted the present and he must find a way of giving her one! The thought of asking his mother for extra money crossed his mind, but he put it away.

In the morning his eyes were caught by a book he had brought from the farm. It was one of Shaw Gower’s books, bound in calf and with tinted illustrations. He had always liked this copy of *Doctor Syntax*, but now he made up his mind, in his desperation, to sell it. But—was it his to sell? Surely it belonged to his grandfather! Then he remembered how one day his grandfather had said to him—“It’s a good thing you’ve got those books, for no one else has ever wanted them.”

They were his, there was no doubt about that. He took the book to the college that day and sold it to a bookish senior for a dollar. A load was lifted from his mind. Now he began to wander from shop to shop, wondering what he should buy for Olive.

At last he decided on a handkerchief box of light wood, with violets hand-painted on the lid. He carried it to his room in mingled jubilation and foreboding. He had saved his face, but surely some retribution would follow such extravagance! He counted the days to the last day of term.

That night Olive brought a bottle of homemade wine to his room, in addition to slices of currant cake and some lemon biscuits. Her hair was tied at the back of her neck with a red satin bow. She looked mysterious and teasing.

“Where’s that present you were talking about?” he asked gruffly.

“Present?” She stared.

“Yes. Present. You said you were making me one.”

“My goodness, Shaw, I’ve forgotten all about it!”

“Do you mean to say you haven’t got any present for me?”

“Sure I do.”

He stared at her in hate. He had sold one of his most valued possessions that he might buy a present for her and now she’d forgotten the one for him! Well, he wouldn’t give it to her. He’d keep it for a wedding present for someone, perhaps for Elspeth when she married.

“Oh, what a puddinghead you are!” cried Olive. “Look behind you, on the bed!” He looked and saw a paper package lying on the pillow.

“Open it, you silly!”

He undid the string and discovered a small cushion, stuffed rather hard and covered by the yellow silk ribbons from cigars, sewn together with a herringbone stitch in black.

He turned it over in his hands. “It’s lovely,” he said. The color mounted to his pale face.

“I made it myself,” said Olive, “out of cigar ribbons the men boarders saved for me. Smell it! You’ll feel like a real man with that smell in your room, won’t you?”

“You bet.”

“Do you really like it?”

“It’s grand. . . . I’ve something for you, too.”

“For me? I never expected anything.”

“You told me you did.”

“I was just fooling.”

His book, his precious book, gone—and she expected nothing! He said warily:

—
“Well, I was just fooling too. I haven’t got anything for you.”

“What! Nothing for me? Oh, Shaw, I didn’t think you’d be so mean!” Olive’s voice was sharp with disappointment, even anger.

“Who’s a silly now?” He opened a drawer and took out the handkerchief box.

Olive accepted it rapturously. “It’s perfectly lovely. I’ve always wanted one. My—what good taste you have!”

But somehow the edge was off their pleasure. They munched the cake and sipped the rhubarb wine with gravity. When they said good-night she leant toward him, her head tilted so that her rose-flushed cheek approached his.

“I’ll miss you awfully,” she said. “I wish you weren’t going home for the holidays.”

“So do I. I’d rather be anywhere but on the farm.”

All through the holidays, which he spent in felling and sawing up trees with his grandfather and uncles, the thought of Olive dwelt with Shaw. Her face flashed before him, vivid and teasing. He wondered what she would expect of him next term. Whatever it was, he hoped it would not cost money.

But when the term opened he found work for his spare time in the office of a manufacturer, checking up accounts, sending them out, addressing circulars. He worked from four to half-past six and earned two dollars a week. This he deposited

in the savings bank to help with his postgraduate course. He was proud that his mother entrusted this to him. When he stood before the wicket waiting for the entry to be made in the book the dingy room expanded, he had a sense of space and power about him. On Saturdays he worked till eight and added another fifty cents to his earnings. He did not tell his mother of this. It was to be a surprise.

It was a brilliant winter, not so cold as of late years. But Shaw felt the cold because he now had little exercise. He was tall, his skin very white, his eyes seldom losing their look of searching gravity. His clothes were a little shabby but not poor. His hands were now big enough to wear gloves that had once been his father's. He turned up the collar of his coat against the wind.

Returning to the boarding house on a Saturday night, he always stopped outside the skating rink to watch the skaters through a crack in the fence. He would stand there for a long while in the snow, wondering what it felt like to skim across the hard ice to the music of the band, under the starry sky. Sometimes a cutter drawn by a spanking horse would dash along the road, the music of its bells penetrating for one glad moment the brazen rhythm of the band.

One Friday evening Olive said to him—"I think you might offer to take me to the rink, Shaw. After all, I've been pretty good to you. It's hard on a girl not to have fun like the others."

"But I have no skates," he objected.

"That doesn't matter. We have a pair a boarder went away and left. They'll fit you, I know. Do let's go! I'm dying to." Her soul was in her sparkling eyes. She drew a deep breath of longing.

"I don't skate well enough," he answered, feeling sullen because he knew that he was already lost.

"My goodness, you can learn in an hour!" she cried. "It would be lots of fun to go together. I never have any real fun and neither do you. Come on, say you will!"

"Show me the skates."

She brought them to his room. "I have a new pair I got for Christmas," she said. "The boarders clubbed together and got them for me. They said they guessed you'd like to take me to the rink."

It was a good thing, he thought, that he had not told his mother of the extra fifty cents he earned on Saturdays. The next night he went from the office straight to the rink. Olive was waiting for him there, the two pairs of skates dangling by straps from her arm.

"Hello!" She greeted him with assurance. "The ice is lovely and there's not a crowd yet. Hurry up and I'll give you a lesson."

It was not Shaw's first effort at skating. He had made an essay at it on the frozen pool on the farm with an old pair of skates that had belonged to one of his uncles. In a short while he was able, with Olive's support, to go from one end of the rink to the other in time to the music of the band.

Now he was inside the fence. He knew what it was like. His blood ran through him fiercely, eagerly. He felt as though he had broken chains that had bound him. He felt like a prisoner set free.

The next day he was stiff, the muscles along his shins as though bruised, but his mind was clear. He studied all the day without weariness. Olive could talk of nothing else but skating and the fun they would have on the next Saturday. She sought even more than before to lavish the best from the kitchen on him.

All the next week he looked forward to the skating on Saturday night. When the day came he could scarcely keep his mind on his work. In anticipation he felt the joy of the rhythmic movement, Olive close at his side swaying to the band, the icy fire struck by the skates from the glistening frozen sheet beneath them.

And so throughout the winter Shaw spent the extra money earned, in skating. One night a week was not enough to satisfy Olive so they went twice. They became accomplished skaters, for she had a natural grace, a fearless poise; Shaw was well-built and possessed long straight legs. Other skaters turned to look at them, the girl's hair curling beneath a woolen tam-o'-shanter, the solemn boy skating as though for his life.

But no enjoyment could dull the reproaches that gnawed at his heart. He was using money for pleasure that should have been saved for his education, hoarded for his mother's sake. Certainly she would not have squandered her earnings so. At the end of the skating season he added up what he had spent at the rink and was horrified. He sat on the side of his bed staring blankly before him. As he worried over the sum dissipated it mounted up and up till there seemed no end to its possibilities. If he could have the winter to live over again, he thought, he would be firm and resist Olive's persuasions.

In early summer Cristabel came to see him. As usual she sent no word. The day she had discovered her mother beating Shaw had made such an impression on her that she always felt she must appear unexpectedly in order to find out if he were being well treated.

Olive let Cristabel in at the door. The girl wore a white shirtwaist and a blue tie and skirt. She smiled with assurance at Cristabel, who thought—"What a nice-looking girl! But she thinks too much of herself. I wonder if she's good to Shaw." She said:—

“I’ve come to see my son. I know he’s not in, but I’ll wait for him if you don’t mind. I guess I’ll find some mending to do.”

“Will you go straight up?” said Olive. “Shaw will be glad to see you.”

There was a possessive tone in her voice that Cristabel did not quite like. As though she—the boy’s own mother—needed to be told that he would be glad to see her!

“Thank you,” she answered with dignity, and mounted the stairs.

Nellie was sweeping the top landing. She gave a nervous start when she saw the stranger and flattened herself against the wall, broom in hand.

“I am Mrs. Manifold,” said Cristabel, “and I’ve come to see my son.”

Nellie smiled in pleasure. She said “Huh!”—and sprang to open the bedroom door wide.

Alone in the room, Cristabel took off her hat and laid it on the bed. She had seen the room only once before, when she had engaged it for Shaw. Now she looked about her in earnest.

It did not look very well cared for, she thought. There was a large cobweb in a corner of the ceiling and the window was grimy. She examined the bed. Hard and lumpy, the pillow showing the imprint of his head, the sheet wrinkled and out at the foot. She pulled off the bedding and shook the thin mattress violently. Then she put on the sheets, smoothing them and tucking the counterpane firmly in place. She plumped up the pillow. Then she crumpled a newspaper and polished the window with it. She drew the paper across the cobweb and wiped the corner clean. She looked into the ewer and saw that it was only half full, the interior covered by a greenish film. And she was paying her hard-earned money to have this room kept in order for her boy! She took up the ewer and carried it to the landing. There she stopped and considered. It would look fussy to carry down the ewer on her very first visit. Perhaps it might make the landlady less agreeable to Shaw afterward. She might speak of it to that girl just before leaving. She took the ewer back to the room and set it in the basin. She stood looking at it. She could not endure it. The thought of Shaw’s washing his face, brushing his teeth, in such water angered her. She lifted the ewer from the basin and carried it to the kitchen.

The kitchen looked clean and Olive was alone in it beating eggs for a custard. Cristabel held the ewer out to her.

“I must ask you,” she said, “to keep the ewer in my son’s room cleaner. The water in it is not fresh.”

Olive smiled at her unconcernedly. “Shaw doesn’t wash there. He washes in the bathroom on the floor below. But I’ll clean the jug if you like.”

Cristabel stood feeling abashed while Olive tolerantly washed the ewer at the sink and filled it with fresh water. "I'll carry it up for you," she said.

"Thank you, I'll carry it," answered Cristabel.

But Olive would not let her. She carried it lightly and easily up the stairs and set it decisively in the basin. On her way out of the room she swept her hand across the table and brushed off some crumbs. Left alone, Cristabel discovered that they were crumbs of cake. She smiled. However did Shaw get cake to eat in his room!

She set about overhauling his clothes. The drawers that held them were in a state of disorder. Sleeves and legs of garments were tangled together. Notebooks were tumbled in with collars and ties. She frowned as she straightened them, but her heart melted in pleasure at the touch of his belongings. She was surprised when she discovered the skates, hanging on the back of the door. He had never mentioned skating to her.

She heard a door shut below, then silence; then his step on the stair. She had a sudden childish impulse to hide that she might surprise him. She could not resist it. He opened the door, then it closed behind him. From where she was hiding behind the cretonne curtain that hung across a corner of the room and made a clothes cupboard for him she could see him clearly. He stood motionless inside the door, his head raised like a young animal aware of some new presence near by. He looked straight ahead of him, his hand on the doorknob. He scarcely seemed to breathe.

"Shaw," she whispered.

He took two strides and flung back the curtain.

"Did I frighten you?" she asked.

"No, Mamma. Why did you hide?"

"I don't know." She came from behind the curtain and kissed him. "Are you glad to see me?"

"Yes. I'm glad." He pressed his face on her shoulder. She passed her hands over his growing frame. She said:—

"You're growing so, you'll soon need a man's clothes. Did Papa's gloves fit you?"

"Yes. They're fine."

They sat down side by side on the bed and she asked him questions about his studies at the college and his life in the boarding house.

"I don't think much of the way they do your room. Do you see any difference in it?"

He stared about. "No. I don't see anything different."

"A lot of use there is in tidying up for you! Don't you miss any cobwebs? Don't

you notice that you can see through the window? And the drawers! My goodness, Shaw, they were a sight.”

“Oh yes, I see now.”

“They ought to keep your room decent. I pay them for it.”

“They work awfully hard. They’re kind to me. Olive’s as kind as can be.”

“Is that the dark girl?”

“Yes. She brings me cake or apples or ginger cookies every night.”

“Where?”

“Here.”

“Into your room?”

“Yes. Here. Her room is next door.”

The color rose in Cristabel’s cheeks. “She has no right to come into your room at night! I saw the cake crumbs she is too lazy to clean up. How long has this been going on?”

“All the time.”

“Every night?”

“Almost.”

“How long does she stay?”

“Till she is sleepy. I tell her what I’m studying. We have something to eat. Then when she’s gone I go on with my work till late.”

Cristabel sighed. He was moving to a new circle outside her life. But she must put out her hand, hold him, help him while she could.

“Shaw, you must promise me not to have that girl in your room any more.”

He was dismayed. “But why, Mamma?”

“Surely you can understand. It isn’t proper. Some night—” She hesitated. “You’ve never been a little free with her, have you?”

“Free with her? How?”

“You’ve never kissed her?”

He made a grimace, but he reddened.

“No!”

“Well—you mustn’t let her in any more. Tell her the cake disagrees with you. Tell her that she interrupts your work. Promise, Shaw.”

“All right, Mother.”

“That’s my good boy!”

“But you needn’t think we’re sweet on each other. I’ve no use for girls—except to talk to.”

“I’m glad of that. I don’t like flirtations between young boys and girls.”

He was pleased that she could think of him in such a light. He felt that he was a child no longer. He watched her moving about the room putting his things in order. A close prenatal twilight hedged them in. They spoke in undertones. When her dress touched him as she passed a tremor of blind joy went through him. He listened as she told of her life in the widower's house, of the news of her many sisters and brothers and their families which interested her so deeply and him scarcely at all, except that it came from her mouth.

He was proud to take her downstairs to the evening meal, a sort of tea-supper with scrambled eggs and fried potatoes, preserves and tea biscuit. Cristabel was proud of him too. He was so grown she had, for the first time, a sense of leaning on him. He was clever, advanced far beyond boys of his age. When he was spoken to he listened gravely, considering his reply before he answered. She could see that the other boarders respected him. Olive waited on them demurely.

Upstairs again, Shaw lay on the bed watching Cristabel darn the holes in his stockings, patch his underwear. When she had finished she laid her hand on his head and they were silent, knowing that the moment of parting was near.

He took her hand and laid it under his cheek, feeling the roughness of her needle-pricked fingers on his face. Presently she was conscious of tears running from his eyes on to her hand. She was troubled. It was years since she had seen Shaw cry.

“What is it, dear?” she asked, laying her other hand on his hair.

“I’ve done such a mean thing, Mamma,” he answered in a muffled voice.

“You couldn’t do a mean thing, Shaw.”

“But I have.”

“Tell me, then. Perhaps I won’t think it’s mean.”

“I’ve been earning fifty cents extra every Saturday night and I’ve spent it—taking Olive to the rink.”

“But how often did you take her?”

“Twice a week. All the winter.”

“How much did it cost you?”

“Over six dollars.”

“Over six dollars! It was a good deal.”

“I didn’t seem able to help myself.”

“I hope you’re going to have a mind of your own. It’s a bad thing for a man to be weak.”

“Oh, Mamma, I’m sorry!”

“Never mind, dear. It wasn’t a very terrible thing to do. I only wish you could

have fun like other boys, with a good conscience.”

He answered vehemently—“I do have fun! I’ve always had fun! I didn’t need to squander my money on taking a girl out! It was a mean trick and there is no use in you saying it wasn’t, Mamma!”

He had abased himself. He had told all. His heart was free. A deep tranquillity came to him, as though through her flesh. They sat silent, the light from a street lamp making a silver plane on the ceiling, the corners of the room receding into the twilight. It seemed to Cristabel that in those dim corners their future waited for them, vague, full of a shadowy portent toward which she could only grope. From below in the house the sound of an organ played by one of the boarders came up to them. The time for parting was drawing near.

CHAPTER IX

Shaw spent his seventeenth summer in bicycling through the countryside soliciting subscriptions for a newly published woman's magazine, at the same time writing reports on agricultural conditions for a provincial newspaper. He was determined to waste no more holidays in working to the limit of his endurance on his grandfather's farm for no more than his keep.

This life was congenial. From house to house, through prosperous towns and villages, from farm to farm, he displayed the bright-colored magazine to the women of the household, and not without success. There was something in his young, reflective forehead, his mouth with its look of resolve and endurance, that inspired confidence. The women believed him when he told them they needed the *Ladies' Home Companion*. Indeed Shaw was himself convinced that they needed it. The women of his family had had no such cheery companion for their leisure and he felt they would have been the better for it.

At night he slept in lodging houses or in farm bedrooms. He talked to the farmer of stock and crops and, when he found the people interested, told them of his own work and advised them about the setting out of plantations of trees. On hot nights he slept in barns, lying on the hay with his books before him, catching the last light for his studying, alone but never lonely, seeing in each morning an advance toward manhood and achievement. He would wake in the sweet-smelling hay to see the cracks in the hayloft shine redly in the sunrise, the festoons of cobwebs turn from ghostly to gay, the walls of the barn opening in promise of forests in the West. He saw the forests stretch on and on to the mountains and the sea. He saw the plantation of saplings sending their roots deep into the virgin land, stretching their branches skyward, their trunks thickening to the bulk of great timber. When he was alone he could think of nothing but trees. His hope and his future were in them, root and branch. His florid imagination pictured them marching in vast armies across the plains, at his command. He had been a being of no consequence in the Gower household yet always dreaming of himself as in command, in the fantastic events of his world of books. Now, lying in the hay or cycling along the hot dusty road, he saw himself establishing forests, controlling conflagrations, a man of trees. Sometimes he was so deep in thought he would pass a house, forgetting the sale of the magazine. Then he would turn back and force his mind into the work of the hour.

The heads of the college became interested in Shaw. In all his spare hours he worked as laboratory assistant. He was not like the other students. He had no

interests outside his work. He needed none. He was complete in the globe of his spiritual egotism which surrendered nothing. Physical discomfort affected him almost as little as it had affected medieval saints. Yet he was no Spartan and dreamed of luxury for himself and Cristabel. He dreamed of the time when he might buy all the books he wanted, when he would go through a catalogue of books, marking the ones that interested him, sending for all of them by return post. His mother should have a sealskin coat and a beautiful handbag full of money to take the place of the worn leather purse.

Shaw found no necessity of a formal break with Olive. When he had returned to the boarding house after the holidays she had become a different girl. She had an admirer among the boarders, a young bookkeeper in a large store who took her out or sat with her in the parlor every evening. On him she now lavished the best from the kitchen and scarcely seemed aware of Shaw's presence. His relief was deep and he settled down in serene solitude to his winter's work.

Trees, trees, trees. He read of them, talked of them, dreamed of them. The walls of his little room were covered by pinned-up pictures of them. He saw them when he closed his eyes. The fir with its blunt cones shining with resin. The Douglas fir, with its sharp cone that showed no resin, the hemlock, the cedar, the blue spruce, the poplar, rising out of sweet fern and bracken. He saw the pine, the birch, the mountain ash, the sugar maple. He saw them, not with the eye of the artist, but with the eye of the forester. His spirit was lifted, not by their beauty but by their symmetry, their vigor, the grandeur of their possibilities.

One summer he worked on a grain boat on Lake Superior. He worked hard, keeping to himself, reading whenever he had the chance. His eager eyes swept the boundless forests that lined the shores. He saw a great fire that turned the sky red and sent deer and wolves to the open settlement in panic. He grew brown and tough as a young pine and learned to like the life and the men who lived it, to feel no fear of the violent storms. But his constant worry was money—to save enough to put him through the two years' postgraduate course in the States. He spent nothing, yet all his something was so little. Because of the expense of travel he and Cristabel did not see each other for two years. He wrote long letters to her, pouring out the details of his work, his plans, mystifying her with technicalities. She strove to understand all, to write letters as long as his, but her letters were full of news of her family which she knew did not interest Shaw at all, but which she could not prevent herself from repeating.

In his last year at the college he was offered work, through the influence of its principal, in the Department of the Interior in Ottawa. At the same time he had a

letter from Ian Blair to say that he and Elspeth were to visit the Scotts in Ottawa that summer. The Member of Parliament and his family now spent a part of each year there. It was to be a happy reunion.

Shaw could scarcely believe that he and his friends of childhood were to be together again. He had made no friends to replace them. The hours spent in the pirates' cave shone bright in his memory as his happiest, dimming to nothingness his hardships, the lack of love or kindness in his home. He was to be with the other three pirates once again, exchange the password with them. He was to see Elspeth. Would she remember the paintbox she had given him? Would she have become proud or distant or "citized" after the years in the Ladies' College? In the long train journey to Ottawa his mind strained forward to these meetings, eager yet shy, fearful that he would be too unlike the others for happy mingling, yet somehow conscious that he was older in experience than they. Their youth was prolonged, while he had strained toward manhood from a child.

Lodgings had been found for him, by a member of the Department, in a hilly street with a view of the river. The room was better than any he had yet possessed and, as he settled himself in it, his eyes wandered through the window to the tree-shaded streets, the winding river, the glimpse of the Parliament Buildings. He was impressed by the thought that in Rideau Hall the Governor General lived with his family in viceregal state. What would that be like, he wondered. Ceremonious, with flunkeys, soldiers in dress uniform, receptions and balls! Here was he, Shaw Manifold, living in the heart of things! He returned to his unpacking, hung his few ties on the gas bracket, set his books on the mantelshelf. He looked in the glass and realized that the time had come when he must buy a razor.

The office where he spent his days seemed palatial to Shaw, with its polished oak floors and portraits of famous parliamentarians. His superiors were considerate. The Department, not long since organized by a Western Member, was keen to prove the need of its existence. He was there a week before he could make up his mind to call on the Scotts. He suddenly saw them as remote, people of another world. He had a glimpse of Ronald in Sparks Street, in the uniform of a cadet of the Royal Military College. Ronald looked altogether too grand. Then Shaw remembered him as a little boy, plodding to school through deep snow and generally with a cold from enlarged tonsils.

But one warm moonlit evening Shaw decided that the time for the call had come, if ever it was to be made. He dressed carefully, brushing his clothes with the brush that had once been his father's, tying and tying again his necktie so that the worn place would be underneath. He had bought a razor and had shaved with but one cut.

He covered this carefully with sticking plaster, trying one shade after another till he achieved a patch that satisfied him. He thought he did not look too countrified.

The exterior of the Scotts' house was not imposing. It was very much like others in the substantial residential street, set in shrubbery where syringa gleamed white in the moonlight and filled the air with its scent. But he was not prepared for the elegance of the interior, the gilt-framed mirrors, the satin-covered settees, the velvet cushions with tassels at the corners. His eyes under their heavy brows took it all in, as he waited. The doors opened and Elspeth entered.

They had not met for three years. Now they stood staring, trying to recognize boy and girl in youth and young woman.

"You are just the same, Shaw," she said, smiling and self-possessed.

"You're different, Elspeth. You're so grown-up."

"Of course you are grown-up too, but your eyes are the same. Ian and I are so glad you're here."

"Do you remember the paintbox?" he asked, then wished he hadn't, she blushed so deeply.

"I can never forget it," she answered. "It was cruel. I mean they should have let you keep it."

"It didn't matter. I have nothing of the artist in me."

They were silent a moment, not knowing what to say next, then Douglas appeared in the doorway, a billiard cue in his hand. He wore white flannels.

"Hello, Shaw! I hope I'm not interrupting some sweet scene."

It was Shaw's turn to color. The implication that there was anything between him and Elspeth left him speechless. She said:—

"Don't be silly, Douglas. We were just going to the billiard room."

These words on the lips of a minister's daughter were so incongruous to Shaw as to be almost painful. He associated billiards with poolrooms behind public bars. The sight of the cue in Douglas's hand made him feel awkward. Young Scott led the way to the billiard room, where they found Ronald making a shot and Ian lighting a cigarette.

Ian turned to Shaw, his face bright. "Hello! Isn't this grand? Blood on your brow!" This had been the pirates' password. Douglas and Ronald now repeated it with solemnity.

"Blood on your brow!"

"Blood on yours, brother," answered Shaw, touching their foreheads in turn.

"Whatever does it mean?" cried Elspeth.

"You are not supposed to hear," said her brother.

Ian was the same as ever. The freckles on his nose, his gay, reckless laugh, did more to bridge the years than any words could do. The room was vibrant with excited young voices. The game was forgotten. Ian was going in for civil engineering. Douglas Scott for law and, later, politics. Ronald's ambition was a commission in a distant part of the Empire, India preferred.

Elsbeth sat listening, her hands in her lap. She wore a flowered organdie dress with elbow sleeves. Shaw had never seen short sleeves on a girl before. He liked the fashion and thought her slim white arms beautiful. He did not like the wrist watches worn by the Scotts. They were affected and effeminate, he thought.

Mr. Scott came in later and sat on the leather sofa in the glare of the lamps. He was a stout, sagging man who perpetually had a cigar between his lips. The casual brotherly relations between him and his sons filled Shaw with wonder. Curiously he found, now the excitement of the reunion was over, that he could talk more easily and freely to this middle-aged man than to the other youths. . . . What is wrong with me, he thought, that I can't chatter and laugh the way they do? My face feels stiff when I try. Nonsense and chaff won't come naturally to me and I feel stupid when the others talk it.

Mr. Scott was speaking and Shaw realized that his attention had wandered. He turned his searching grey eyes on the older man's face.

"I was saying that young men nowadays don't know what it is to deny themselves luxuries. I lived simply and worked hard, I can tell you, when I went to college."

"We are not all so lucky as Douglas and Ronald," said Shaw. "It's going to be a pull for me to get through my postgraduate course—even if I work like a nigger and live like a Spartan."

"It's a pity your father died."

"Yes, it is a pity."

"Your mother is a fine woman."

"Yes," agreed Shaw, with a sudden feeling of resentment, as though he had been told that he did not appreciate her, "she is."

"It will be a great day for her when you get through."

"Yes, sir, it will."

"Good shot!" cried Ian. "What are you going to do about it, Ronnie?"

Ronald bent his graceful body over the table.

"I am glad," went on Mr. Scott, after a glance at his sons, "that you have your present job. It will be a help to you in every way. You'll make friends with people in the same work."

“Yes,” said Shaw. He felt that something was coming.

“I have been wondering,” said Mr. Scott, “if you would like me to lend you a few hundred dollars.”

The room reeled with Shaw. He gripped the arm of the sofa where they sat to steady himself.

“Do you mean it, Mr. Scott?” he asked. He stared at the mature, kindly man, with a strained, unbelieving smile, as though he had suddenly shown the attributes of a god. “You don’t really mean it, do you?”

“I certainly do. When I see a young fellow as keen as you are, I like to put out a helping hand to him.”

“But what about security? There ought to be security, oughtn’t there?”

“I knew your parents. I know you. Your word is enough, Shaw.”

“Well, sir,” said Shaw grimly, “it will mean just this to me—that I can eat as well as study.”

Mr. Scott was embarrassed. Pointing a forefinger at Ronald, he exclaimed:—

“That boy pretends to be fond of his mother and me, but will he apply himself? Will he take our advice? Never!”

Ronald grinned and began knocking the balls about. The game was finished.

Ian said, in a ministerial voice—“Why callest thou me, Lord, Lord, and doest not the things that I say?”

The Scotts had a summer cottage on the shore of Blue Sea Lake and Shaw was invited to spend the week-ends with them there whenever he could. But after the first he did not go again. For one thing Ian and Elspeth were no longer there. Another reason was his inability to join in the life of the summer colony. His solid cloth suits, his uncompromising black boots and old-fashioned ties, set him aside, he felt, less than his inability to take what was said to him other than seriously, to chaff when there was nothing to chaff about, to laugh when he was not amused.

Ian was to finish his course as civil engineer the next spring. He was to be a member of a forest-survey party on Riding Mountain of which Shaw was to be put in charge following his examination in July. He had made an impression in his work in the holidays. He was the star student of the college. Cristabel was to have a new dress to attend the graduation ceremonies. Her heart was joyful that her boy was fulfilling his promise. She saw the day approaching when they would have a house, for the first time in their lives, if only he did not marry young, as some boys did, and have nothing left over for his mother! She pictured herself seated in the college hall for the graduation ceremonies, professors in gowns, visiting celebrities on the platform; Shaw, the most brilliant student of all, the one who had graduated with the

highest honors; there would be few who would know who she was, but later at the reception she would be at his side and everyone would say—"That is Shaw Manifold, with his mother!" Everyone would know that he was leaving the next day on a responsible mission. Cristabel had not been so happy since before the death of her husband.

Several days before the ceremony, a few hours after the last examination, Shaw appeared at the house where she was employed as housekeeper. One of the daughters answered the door and ran to her with the news. The young girl was excited by his arrival and would have returned with Cristabel to the sitting room where she had taken him, but Cristabel would go alone. She was anxious, even frightened, by this sudden coming. She went into the room and closed the door behind her, looking at him questioningly, her blue eyes wide.

"Hello, Mother," he said, and bent and kissed her. How tall he was! How he brought her old life into the room with him, all unconsciously, cloaking her with past sorrows, stirring her heart with forgotten joy, blotting out the room they stood in.

"Is anything wrong?" she breathed, his kiss still warm on her cheek.

"No, nothing is wrong. But I've decided to catch the late train to-night for the West. I've just been thinking how foolish it would be to waste several days waiting for a ceremony that means nothing to me. By the time the reception is over I can be at work."

"Is there so much hurry?"

He stared at her surprised. "Has it ever been right for me to waste time?"

"But—Shaw—"

"What is it, Mother?"

"Nothing."

They stood looking at each other. She repeated to herself—"Has it ever been right for me to waste time?" But . . . then, surely this was different! Never again would there be an occasion like this for her.

"Are the college authorities urging you to go?" she asked.

"Urging me!" He laughed. "On the contrary, they are very much annoyed with me. No one is urging me—but myself." He took an impatient turn across the room. "Mother, I must be off! You understand, don't you?"

"Yes. I understand. But you will be able to stay awhile with me, won't you, Shaw? You will be able to stay to tea, surely?"

"Yes. I can do that."

"Where is your baggage?"

"At the station."

“And to think that I have never been over your clothes! What sort of state are they in?”

“Clothes won’t matter where I am going, Mother.”

“Have you any loose buttons or holes I could darn while you are here?”

“I broke my braces this morning and tied them together. You might put a stitch in them.”

“What a good thing you thought of that! We’ll go to my room.”

She led the way up the stairs. Inside the room she said:—

“This is where I’ve slept all these years and you have never seen it before!”

“Is it a good bed?” he asked.

“The mattress is good but the springs sag. But it’s a fairly good bed.”

“You just wait a little, Mother, and I’ll get you one of those shiny brass bedsteads, with a hair mattress and a big pink satin eiderdown quilt.”

“That will be grand.”

He looked about the room. “Who are these?” he asked, picking up a photograph of children from the dressing table.

“Those are the children of the family when they were younger. That is the one who answered the door.”

He looked at the group disparagingly. “I don’t think much of them. Is this the kid you brought to Grandma’s once?”

“Yes. That is Jimmie. He’s a pretty boy now.”

“He was always whining then.”

“He was very delicate.”

Shaw was jealous of them. Cristabel felt that and was amused and pleased. He was not really grown-up after all. He took off his coat and sat down while she mended his braces.

The sound of a piano came from below.

“Who is playing?” he asked.

“That’s Alfred. He’s going to be a musician. He’s very talented.”

“He is the one you always liked, isn’t he?”

“Yes. He is a nice boy.”

Shaw sat in his shirt sleeves in the rocking chair swaying quietly while she stitched. The two in a room alone together. She imagined what a home would be. Her eyes rested on his broad chest.

“You have a good chest, Shaw. You are going to be a strong man. I used to be afraid for you—because of your father and because you worked so hard when you were little. It was a shame.”

“I’m as strong as a horse.”

As she touched his body putting the braces in place, a deep tenderness for him welled up in her. “I hope the work you’re going to won’t be dangerous,” she said.

“Don’t you worry, Mother.” He took out the watch that had been his father’s and looked at it.

“It’s easy to say don’t worry, Shaw.”

“Well, I haven’t given you much cause for worry, have I?”

“It isn’t you I worry about. Not your behavior. It is the dangers you may be going into. You don’t know what a mother’s thoughts are.”

He looked at her speculatively. “No, I suppose not.”

“For one thing I always have such a hurried feeling when I’m with you. I try to remember the things I’ve wanted to say, but I forget most of them till we’ve parted again.”

“You can write them to me.”

“I’m no good at writing.”

“I like your letters, Mother.”

There was a tap on the door. It was the daughter of the house to say that she would make the tea ready, so that Cristabel need not leave Shaw. He thought his mother was too casual in her thanks.

“What a nice girl,” he said.

“She is showing off, because of you,” answered Cristabel. “She’s the hardest to get on with of all the family.” Then her face softened. “They’ve been very kind to me. They don’t need me any longer. I think I must find a new position.”

Shaw drew down his brows. “I wish you could stop work. It seems to me I’ve been half a lifetime growing up.”

“To me it seems you’re growing up very fast.”

“I hope there won’t be any children where you go next.”

She was surprised. “Why do you wish such a thing?”

He hesitated and then said—“I don’t like children.”

She thought—“He is jealous, because he loves me so.” She looked at him tenderly.

“Mother,” he said suddenly, “I guess you’re disappointed about not wearing your new dress at the Closing.”

Cristabel could feel the color rising to her face. She thought, “I’m like a silly girl about that dress!” She was ashamed. “It doesn’t matter much. I needed a new dress terribly anyhow. But if it hadn’t been for the Closing I’d have made it myself. I had a good dressmaker do it.” She tapped her teeth nervously with the tips of her nails,

thinking of the outlay.

Shaw read her thought. He said, in the hearty voice of a comforting man:—

“Put it on, Mother. Let’s see you in it!”

“Very well.”

She went to her closet and took the dress from its peg. It was a brown taffeta with puffed sleeves and lace jabot. She slipped off the print dress she wore, looking for that instant girlish in her short petticoat and corset cover, and put on the taffeta. She fastened the collar with a gold brooch.

What a difference clothes made!

“Mother, you look grand!” he exclaimed. “Turn round! Keep turning round! What a lovely dress!”

She was proud of it, pleased by the scrap of herself she could see reflected in the tiny glass.

“Perhaps it was a good thing I had the dressmaker do it. It will be my best for years.”

“You just wait and see,” he said.

She wore the dress down to tea, sitting at the end of the table, facing the widower. He was a chinless man with a large Adam’s apple. “To think,” thought Shaw, “my aunts suggested that Mother should marry him!”

Mr. Worden was very pleasant, however. He asked Shaw questions about his work that showed how he had followed it all those years with interest, though Shaw was unknown to him personally.

“We feel we know all about you,” he said.

The young people looked at Shaw with curiosity. They had heard so much of him and here he was in the flesh. To Cristabel it was strange to see him sitting at that table. She felt, as never before, that her own son was a stranger to her compared with these people of no kin. In closest intimacy she had watched the development of these children’s characters, witnessed their griefs, their tempers, their small triumphs. If she were to count her hours with Shaw how pitifully few they would be! Yet—her eyes turned in love to his face—what revealings in those few hours! Their two souls . . . the mother and son souls . . . that lapped together, as two waves, after separation. This was more than years spent together. Yet—how she regretted those years of separation! Here at her side was a youth of nearly nineteen, in height and breadth a man, self-possessed, his face inscrutable, going forth to his work in the world, and what had she had of him?

“I suppose,” Mr. Worden was saying, “you will be traveling on a tourist ticket?”

“No; I have a pass from Ottawa,” answered Shaw.

A railway pass! To travel thousands of miles for nothing! The faces about the table turned to him in wonder.

“Your expenses paid, right to Dauphin?” exclaimed Mr. Worden.

“Yes.” Shaw looked at his watch. “I shall have to go soon.”

The girls urged him to more of the jelly roll. The young musician stared vaguely in front of him, uninterested in a life of action, his Adam’s apple, like his father’s, moving up and down as he swallowed his tea.

“Your mother looks quite the lady in that dress, doesn’t she?” said Mr. Worden.

“She is a lady,” returned Shaw gruffly, and Cristabel blushed for his rudeness.

She changed into a coat and skirt and walked with him to the station. The sun was low but sent shafts of dazzling light between the houses on to the road. There had been a shower and the air was washed and renewed. Children were being called in for the night. Their young voices echoed in the last moments of freedom. Cristabel laid her hand on Shaw’s arm. They passed from light to shadow, from shadow to light.

If only it were farther to the station, she thought. She walked more slowly, pressing the firm muscles of his arm under her fingers.

“Are you tired?” he asked.

“Oh no. But do we need to walk fast?”

“No. There’s plenty of time.”

“Shaw, you shouldn’t have answered Mr. Worden like that.”

“Like what?”

“You know what I mean.”

“I don’t like him.”

“Not like him! And he’s been so kind to me!”

“He ought to be. There aren’t many women who would have worked like you have for him.”

“But that shouldn’t make you dislike him.”

“I dislike everyone you work for. I want you to be independent.”

“The time will soon come. It’s wonderful to think you’re earning money already.”

He drew a deep breath and looked down at her.

“Mother . . .” he said.

Her eyes filled with tears. “There is the station, Shaw. Have you your ticket? I wish you would show me that railway pass. I’ve never seen one.”

He sat staring out of the window as the train sped through the night. At first he

saw the lights of villages, then, as it grew later, few lights except those at the railway stations. The great train tore through villages and stations without stopping, bound for the West, the land of young hopes, of promise, of defeat. He strained toward it, his big young body hunched at the window, his short past behind him, his future secret in the night.

He thought of the thunderous speed of the flying train; thought of the slow painful progress of the French pioneers hacking their way through the forests, crossing the lakes, facing the treachery of the rapids, the darker treachery of the Indians. For here the night was heavy with romantic mystery. The negro porter bent over him.

“Kin Ah make your berth, sah?”

“Yes. I think I’ll go to bed.”

He savored the experience of going to bed early. How many years was it since he had been in his bed before midnight? And generally two o’clock—up in the morning at seven to study before breakfast. When had he had enough sleep? Yet his brain seemed always cool, his eyes ready for more reading. What part of him was tired, he wondered, for he was conscious of weariness. Not his body, not his brain, not his nerves, certainly not his spirit. He found no name for this weary something which was in truth the flower of his youth, drooping and undefended.

The porter placed the steps for him to climb into the upper berth.

“Is it your first trip to the West, sah?”

“Yes.”

“Goin’ to make your home there, sah?”

“I’m not sure yet.”

“Just to make your fortune, eh, sah? It’s a great country for young men, they say. Will it be ranching you’re going to do, sah?”

“No. Forestry.” He could not say the word without experiencing a vibrant tightening of the nerves. He looked intently into the negro’s eyes. “My work is to be among trees.”

White teeth gleamed in the dark face.

“Ah likes trees. Ah likes to sit in the shade of a nice tree, with a nice gal, and have a little pleasant conversation. It’s a great change after life on the trains. Ah hates trains, sah.”

He drew the curtains about the berth. The whistle shrieked at a crossing. The roadbed became less smooth. There was a grinding, a jerking, a swaying. Then by degrees the level swift movement returned, speed increased. The man in the berth below began to snore. Shaw switched on the light and looked at his watch. Eleven o’clock and he in bed! Prepared to lose precious hours in sleep. For some reason

the curtained privacy of the berth reminded him of the pirates' cave. For three nights this was his own. For three days the new country would unroll itself before him. And then . . . the new life. He lay with closed eyes but not unseeing. Forests flowed like rivers before him, his eyes marking, even as they sped, the various species of the trees and which ones thrived together. Then out from a wood of pines his mother's face peered at him, sorrowful but steadfast. He looked long at it and his lips formed her name. He turned his head on the pillow and pressed his fingers on his eyeballs. The rhythmic throbbing of the train stirred, rather than soothed, him. He lay, feeling the drawing of his breath an intolerable burden in the close heat. The boundless unfolding of the forests before his shut lids became unbearable. In his mother's eyes there was reproach.

Again he switched on the light. He took a leather bag from the foot of the berth and out of it one of a packet of books given him by the Minister of the Department at Ottawa. He rested his head, with the fine brown hair standing disheveled, on his hand and read far into the night.

The surveying party moved on and on. With their pack horses, their tents, their supplies, their Indian guides and half-breed workers, they penetrated the lonely forests, the winding reaches of rivers that not long since had been roaring torrents in flood. Spruces and firs loomed black behind birches and maples, aspens and alders. The heat of the sun brought sweet scents from earth and bracken. In grassy spaces flowers blazed bright as butterflies, butterflies drowsed like flowers. Sometimes they came on a bear drinking from the rim of a little hidden lake. Sometimes the great antlers of a moose thrust through the foliage, his eyes staring in wonder and gathering alarm.

Ian joined the party at Dauphin. At the earliest possible moment he had transformed himself into a woodsman, as far as clothes could do it. He made friends with the men, where Shaw was reserved. Some religious magnetism which he had inherited from a line of Presbyterian pastors induced casual acquaintances to tell him of their spiritual experiences. In his vicinity there was always talk. In Shaw's, unless Ian were there, long periods of monosyllabic concentration. At night the two talked together in their tent.

Sometimes the flap of the tent was left open and they lay looking at the moon as it mounted the dark blue sky and hung high above the aspiring peaks of the spruces. The call of the coyote came to them out of the forest. The cooling earth sent out its sweet night smells.

Once Ian asked—"Shaw, do you believe in God?"

“No, I don’t think I do. Not in a personal God.”

Ian raised himself on his elbow, his eyes bright in the moonlight. “Not believe in God! On a night like this!”

“I don’t see what difference the moon makes. It’s a pagan-looking thing, anyway.”

“That’s just what I mean. On such a night I have to keep remembering that the real God is a Scotch Presbyterian or I’d turn pagan myself. At the same time I find the thought of God’s personal interest in me very comforting. I think it matters terribly to God whether Ian Blair is good or bad, happy or unhappy. Don’t you think it matters to God what becomes of you, Shaw?”

“No, I don’t think it matters.”

“If everything went wrong with your affairs and you felt yourself in an awful fix, would you pray to God to help you out?”

“I might. I can’t tell.”

“Well, I’d pray for you. I’d say, ‘Look here, God, it’s up to You to help Shaw Manifold. Don’t You go turning the light of Your countenance from him. He’s worth a dozen like me. He’s worthy of all exaltation. Oh, Lord, keep Your holy eye on Shaw Manifold!’”

“You sound like a revivalist, Ian.”

“I feel like one—or a Catholic priest. I’d like to be a Catholic priest.”

“If your father heard you say that . . .”

“My father doesn’t understand me in the least. Do you remember the Jesuit father we saw yesterday? The one with the beard? When I looked into his face I thought—‘You could understand me far better than my own father could.’”

Sometimes, when it rained, they lay listening to the raindrops on the canvas, reading by the flare of a torch or writing home. Once Ian said:—

“I’m writing to Elspeth. Have you a nice message for her?”

“Give her my kind regards.”

“Is that the best you can do?”

“Well, affectionate regards, then. Tell her I try to keep her brother in order.”

Ian chuckled. “I’ll soften the blow as much as I can. Elspeth admires you.”

The torchlight on his face gave it a strange charm. Shaw contemplated it with pleasure, then returned to his book.

After a little Ian remarked, as though to himself:—

“The young man doesn’t believe in religion and he doesn’t believe in love.”

“I’ve had no experience in either.”

“Aren’t you pining for experience in love?”

“No. Are you?”

“Yes. Ever since we’ve been on this trip.”

“It’s a funny time to choose.”

“Why?”

“There are no facilities.”

Ian rolled over in his blanket. “You make me weak, Shaw. My heart also, in the midst of my body, is even like melting wax.”

One evening, after three days of hard work in great heat, men tortured by mosquitoes, horses by flies, they came on a trapper’s cabin by the side of a winding river. A strong breeze had risen and blown the mosquitoes away. The red sunlight turned the ants that swarmed the trail into metal particles moving in a strange pattern. Spiders came out of their retreats to devour the flies captured.

Outside the cabin a girl of nine was minding a half-naked baby that crept towards the advancing men and horses with a stare of wonder. A man came out of the cabin and the figures of two women could be seen inside the door. Shaw, in advance of the others, discovered something so strangely familiar in the man that he had no words for greeting. Where had he seen him before? That superb body, now naked to the waist, he had seen it exposed before, but when? That classic head, with the close waves of fair hair, that insolent face that had repelled and attracted him, but where? Obviously the man did not know him. He came forward and said:—

“Good evening, and what can I do for you?”

As soon as he spoke, Shaw recognized him. He was the hired man, Jack Searle, who had run off with the neighboring farmer’s daughter, the girl her family had called their “ewe lamb.”

“I hope you’ll know me again,” said Searle.

“I do know you,” returned Shaw. “You’re Jack Searle.”

The man looked wary, then blank. “You’re mistaken, mister. I’ve never heard the name before.” He turned to the door of the cabin. “What’s my name, missus?”

“Jack Potts,” answered one of the women.

“There,” said the man triumphantly.

“I thought,” said Shaw, “that you and I once bathed together in a pool in an Ontario wood.”

“How old were you then?”

“About nine.”

“Good Lord!” Searle’s face cleared. He advanced and offered Shaw his hand. “I wonder I didn’t recognize your face. But how you’ve grown! I do call myself Potts sometimes. Just a whim.” Their hands clasped. “In this country all men are

equal, eh? What's your job?"

"I have brought a party on a forestry expedition."

The others came up, dismounted, and Shaw introduced Ian. They decided to camp by the cabin for the night. The river flowed cool and dark. The tethered horses began to crop the short grass.

"Come into the cabin and have a drink," said Searle. "Whiskey is one thing I have got."

He led the way indoors. The baby crept across his path and he picked it up and set it on his shoulder. The young men followed him, then the little girl, in ragged frock and bare legs and arms, her skin tanned a dark brown, contrasting strangely with her silvery fair hair. She stared boldly into the faces of the strangers.

Inside the cabin there was a sickly smell of drying skins.

From the ceiling a haunch of venison wrapped in dingy muslin was hung up to dry. The one small window was dimmed by flies, so that the poverty of the furnishings was only half revealed. Searle placed two chairs and a box by the table. He produced a half bottle of whiskey and, with it in his hand, nodded toward the older of the two women.

"My wife, gentleman. I think you've met her before."

Ian was mystified, but Shaw's eyes met hers with embarrassment and compassion. There was no need for either. From under her untidy hair she regarded him coolly. She was obviously in a family way, her face and figure heavy.

"I guess you've forgotten me, but I remember you all right. You were a solemn-looking little fellow. I used to see you in church with the Gowers. How are all the folks?"

"Pretty well, thanks," answered Shaw. He took the rather dirty hand she extended. Was this the pet daughter, the darling of a family, the "ewe lamb"? What had Potts or Searle, or whoever he was, done to her?

She brought three tin mugs and set them on the table. Ian and Shaw took the chairs that were offered them. Searle seated himself on the box. He poured some of the spirits into each of the mugs.

"Here's to us," he said, "and to hell with the Government!"

"My friend and I can't very well drink to that," said Shaw. "We're employed by the Government."

"Very well," said Searle easily. "Out of compliment to you, we'll drink a health to the Government. Let's hope the people will give it rope enough to hang itself with."

They drank, the rank liquor distasteful to the youths. Ian looked inquiringly at

Mrs. Searle.

"I'm afraid we don't remember each other," he said, with his boyish smile.

"I remember you. You are the minister's son. I was Laura Page."

"Don't you call to mind how she eloped with me?" put in Searle, with the smile that made his handsome face so disagreeable.

Ian flushed. "Yes, I remember now. Is this your little girl?"

"Yes. Her name's Gloria. She's going to be a beauty, eh? When she grows up and gets a real good bath."

Ian laughed, his face already flushed by the spirits. Shaw had in him the quality of a hard drinker. He felt no effect from what he had taken. The child clambered on to Ian's lap and pushed her hands in his pockets. She found a bar of chocolate and began to devour it.

Searle had put the baby into the younger woman's arms. Shaw saw now that she was a half-breed girl. The baby had skin and features like hers, but it had blue eyes and fair curling hair. It began to cry and she carried it outside to show it the horses. It was Shaw's first experience of such a situation. It was as though a dark gulf had opened before him. He had a mind to stride out of the cabin. He felt a little sick and his eyes moved shamefacedly to the woman's. She returned his look coolly. There was a cynical half-smile on her lips. Was it possible that this was Laura Page? Was this the "ewe lamb"? What had Searle done to her?

He was saying—"Why shouldn't I hate the Government? They put us on land that never raised a crop. If it wasn't drought it was sandstorms or locusts. Then we were sold out. We've been knocked about from pillar to post. The Government don't help us. It just leaves us to starve. I'm a trapper now, but whether we can survive on that . . . I say, can you give me a job?"

"I'm afraid I can't."

"Never mind. You will one day. I said you would grow up to be somebody, didn't I? What I prophesy always comes true. And I prophesy that you'll give me a good job yet. Have another drink?"

They refused, but he would not let them go. The company of man, so long denied him, was like rain to the parched land. He talked on—the youths listened to his railing against the Government, his reminiscences of foreign countries, his ribald stories, till fatigue overcame them.

They had a cool plunge in the river, then their evening meal cooked over the campfire. The shapes of the tethered horses were melting into the shadows of the trees. Then men, Indian, half-breed, and white, lay in relaxed postures on the bank of the river, the flare of a match occasionally lighting up a swarthy face or the curve

of a tiny spark marking the tossing of a cigarette end into the water. Cool night smells drifted from under the trees, overcoming the scents from the sun-baked earth in the open. There was a light in the cabin. Shaw had a wary eye on the open window, for he had a suspicion that Searle might attempt to sell whiskey to the half-breeds or Indians.

He and Ian sat apart, recalling all they could of the elopement of Laura Page with the hired man.

"I remember," said Ian, "that the Pages were very decent people. My father always said what a pity it was that your family and they were on bad terms."

"It was over the boundary line between the farms. And I think my folks sneered at the Pages for spoiling their daughter. Calling her their ewe lamb and that sort of thing."

"Isn't it awful?" asked Ian, jerking his head in the direction of the cabin. "If her family could see her now . . . But they cast her off and I think that was a shame. She must be terribly unhappy."

"I don't think she is," said Shaw.

"Not unhappy! Think of the way she's living! The place is filthy."

"I don't believe she cares."

"Then it's because her spirit is broken."

"I don't think it is."

"What about the half-breed girl and her baby? Anyone can see that it is Searle's."

"I think she loves him so much that nothing else matters."

"Shaw, you are a funny fellow! You said the other night that you weren't interested in love."

"Neither I am—not for myself—yet. But there is something in that woman's face —"

"I suppose you're practised in discovering expressions of love—you saw so many aunts in that state. Beaty, for instance."

Shaw pushed out his lips. "I don't call that love. But this . . . I do."

Ian laughed. "My father would have a name for it. He'd have a name for it, smelling of fire and brimstone. . . . That's a strange child they've got. Gloria. . . . She simply wouldn't let me alone."

They sat in silence for a space. The swift darkness of the West was falling but it soon would be light again. A full moon was rising beyond the river. Its light, touching a cloud, threw its golden white reflection on the water. A waterfowl was calling plaintively. The little girl ran out of the cabin across the grass and threw herself on

Ian.

“Come,” she begged. “Come—I want to show you my kittens. They’re in the shed.”

“But they’ll be asleep and so should you.”

She pressed her cheek to his. “No, they’ll not. And I never go to bed till I feel like it. Come along!”

“Why don’t you ask my friend to go? He’ll be jealous.”

“I only like you. Come! Come!” She tugged at his hand.

Ian was flattered. He rose stiffly and allowed himself to be dragged where she chose. Shaw was glad she had let him alone. He stretched himself on the grass, savoring his solitude, listening to the quiet lapping of the moonlit river. Inside the cabin he could see Searle’s naked torso gleaming in the lamplight. He had got three white men in there and they were playing poker.

Shaw did not hear the approaching step. He was startled when the voice of Mrs. Searle came from behind him. He rose, facing her. Her bare arms were folded on her breast, a lock of dark hair hung across her calm forehead. She was saying:—

“I suppose you write home regularly.”

“Yes.” His eyes were troubled. What was she going to say to him?

“I’ve a message I want you to give your folks. I guess no one ever speaks of me now.”

“I haven’t heard your name for a long while.”

She drew a deep breath and stared at the ground. “Well, I guess they haven’t forgotten. Will you give the message?”

“Yes—I’ll be writing in a day or two.”

“Tell your mother that, if ever my name is mentioned, she may say that I have never been sorry for anything I’ve done. Tell her I’m happy and I don’t regret anything, will you?”

“Yes, I’ll tell her.”

She gave him a piercing look. “Do you believe I’m telling the truth?”

“Yes, Mrs. Searle.”

“Do you believe I wouldn’t change places with anyone? Well, whether you believe it or not, it’s true. There’s other things in life beside respectability. I s’pose I shouldn’t say that to a young man, but I don’t believe what other people say matters much to you. You’ll go your own way—like I did mine.” She turned and left him. He heard her calling the child.

He sat looking across the darkling shadows of the river. The camp was becoming quiet. Now and again came the muffled movements of a horse or its deep

indrawing of breath. Shaw gazed into the darkness of the trees. They stood motionless, attentive, as though waiting for him. He thought of the forests, how they stretched on and on, serene, majestic, but so vulnerable. He thought of his life that was to be spent guarding them, fostering them, seeking to understand them, creating them from the tender saplings. Then he thought of Mrs. Searle.

“She loves that man,” he thought, “like I love the trees.”

CHAPTER X

In March of the next year Ian Blair was waiting for Shaw in the lounge of a Vancouver hotel. He was so impatient that he could not keep still but fretted up and down the room, now looking out of the window into the street, now rustling the pages of a newspaper, to the annoyance of an elderly British colonel who was reading the *Spectator* and sipping a liqueur.

At last, when Ian was not looking for him, Shaw appeared in the doorway. He looked so tall, so gaunt in his loose-fitting clothes, so mature yet so oddly appealing, that for an instant Ian let his eyes rest on him in appreciation, without speaking. Then he took three strides to his side.

“Blood on your brow,” he said, in his clear voice.

“Blood on your brow, brother,” answered Shaw, and touched Ian’s forehead with the tips of his fingers.

The elderly colonel glared at them astonished.

“Bloody deeds are to be done,” proceeded Ian.

“Our deeds will be bloody indeed, brother.”

The colonel riveted his blue gaze on them, he compressed his lips under his white moustache.

“Shall we go to my room and gloat over them?”

“You have spoken, my brother.”

The colonel rose with surprising agility and followed them to the door. He made a note of the number of the room to which they retired.

Inside the room Ian threw an arm about Shaw.

“Isn’t it grand that we’re to work together again?”

“Yes. And isn’t it lucky I was able to cut out the spring term?”

“How did you manage that?”

“Well, I did pretty well in the University—”

“Pretty well! I know your ‘pretty well’! I suppose you swept the professors right off their feet. Why be so modest, Shaw? I’m at the other end of the scale. I get through exams by the skin of my teeth. I think there’s something fine in both ways, don’t you?”

“I think you’re a clever fellow, Ian, but bone lazy.”

“Well, that’s neither here nor there. Tell me what you were going to.”

“It was only that I did pretty well and so they have given me leave of absence for this term. It will be taken up with work I know already and will not be much use to

me. The money will.”

“To say nothing of the fun we’ll have!”

“Yes, to say nothing of the fun,” answered Shaw with his grave smile.

They sat down opposite each other by the window.

“You haven’t changed a bit, Shaw. Your smile is just the same as when we played at pirates and you had a licking to face afterwards.”

“I didn’t face that,” answered Shaw, his smile now a little grim. “It came from behind. Lord, I used to be so sore the next day I could hardly sit at my desk!”

“It was a darned shame.”

“Did you see any of my folks before you left?”

“I saw your mother, Shaw.”

What was there in Ian’s voice? A note of anxiety? Or was it only compassion? Was his mother ill? He asked, his eyes on his clasped hands:—

“How does she look?”

“Quite well, but rather tired.”

“She works pretty hard. She’s matron in a boys’ school, one of those private schools where the little devils are pampered.”

“Just like our school! Do you remember Miss McKay and her pimples? I wonder where she is.”

“I wonder. . . . You’re sure my mother wasn’t ill?”

“Oh yes. She was full of your trip out here. But I think it was a great disappointment to her that you didn’t go home last Christmas.”

Shaw’s mind turned back to the logging camp where he had worked in the holidays. He saw the Maine woods, deep in snow, heard the crackling crash of falling trees, the fluent oaths of the French Canadian foreman, smelled the resinous sweetness of the newly severed wood, the hot flapjacks at suppertime.

“I couldn’t go home,” he said. “I worked in a pulpwood camp. Don’t you remember?”

“Yes, I remember.” He looked into Shaw’s strongly marked features. How the fellow had worked! He noted the set look about his mouth, the sharpness of the cheekbones.

“Did you like it?” he asked.

“Yes. It was a pretty good life. And there was lots of food. Coarse—but plenty of it.”

There was a satisfaction in his voice as he said the last words that hurt Ian. Was it possible that Shaw sometimes went hungry?

“Speaking of food,” said Ian, “I’m ravenous. Let’s have some grub.”

“In this place!” exclaimed Shaw. “Not me! Whatever brought you here?”

Ian was crestfallen. “Do you think it’s too grand? I suppose going about with the Scotts has given me a taste for luxury. Did I tell you that Douglas is paying attention to Elspeth?”

“No! Is he really?” It was an effort to Shaw to keep his voice calm, his expression approving. Douglas Scott and Elspeth! Why, she was *his* friend! Douglas had no right to butt in.

“It would be a good match for Elspeth,” said Ian.

“Yes, I suppose it would be a good match.”

Between him and Ian rose Douglas Scott’s full-blooded, good-looking face, his bold eyes; Elspeth’s smooth little head, the frilled organdie dress she had worn when he last saw her. But what could he do about it? It was not for him to choose her admirers. For an uncontrollable moment his face revealed his resentment, his disappointment.

“I had sooner it was you, old man,” said Ian. “But you don’t care for girls, do you?”

“Not very much,” answered Shaw. “But I like Elspeth. I hope she’ll have a happy life.” He put back his shoulders in a characteristic movement. “I’m going to find a boarding place and then see about the supplies and the boat.”

Ian sprang up. “If this is too grand for you,” he said, “it’s too grand for me!”

As they walked down the street, their steps timed in an easy swing, their spirits were buoyant. They had only to push back the boughs of circumstance and gather the fruit of achievement. To find themselves close together again made them, for the first time, conscious of love between them. They had accepted each other casually. Now they realized what it meant to them to swing along the streets of a strange city together, now and again their arms touching, scarcely speaking. Each completed the other. To be with Shaw brought Ian ambition, the largeness of life, a compass for his yearning for volatile adventure. When he was with the Scotts he felt himself a thwarted boy, eager to do all they did but hampered by lack of money and parental disapproval. When he was with Shaw he felt older, freer, capable of fine things.

Ian’s gayety, his zest in adventure, his boyish laugh, made Shaw less serious. Though he was his junior by two years, Shaw had a protective, almost paternal feeling towards Ian. In his heart he associated Ian with Cristabel and Elspeth.

They moved from the area of fine shops to the shops whose windows were crowded with sledge hammers, big saws with teeth to bite into the toughest wood, axes, augers and logging boots, oilskins, blankets, and dungaree trousers. They stood staring into the windows at these, savoring their familiarity with such things,

feeling hardy and knowing, till there lounged up beside them a seasoned woodsman, impassive, mildly critical, his hands deep in the pockets of his dungarees, a squirt of tobacco juice issuing from his lips. They felt suddenly young and inexperienced.

The streets were busy, for there was a boom on. Activity and exhilaration were in the air. Shaw and Ian were to work for an Eastern syndicate which was taking up timber limits. With another man they were to travel up the coast in a steam launch. To find a boarding house, to make the acquaintance of the man, to get the launch ready for the trip, these were the first things to do. As though their lives depended on it, they threw themselves into accomplishing them.

Ian was dubious of the boarding house chosen by Shaw. He had never spent a night in such a doubtful-looking place. Were the beds clean? What was the strange smell? Nothing but Shaw's imperturbable front, the feeling that to Shaw these things were insignificant, reconciled Ian to spending several days there.

The steam launch was a delight to them. The look of it, the smell of it, the knowledge that it was to be their headquarters for months, made them eager to begin the new chapter. They set about storing the *Gertie May* with provisions of tinned foods, smoked meats, biscuits, and all the paraphernalia of their work, with the zest with which they had stored the pirates' cave. In and out of her they clambered, under the eyes of loafers and loggers who hung about the wharf: the sun coming out suddenly hot, burning their cheeks, turning the harbor to a shield of blue that wrinkled into dazzling wavelets.

When the man who was to run the launch, to be their guide, to work with them, an old-timer described as tough and reliable, appeared on the wharf after many inquiries, they were for a moment filled with dismay. Was this the man? This sodden, blear-eyed, dirty fellow, in greasy dungarees and crumpled shirt? He grinned at them, showing his broken black teeth in his unshaven face. He was apologetic and about sixty. His name was Varney.

He explained in a husky voice that he had spent the time while he waited for them in bad company. He had gambled and drunk up all he had made in his winter's work. Now it was over. He was sober and would remain so. When they had been with him an hour they trusted him entirely. They felt like babes beside him.

The night before they left for the North, Varney was missing. They were very anxious and made the rounds of the saloons and bars.

They found no trace of Varney but in one of the lowest of the saloons they discovered Searle, whom they had last seen on the side of Riding Mountain with his wife, the half-breed girl, and his children. Shaw had often thought of him, both relishing and shrinking from the idea of meeting him again.

The room was full of men and fogged with smoke. They stood by the door, Shaw looking over heads, Ian between. A French Canadian logger was sitting on the edge of a table, a fiddle tucked under his chin, his black hair falling across his face. He played with extravagant zest, his heel tapping out the beats, his thin body swaying. In a cleared space Searle was dancing. The dance was wild, uncouth, with stampings and snapping of the fingers, but the beauty of his body and his face, despite ragged clothes and unshaven cheeks, was such that all his movements were arresting.

“Searle!” exclaimed Ian, pressing Shaw’s arm.

“Yes. He looks pretty drunk.”

“Go it! Go it! Good for you! Dance, you son——!” Encouragement and insults were hurled at him. He heard neither. His face was as wild as his dancing. The chucker-out stood behind the bar staring at him, his hands ready, his wary eye fixed, a grin flickering on his pockmarked face.

A big Swede was about to raise a glass of whiskey to his lips when Searle, with a swift movement, kicked it out of his hand. The glass was shattered; the spirits splashed into the Swede’s face. He sprung towards Searle, who, without missing a beat, continued his dance. The Swede struck him!

“Let him alone!” shouted the chucker-out. “I’ll fire him!”

“Vat about my viskey?” stormed the Swede.

“You’ll get some more!”

There was confusion. Searle was hustled towards the door. With an ugly grin he began to resist; then he saw Ian and Shaw.

“My friends——” he stammered, “my dear friends!” and began to cry.

“Are you his friends?” demanded the chucker-out.

“Yes,” answered Shaw.

“Well, get him out of here, then, before he gets his head stove in.”

The young men led him through the dirty hall into the cool moonlit night. Blood was trickling down his cheek.

“Godblessyou,” he stammered. “Was never s’glad to see anyone in m’life. Comeanhaveadrink.” He put his hand to his face and stared blankly at its reddening. “Why—I been hit! Tha’ bloody scoundrel hit me!”

“Where do you live?” asked Shaw.

“Tha’s right! Come and see us! The missus will be delighted . . . welcome you.”

“Where do you live?” repeated Shaw.

“Live?” He looked about him blankly.

“Do you know where your wife is?” Ian asked, a ministerial note coming into his

voice.

An odd light flickered in Searle's eyes. "Yes, I know where she is. You come along and I'll show you. She'll be glad to see you . . . old friends, girlhood days . . . and all that. . . ." The night air was having its effect on him. He gave his unpleasant smile and led the way steadily down a side street.

The houses were dingy and dilapidated, though none of them had been built longer than twenty years. It was getting late and there were lights in only a few. They met a group of Japanese sailors who turned to stare at them, then passed on, their strange tongue clacking on the quiet air. The three turned from this street into a still dingier one, and from it into a lane. There were five dilapidated houses here. Searle opened the door of the last and led the way into a dark passage. A thin blade of light shone beneath a door. At the sound of their steps the door opened and Laura Searle faced them. Her hair was plaited and she had a shawl over her nightdress. She carried a shirt which she had been mending.

At the sight of two men behind Searle an expression of anxiety made her face look wan. She peered into the darkness to see who they were. They came into the light and she exclaimed in relief:—

"Oh, it's you, Shaw Manifold! And Ian Blair! I wasn't expecting visitors, but come in."

Then she saw the blood on Searle's face and gave a cry.

"It's nothing, missus," he said jauntily. "I just ran against a blasted Swede. It don't hurt. Get me a basin of water and a rag." He reeled to a chair and dropped into it.

White but calm, with her lips sucked in, Mrs. Searle placed two chairs for the youths. Ian sat with downcast eyes, ashamed to look about the sordid room, wondering if he dared offer money to the Searles, his heart mild with compassion. Suddenly he saw, as though in a dream, his father kneeling in prayer. For a moment everything else was blotted out. Then he thought, "If he were really here he'd do something about it," and admiration for his father entered him in a warm tide.

Shaw was staring at the cut. As Mrs. Searle bathed it he went to her side and examined it. Searle grinned up at them, his classic head resting on his wife's arm. "It's nothing," he repeated.

"No, it's not serious," agreed Shaw.

His eyes met Mrs. Searle's and hers said—"I'm not sorry for anything I've done. I love him."

Searle asked—"Where are you fellows staying?"

They told him, and he exclaimed in chagrin:—

“You ought to be here! We take in lodgers. You’d better move here to-morrow. We’ll look after you well, shan’t we, Laura?”

“They’d better not come here,” she answered curtly.

“Well, if it isn’t better than the shambles they’re staying in . . .”

She interrupted—“It isn’t half as good and you know it, Jack.”

“We are leaving to-morrow on a trip up the coast,” said Shaw.

“What for?” demanded Searle eagerly.

“We’re working for a syndicate. They’re taking up timber limits.”

“Get me a job,” said Searle. “You can, if you try! I’ve always said you’d get me a job. Why, when you were a little boy, I said you’d do things. I talked to you about your future, didn’t I? And my missus—she was your neighbor. For God’s sake get me a job! Do you know what I’m doing? Beachcombing, by God! Gathering in stray logs—anything that’s cast up. Listen to that! That’s what my wife’s got to put up with.”

The front door had been flung open, stumbling feet were mounting the stairs and husky voices were singing:—

“Has anybody here seen Kelly?
K—E—double L—Y.”

“They’re all right,” said Mrs. Searle calmly.

“I’m afraid I can’t give you a job,” answered Shaw. “There are three of us already, all we are supposed to need.”

“You were saying this morning,” said Ian, “that we could do with a fourth.”

“There now!” exclaimed Searle. “I knew you could find me a job.”

“I can’t promise. I’ll have to see a member of the syndicate to-morrow morning.” He was half annoyed with Ian for encouraging Searle. What would it be like to have him as a companion for months? He believed Searle was a good worker. He remembered having heard that of him on the farm.

Stumbling feet and more singing sounded from the room above:—

“For his hair is red and his eyes are blue
And he is Irish through and through—
Has anybody here seen Kelly? . . .”

Shaw asked—“What about Mrs. Searle staying alone here?”

“Don’t worry about her! We’re being turned out of here—can’t pay our rent.”

“What would she do? And the children?” Shaw suddenly remembered the coming baby, the half-breed girl and her child. “There were other children, weren’t

there?" He reddened a little.

Searle answered with dignity—"Jinny got married to a French half-breed. Our second child didn't live. There's just the missus and Gloria. We know a parson who will give them shelter while I'm away. I'll save every penny and we'll make a fresh start. What d'you say?"

Looking up suddenly, Shaw saw Mrs. Searle's face, alight with a pale hope that seemed like the last flare of all hope, a tremulous shining before despair. His eyes moved from her face to the basin of water on the table, reddened by Searle's blood. "I'll try," he muttered.

The next morning when they went to the launch they found Varney waiting for them, clean and spruce.

"I hear," he said truculently, "that you wuz combin' the town fer me. Did you think I wuz off on another spree?"

Shaw looked him in the eye.

"I might," he said.

Varney glared. "Might what?"

"Might have thought so."

"Well, I tell you, boss, I'm not that sort. What do you take me for? I spent yesterday with my old mother. I s'pose you think a man of my age hasn't a mother, but I have and she's eighty-five!"

Shaw did not believe him but he spoke soothingly to him. Varney began vehemently to put the supplies in place.

Shaw approached "Authority" in its luxurious hotel. It was arranged that Searle was to be of the party. Authority was anxious that the work should be done as expeditiously as possible. The cost of the extra man was insignificant. But Shaw was troubled. Had he done right to take on Searle? Then he remembered that expression on Mrs. Searle's face. The petted daughter—the "ewe lamb."

On the morning they left she came to the launch with Searle. Their little girl held to their hands. She recognized Ian at once and called out to him:—

"Hello, mister! I wish you'd take me with you!"

Ian, standing in the launch, held out his arms and she leapt into them. She had on a clean dress and her hair was smooth, but her stockings were twisted on her legs and there were knots in her shoelaces. Mrs. Searle had contrived a sort of half-tidiness on her own person. The hairpins looked ready to fall out of her hair. Searle was washed and shaved. He had a large piece of sticking plaster on his head. He was proud of his wife and child and kept glancing from them to Ian and Shaw to draw attention to them. He seemed full of energy and anxious to begin helping at

once. But Shaw noticed that Varney gave him a disapproving look.

It was hard to get rid of the child. She clung first to Ian, then to her father, when the launch was about to be pushed off. Shaw had difficulty in hiding his annoyance. It was easy to see that the parents could do little to control Gloria.

Mrs. Searle said in a low voice to Shaw:—

“It was kind of you to get work for Jack. I’ll never forget it.” She smiled into his eyes.

“How pretty she is!” he thought. No, not just pretty, there’s something beautiful in her face. Yet she had always seemed to him an ordinary-looking person. The fresh morning wind from the sea blew her hair back from her face. She put her hand to it. Searle laid his arm about her shoulders and whispered something to her. Then he jumped on board. His child clambered on after him.

“What!” Ian exclaimed jocularly. “You here again?”

“Gloria!” called her mother.

“I’m going with you!” The child wrapped herself round Ian.

Searle picked her up, kissed her, and carried her to her mother. Varney started the engine. The launch moved out on the water, spreading a small wake behind it. Varney sounded the shrill whistle and looked triumphantly at Shaw. They were off.

Searle stood waving his arm.

Feminine voices came from the wharf.

“Good-bye! Good-bye, Daddy!”

Ian’s eyes rested tenderly on the figure of the child. “Lovely little thing,” he said.

“She’s a badly behaved kid,” said Shaw. “She needs a good spanking.”

Now the launch moved out quickly. Gulls followed it, crying out, as though in derision of the enterprise.

“Ah, ya, ya, ya!” they cried, swooping, dipping, swinging on the wind. One hovered low, staring into the faces of the men. “Ya! Ya! Ya!” it cried, its bright eyes full of scorn.

“Ya! Ya, yourself!” retorted Varney, his black teeth showing under his drooping moustache.

The gull, abashed at hearing its own language, dropped to the water and rested there with breast pouted till a cry from its mate recalled it and it rose, the pair of them swimming against the blue sky like tossed-up flowers.

Now the figures of woman and child looked like two dolls. They were turning away from the wharf. Searle sat down beside Varney and grinned ingratiatingly. He had a feeling that Varney had taken a dislike to him.

“What’s the matter with your face?” asked Varney.

The grin faded on Searle's lips. "What have you got against my face?"

"I mean it looks as though you'd been in a fight."

"I ran against a door."

"Oh, is that all?"

"That's all."

The breeze blew fresh across the harbor. On it came the salt tang of the sea. Landward Vancouver curved about the shore, low except for its few tall American-style buildings. Shaw and Ian lounged together in the stern, their faces serene, five months of companionship and work that they liked ahead of them.

Soon the town was out of sight. How quickly the strength of the forest obliterated the print of man's hand! The forests pressed to the very shore, clustered pinnacles of cedar, tall slender pines, sombre spruce. Shaw's eyes swept the forest, its strength spread out before him to be gauged, to be surrendered. He felt his purpose strong in him and his courage high. One year more at college and he would be free! The long-drawn-out burden of his education could be cast off forever. In the strength of manhood he would set his face forward, the chains of youth would be broken.

Ian spoke. "It's grand to be young!"

Shaw turned to look in his face.

"Well, don't you think so, Shaw?"

"Yes," he agreed, "but not too young. Sometimes I've hated being a boy. From the time I was eight I've wanted to be grown-up. I've more reason for it than most fellows; I was just thinking that I've only one year more to put in."

"And I was thinking I'd like to go on being twenty-one forever." Ian offered Shaw a cigarette.

"No, thanks."

"But you like them?"

"Yes. But it's an expensive habit."

"This isn't costing you anything."

"I won't smoke yours."

"Do you ever forget?" exclaimed Ian, exasperated.

"No." Shaw set his lips almost sullenly. His mind returned to the thought of college and the year that was past. He had never deviated from the iron rule to spend no penny on himself that was not necessary. He recalled his washing of his shirts and socks and the awkward mending. The laying of heavy paper inside his shoes when the soles began to go. The sponging of spots on his suits. The small, fine writing to save paper. Above all, the saving on food. Moisture came from his jaws at

the thought of it. He had had a roommate, named Lunt, as saving as himself. Lunt was a raw-boned boy from Vermont. Together they had spent some time in studying dietetics to find out how little the human body could be nourished on. They had had a gas ring in their room and had cooked most of their meals on it. Lunt's father had sent him a barrel of apples and they had eaten them all—raw, stewed, sliced, and fried. Apples, potatoes, turnips, oatmeal, bread without butter. Sometimes a feed of pork and beans at a restaurant. The worst was, in spite of all this bulk, they were always hungry. Hunger and study—study and hunger. Shaw got tired of seeing Lunt's cheekbones push sharper and sharper against the skin. He got tired of his own reflection in the glass—the hungry eyes, the set mouth, the broad pale forehead. Sometimes, after they went to bed, they would amuse themselves by choosing what foods they would like to have set before them.

"A big thick juicy steak," Lunt would say, "with fried onions."

"A slice of roast pork," Shaw would choose, "with a crisp rind and a rich stuffing and applesauce—no, *not* applesauce! I wish I mightn't eat apples in any form for a year. Just the pork, with stuffing and parsnips. And after that, lemon pie."

Lunt would interrupt—"After my steak—plum pudding, pumpkin pie, a gallon of ice cream, and a pot of coffee!"

They would lie in the darkness gloating over the feast, their mouths watering.

Shaw forgot where he was. The launch, the sea, vanished. He was in bed with Lunt, with the noise of traffic in the street below and Lunt's bony knees manœuvring to get an undue share of the blankets.

He was roused by Varney's voice.

"Time for eatin'! Gosh, I'm that hungry I could eat my boots." On an upturned box he had laid out some food. Searle was steering. Ian was sketching on the back of an envelope.

With an effort Shaw drew his mind back to the launch. He looked half-dazed at the three men, at the blue spread of sea and the great March clouds so splendidly formed as to look solid as marble.

"I'm hungry too," exclaimed Ian. "What have you got?"

He had ham and hard-boiled eggs, a bottle of Crosse and Blackwell's pickles, and coffee. He said:—

"Don't get it into your heads that we're goin' to live as high as this all the time."

"What about shooting?" said Ian. "There should be game about."

"I'll cook you a moose steak one of these days," said Varney. He carried some food on a plate to Searle, with an air less than friendly.

Like a nervous dog Searle ignored it at first, then he stretched out his hand and,

without looking at the plate, took a sandwich. In two bites it was gone.

“What’s the matter with that guy?” asked Varney.

“He’s all right,” said Shaw.

“Then why the hell does he look at the grub I gave him as though it was poison?”

“He’s a little shy.”

“I s’pose that’s why he got that punch on the mug—being so shy like.”

“He’s all right,” repeated Shaw. He helped himself to another slice of ham, then turned to Ian. “What were you drawing?”

Ian showed him the envelope, on which there was a sketch of trees. Shaw’s face lighted with pleasure. “It’s good! Why didn’t you tell me you could sketch? I thought it was Elspeth who had the talent.”

“Elspeth never draws now. I’m not much good at it. I wish I were.”

Once again Shaw felt the bliss of possessing the box of paints. He was sitting by the dining table, his grandfather staring over his beard, the brush poised above the map; then the sensation of power as he turned the sea to a lovely blue deepening to purple at its rim. He heard the solemn ticking of the clock, his grandfather’s blowing breath. . . . He turned his mind away from the remembrance of the next day. . . . “I’d like to keep this,” he said, the sketch in one hand, a slab of bread in the other, “if you don’t want it.”

“I’ll do you a better one,” said Ian. “I brought a drawing block in my kit.”

In the months that followed Ian made many sketches. At odd moments, while eating his meals, or when they were in the launch, he drew trees, mountains, the heads of his companions, his companions lounging or sprawled in sleep. He desired only the pleasure of drawing. Shaw collected the sketches.

Searle’s head fascinated Ian. He drew it over and over, and, with almost equal fascination, Varney’s ugly features. He called them Beauty and the Beast. Varney overheard him and was resentful, not toward Ian but toward Searle.

They got on very badly. Not a day passed but hard words were exchanged, and, in some queer fashion, they seemed to enjoy their bickering. The way of speaking of each was irritating to the other. The cockney “oi” sound, the clear “ings,” of Searle’s speech made everything he said sound insulting to Varney. Varney had spent many years in the States and had acquired a twang that sharpened every sneer. He had all the advantage of the old-timer; Searle of the man who had traveled over most of the globe. Varney suffered from toothache. The sight of Searle’s mouthful of white teeth was hateful to him.

Of what nationality was Searle? Shaw never would have asked him, but one day Ian did.

“My mother,” he answered, “was the daughter of a Greek restaurant keeper. My father was a big Swede. . . . I was adopted by a cockney bargee. But his wife, who was an Irishwoman, told me once that I was her own son by an English lord and that all I’d been told before was lies. But she was drunk at the time.”

On and on up the coast the launch nosed her way. The sea was as changeful as the Mediterranean. The forest rose denser and denser against the towering peaks of the mountains. Sometimes a mist would draw itself out of the sea, coiling round the launch with the finality of doom. They lay drifting, imprisoned in the muffled air, the waves moving listlessly against the side, the forest, the mountains, obliterated, as an image by breath blown on a mirror. The men would speak in undertones, their faces dimmed. Varney would gnaw a fresh chew of tobacco from the plug. Searle would snap his white teeth on a broken thumbnail.

Then, like the curtain of a theatre raised to display the stage garnished anew, the mist would rise, rolled up fold on fold to the heavens; the dim sun, at first with the glimmer of old pewter, would show through. Then its brightness intensified from pewter to silver fresh from the mint, the new sovereign’s head glorious on it. From silver to fiery gold, the sun would give back color to the sea, to the sky, to the pine and birch and spruce. The mountains would rear their crested heads proudly. Varney would uncrouch himself and press an oily finger on the lever that started the engine. The launch and the waves would begin to talk together.

“*What* a country!” Ian would exclaim. He never grew accustomed to the space and grandeur of it. He would stand with face upturned to the treetops that seemed designed for a support to the sky, his ears filled with the rush of a mountain torrent whose banks were strewn with fragile pink flowers. Down, down the river foamed beneath its flowery banks, its waters chilled by distant pinnacles of snow, its onrushing guarded by craggy steeps till, joyous and liberated, it surrendered itself to the sea.

“It’s too grand,” Ian said once. “I could cry for its grandeur. I could carve myself a pulpit here and preach to the beasts.”

Shaw returned sombrely—“I could cry for what some of these loggers are doing to the country.”

It cut him to the heart to see how, without conscience, they butchered the trees that were accessible to the coast, the trees that would fairly fall into the sea, caring nothing for those who would come after, spoiling the leases of forest land for the future! “If I had my way . . .” he would say grimly.

“All you need is your grandfather’s beard,” Ian would laugh.

“And all you need is your father’s character,” Shaw would retort.

The strengthening and deepening of their friendship was a delight to them. They had accepted each other casually, without emotion, in the old days. Now, thrown together in the lonely forest, their emotions were intensified. They felt that they wished they might never be separated again.

With Varney and Searle it was the opposite. Each opened his eyes in the mornings to resent the presence of the other. The young men were sometimes afraid that they would come to blows.

"I'd back Searle," said Ian. "Look at the arms and back on him! He'd mop the floor with Varney."

"I doubt it." Shaw would look the two over judiciously. "I miss my guess if your Beauty's face wouldn't be spoiled in the scrap. Varney's like iron."

"Damned rusty old iron!" declared Ian.

"You're wrong and you know it. Look how he works!"

"Look how Searle works!"

"They're jealous of each other. In that way it's been a good combination."

"The whole thing has been grand. I wish it could go on forever. I don't believe I ever want to go back to civilization."

All four were nearly as brown as Indians. They had little flesh, but that was firm and elastic. Their muscles were like steel. On and on they moved through the great tracts leased by the timber company, estimating, measuring, Shaw filling notebooks with his observations. Sometimes they slept on the launch, sometimes in the tent on branches of sweet-smelling spruce. Fish and a variety of game were theirs for the stretching out of an arm, for the raising of a gun to the shoulder.

Varney could do anything. He could cook a moose steak, he could fry the great pink salmon to a turn. He could mend clothes, he could play the barber. It was a sight to fill Ian and Shaw with hilarity to see Varney shave Searle; Searle, with his muscular legs sprawling, his shirt open at the throat disclosing his fine bronzed chest, his golden head thrown back and his face upturned to the razor. Varney bent over him with a leer, half smothering him in lather, cursing the toughness of his beard, always contriving to draw a little blood from him.

"You've cut me, you blighter!" Searle would snarl.

"You're lucky I haven't cut your throat," Varney would answer, mopping up the blood.

Up and up the mountainous coast the four worked their way, passing through valleys where pools as black as night held the still blacker shadows of the hemlock and the spruce; the climbing craggy heights that seemed thrown up in their grandeur to prove the helplessness of man; making notes concerning gorges in whose depths

the ice-cold waters of a glacial stream were locked in the iron embrace of boulders.

Once in late August there was a forest fire inland and they had to go far from the shore to escape the smoke and cinders that fell in black flakes on the sea. They never knew where the fire was, but the sombre curse of its smoke darkened their sky, smarted their eyeballs. The sun was no longer a sun, but a sick red moon languishing from its rise. The men lay hunched in the launch, their arms bent above their faces, scarcely speaking. "Farther, let's get farther out," Shaw would urge, the breath in his lungs cutting him. Out they would go, but the great sullen waves kept washing them back toward the shore. Then, on the third day, a west wind swept in from the mid-Pacific. The smoke was rolled back, wild white clouds filled the stormy sky, the sullen waves lashed themselves to foam, and Varney rushed the launch into a sandy cove.

Often they argued about the future of the country.

"It's the most glorious country in the world," Ian would say. "It has everything. Lovely climate. Gorgeous scenery. Timber—fish—fruit—fur. There are no limits to its possibilities."

"If only they don't butcher the forests!" were Shaw's often repeated words.

"They will," Varney would say gloomily. "And Americans will develop it, the way they've done with our mines. We'll do the work and they'll take the profit. See if they don't!"

"Don't you worry! We'll look after it," Searle said.

"Who's we?" Varney asked truculently.

"England, of course."

"Hmph! I'll bet she won't invest her money here. You live long enough and you'll see this country go broke!"

"Perhaps the Saskatchewan and Alberta," said Ian. "Never B.C."

"Wait and see!"

Grumbling, Varney went down to the shore. He was stiff and sore after a hard day's work. He was becoming rheumatic from weeks of sleeping on spruce boughs.

"Look here!" he shouted, after a little.

They went after him. He was standing astride of something stretched on the stones.

"This poor loon," he said, "came up here full of schemes. He was as chock-full of hope as Mr. Blair." There was disparagement in the "Mister." "And look at him now!"

They saw the skeleton of a man that had lain there for more than a year, the big teeth grinning up at them.

“It’s a bad omen,” said Searle, “finding this, just at the last. I hope my wife and child are safe.” He was full of superstitions. From then on he strained toward the time of returning. He would tell anecdotes of the child, his face softening. He produced a snapshot of Gloria and showed it proudly.

Wife and child were not only safe but waiting on the wharf for him. They looked as though they had never left it, except that there was a new attempt at decency in their clothes. Searle was the first out of the launch. The child flung herself on him.

Before following him and Varney, Ian and Shaw stood close together for a space, their weather-beaten faces grave. It seemed unbelievable that the hour of parting had come. Ian’s voice was a little husky when he spoke.

“I’ve a sort of feeling, Shaw, that we’ve had the best time of our lives this summer.”

“It’s only the beginning,” said Shaw.

CHAPTER XI

Shaw and his roommate, Calvin Lunt, sat close to the window of their room, so that they might get the last of the early spring twilight. Lunt sat sideways to the window, his excessively long legs stretched out on a chair, the book held close to his eyes. His profile thus silhouetted showed a long drooping nose, a compressed upper lip and a jutting chin. His black hair, through which he continually ran his bony fingers, fell almost into his eyes. In his cheek he had a piece of gum which he occasionally chewed savagely, then shifted to the other side of his mouth and for a time forgot.

Shaw sat facing the window, his knees crossed, his chin cupped in his hand, the open book on his knee, his face impassive as a mask of Study. He had more flesh on him than Lunt; but his pallor and the blue shadows beneath his eyes revealed the months of sedentary work and the lack of nourishing food. To an observer who might have seen him spring out of the launch at the end of the preceding summer, a comparison with what he now was would have been striking.

The room had long ago reached the very apex of disorder and there had since remained. Shaw might have made an effort at occasional tidying but Lunt was incorrigible. Whatever garments he took off lay where they fell till he needed them again. He never shut a drawer, so that those belonging to him were always on the point of spewing out their contents. By preference he kept his books on the floor, his pens and pencils on the window sill. When in haste to make a note he would scribble it on the wall, and many a time later Shaw would discover him shortsightedly peering over its surface, as though in study of ancient Egyptian calligraphy. His fingers were always stained with ink; he was troubled by dandruff, which dusted the shoulders of his worn black coat; he seldom took a bath for he said that bathing absorbed the strength he needed for his studying; but his mouth was gentle, his sea-blue eyes magnanimous, his gaunt body not without grace. Like Ian Blair he came of a religious family, but he never talked of religion. Each night he knelt long by the side of the bed, his face buried in his hands. Sometimes he fell asleep in this posture and Shaw would wake him by tapping him on the head. Lunt would ignore the tapping, but after a little would rise with dignity and get into bed.

It had been a day of rain that had brightened to silvery radiance at its end. There was no sunset but now an orange afterglow spread over the west. The street was quiet except for a vendor of peanuts pushing his barrow along the wet pavement, the thin squeal of the little whistle merging with the steam from the roasting oven. The

Italian vendor raised his face to the windows, hesitating as he spied the figures of the two young men.

“Peanuts!” exclaimed Lunt. “Let’s have some.” He began frantically to search through his pockets.

“Nickel or dime?” asked Shaw.

“Dime! Gosh, I could eat a bushel!”

Shaw produced the coin.

Lunt whistled at the window, then dashed down the stairs. The Italian stopped. Shaw watched the transaction over the top of his book. He saw Lunt spit out his gum as he returned with the bag of nuts.

“Have some!” said Lunt. “I’ve bought these, you know.” He had found his money and dropped a dime on to Shaw’s book.

Shaw took a handful of the nuts. They were hot and crisp. They crunched, their eyes glued to their books, the light lessening. Shaw laid his shells on the window sill but Lunt dropped his to the floor. Far down the street the thin whistle sounded faintly. A wagon drawn by two horses stopped by the house at the corner. The wagon was loaded with blocks of ice, covered by sawdust. The horses hung their heads, tired after the long day, but the driver jumped energetically down from his seat, tongs in hand, seized a block of ice and staggered swiftly with it to the back entrance of the house. When he returned he began to hack one of the larger blocks in half with his hatchet. A group of children appeared from nowhere. They picked up the splinters of ice from the pavement and bit into them eagerly, hopping from one foot to the other at the chill contact. Without glancing at them the driver jumped into his wagon, touched the horses with his whip, and rattled down the street.

“It looks like summer to see the iceman,” observed Lunt.

“Hm-hm,” agreed Shaw.

There was silence.

Suddenly Lunt sprang up, rushed to the dressing table, and began to search wildly through the drawers. Shaw looked out of the window. He turned to Lunt.

“They’re not there,” he said. “They’re on the floor under that heap of books.”

Lunt scabbled through the books and discovered a shabby pair of field glasses. He hastened to the window and held them to his eyes. A slim girl was coming down the street.

“Evelina,” he murmured. “Oh, lovely Evelina! How I adore you!”

Beneath the glasses his long nose drooped between his hollow cheeks, his mouth wore an expression of extreme tenderness.

Unconscious of his homage the girl passed along the opposite side of the street,

holding her long flounced skirt from the pavement with a gloved hand, her hat tilted above her curled brown pompadour. She disappeared into the house where the ice had been delivered. Lunt laid down the glasses.

“It’s an awful thought,” he said, “that my last term is almost up and that after I leave here I’ll never see her again. I’ll never know her real name! She’ll marry some fellow who won’t love her half as much as I do.”

“If I felt like you do,” said Shaw, “I’d stop her and tell her about it.”

Lunt’s jaw dropped. “My sakes! I couldn’t do that! What would you say?”

“I’d say I loved her and that if she liked the looks of me I’d prove to her that I meant business.”

“But she wouldn’t like the looks of me! What girl would?”

“You’re all right, Calvin. I like your looks.”

“You’re not a girl! Now if I was a big-chested fellow like you . . .”

“Rot! Have a try!”

“Will you speak to her for me?”

“Certainly. If you like.”

Plainly Lunt was disconcerted by Shaw’s consent. He covered his face with his long bony hand and was silent. After a space he said:—

“It is better as it is, Shaw. . . . It is better for me to nurse a hopeless passion than to bear a cold rebuff.”

Shaw gave a shout of laughter. “I thought so. You don’t really want the girl. You just want to worship the idea of her.”

“She inspires me,” said Lunt. He cracked a nut in his teeth and spat out the shell.

There was a knock. Without waiting for an answer the visitor threw open the door and entered. It was another student, Henry J. Klein of Chicago, the son of a wealthy merchant. He had a bed-sitting room on the ground floor with a piano in it. He was the only student in the School of Forestry who owned his own motorcar. He moved in an aura of that distinction. Shaw and Lunt often wondered why he had taken up the study of forestry, for he showed little interest in it. He was a plump youth with a good-humored greedy smile and a taste for loud ties. He now wore a magenta one with yellow stripes. Lunt looked at it and at him with annoyance, for they jarred equally on his mood. Klein trod on the peanut shells that littered the floor. They crackled, as Lunt felt his temper doing.

“Hello!” exclaimed Klein. “You fellows digging into it as usual?”

“Yes,” returned Lunt. “Digging into it. Or trying to.”

“Does that mean I’m not welcome?”

“Oh, you’re welcome enough, if you’re quiet. You’d better take that tie off,

though.”

Good-naturedly Klein covered it with a plump hand. “My, how sarcastic you are, Calvin! I hope he doesn’t talk like that to you, Shaw.”

“We don’t talk,” said Lunt. “We work.”

Klein looked crestfallen. Shaw was sorry for him. To cheer him he asked:—

“How’s the automobile?”

Klein beamed. “Oh, she’s grand! I took her right up a hill in top gear yesterday. I’m going to drive her to Alabama. Another fellow is going with me and we’re going to make a regular picnic of it.”

“You’re lucky,” said Shaw. “Lunt and I are going to walk.”

Klein laughed at what he considered a joke.

“You don’t say! Perhaps I can give you a lift on the last lap. You’ll be getting kind of footsore by then.”

“Don’t you worry about us,” said Lunt.

Klein returned meekly—“What I really came up for was to ask you fellows if you’d come to my room for a little singsong. Some others are coming in and I do like to have your voice, Calvin. Shaw don’t sing but he’s perfectly welcome. And we do need your voice, Calvin.”

“It’s a pity,” said Lunt, “that I can’t disembody it and send it down. I’d be delighted.”

“There he goes again!” exclaimed Klein. “What have I done to deserve it? He’s getting to be a regular pessimist. It’s a good thing I’m an optimist.” He had just got hold of the words and relished them.

Lunt threw up the window and put his head out into the dusk.

“He’s got a headache,” Shaw said apologetically.

“Say, that’s too bad! Perhaps a little singsong would help it.”

“I’m afraid not,” said Shaw. “Lunt’s funny that way. He hates singing when he has headache.”

Klein was disappointed. Lunt’s good tenor was the making of a singsong. He turned to go. In the doorway he hesitated.

“You fellows aren’t in earnest about walking to Alabama, are you?”

“In dead earnest,” said Shaw.

The final term at the Forestry School was spent in field work in the pitch-pine area of the South. How to get there was the problem for Shaw and Lunt.

Klein’s jaw dropped. “Why—you couldn’t—it’s over nine hundred miles! I’ve just been looking it up on the map.”

Shaw exclaimed. “Look at those legs!” He pointed to what remained of Lunt in

the room. "And my own aren't too bad."

"But you couldn't get there in time! It would take you weeks, I tell you; you can't do it. You'd be worn out before your term's work began."

"What will you bet?" asked Shaw. "What we propose to do is this. Walk to New York. Go by steamer from there to Charleston. Work our way—walk—steal rides on freight trains and arrive in Alabama in time for the term and in as good condition as you are. What will you bet?"

"Whatever you like."

Shaw considered. He would have about twenty-five dollars in his possession after paying his expenses for the coming term. They would be light because he would live in the woods and work for the lumber company, who made no charge for board. But—dare he risk his all? He dare! He said casually:—

"I'll bet you twenty-five dollars."

A tremor went through Lunt's long legs. He turned on the sill so that he looked over his hunched shoulder into the room.

"You're crazy, Shaw!" he said. "What if we had an accident?"

"We'll not have an accident! Now we'll make a note of this bet." He took a small book from his pocket. Klein did the same. Klein said:—

"Well, I sort of hope you'll win the bet. I'm sorry I can't offer you a lift in my automobile."

"Thanks, I'd rather walk," said Lunt, and again put his head out of the window.

"Well, you're an optimist after all! I'm glad of that, Calvin." Klein's voice was soothing. He looked rather pathetically at Shaw. "I always seem to irritate him and I do so want to be friends."

"Don't mind," said Shaw. "He's the same with me." He turned on the light. In its unshaded glare even Klein looked wan. He looked at the bare room, the peanut shells on the floor, and his face softened in sympathy.

"Say, you fellows," he said, "even if you can't come to my singsong I wish you'd come down for some light refreshments afterwards. I've got wieners and rye bread and beer. Perhaps even a nip of something stronger." He gave a sly wink.

"I'm afraid we've got to work," said Shaw.

"Work, work, work," exclaimed Klein peevishly. "I get so tired of hearing you talk about work. I don't work, yet somehow I pass my exams. I'm afraid I'm a confirmed optimist."

Lunt unwound himself from his cramped position. He advanced on Klein and pushed him out of the room and down the stairs. When he returned his face was tranquil.

“I hope he didn’t think you were in earnest,” said Shaw. “He’s a sissy, but he’s kind.”

“Of course he didn’t think I was in earnest. He couldn’t believe that anyone would want to insult him. Perhaps some day . . .” He took a peanut from the bag and cracked it savagely between his teeth. In the green artificial light he looked like a corpse, except for the alive blue eyes.

Shaw sat with his head in his hand, meditating on his bet. It would be good to have fifty dollars instead of twenty-five after his expenses were paid. It would make things easier in every way. And this was his last term. The examinations—the trip to Alabama—the lumber camp—these over and the long pull, the everlasting work and waiting of his boyhood, would be behind him. He would have his man’s work ahead of him. He would stand on the shore of that spreading sea of achievement. For the first time in his life he would be free. For a moment his mind was blank. The crackling of a peanut shell might have been the crackling of a dry twig in a forest. Then, out of the blankness, his mother’s face emerged. She was looking at him long and steadily. He sat motionless as a stone, his being concentrated on the image of her face. A warm tide moved in his veins, centring at last in his throat. Tears rose from his throat to the back of his eyes but came no further. He was a little boy again, remembering something of sadness but he could not tell what.

Lunt was speaking. “They say that the Highlanders of Scotland can live on raw oatmeal and water—I’d like to experiment with that. They’re a very hardy lot. You can’t beat them.”

“All right,” said Shaw. “I’m willing.”

“Let’s try it—before we set out on our trip.”

“All right. . . . We might have had a feed to-night.”

“I’d rather starve than be beholden to that fellow.”

“You’d have sung for your supper.”

“Bah! If you want to go—go!”

“I don’t.”

They buried themselves in their books. It was the first time they had sat by the open window since winter. The breeze that came in was almost too cool, but they could not bear to shut it out. It had a new quality in it. After long months it had veered from the north and northeast to the southwest. It blew from a warm land where spring was already forward. It had the wildness, vagueness, and sweetness of youth’s imaginings. It came in troubled gusts, stirring the hair of the two students, entangling the words on the pages, blowing down the calendar they had pinned to the wall as though it no longer mattered.

Lunt was reading—“*Trametes pini*. Common names for this rot are red rot, white pocket rot, red heart, cork rot, white honeycomb rot, picky wood rot, ring shake, and ring-scale rot.” He raised his head and stared at the ceiling. “Rot . . . rot . . . rot,” he said, “nothing but rot! I suppose in time we’ll all rot! Why try to delay it?”

“If Klein were here what a pessimist he’d call you!”

“Don’t mention his name to me! He’s a fungus. A fungus in the first stage of decay, of a pink coloration which will later turn to purple.”

“Shut up!” said Shaw curtly.

“I’m so hungry.”

“Shut up!”

“Shaw, I keep thinking of the lovely wieners and rye bread and beer downstairs.”

“Then go and get some.”

“I’d starve first!”

“You’re too proud.”

“Proud and hungry! It sounds noble.”

Mechanically Shaw murmured—“Shut up!”

He was reading. “Hybridization, even between closely related species, is an uncommon occurrence in nature . . . if a hybrid of two genera like spruce and hemlock did occur, it would probably be sterile and unable to reproduce itself.” There was nothing new in this! He’d read it a thousand times. . . . But now he could smell the spruce and the hemlock. The room was full of the scent of them, the strange resinous scent that clung so to one’s fingers. It must be coming in on the breeze. He got up and went to the window without knowing he was doing it. He was surprised to find himself there. The figures of two youths were coming into the house. He heard Klein’s voice welcoming them. They would sing. There would be an infernal noise. Klein was a public nuisance. But soon this would be over. All this part of his life over and the real part begun. . . . Already this was taking on a tinge of unreality. All but Lunt. He would always be real. A part of Lunt would go with him into his new life. Some day he would introduce Lunt to Ian. It would be amusing to see them together.

From the room two floors below came a burst of song in male voices:—

“Oh! I went down South to see my Sal—
Sing song Kitty, won’t you Ki—me—oh?”

He pulled down the window with a bang.

“They’re at it,” he said.

Lunt sprang up. “Where’s the cotton wool?” He began savagely to seek it.

“Here it is,” said Shaw.

They tore off bits and stuck them in their ears. Two hours passed.

Lunt looked up suddenly.

“How long is it,” he asked, “since you have seen your mother?”

“Funny you’d speak of her. I’ve been thinking of her this evening.”

“I know.”

“You know?”

“I know more of you than you think.”

“Not from my expression. I’ve a wooden face.”

“Rot! . . .”

“Could you tell by my expression, then?”

“No. . . . Something comes from you when you’re thinking of her. I can’t tell what it is.”

They were embarrassed and, for a space, continued their reading in silence. Then Shaw said:—

“I haven’t seen her for two years. You see, I spent my Christmas vacation working in Ottawa.”

“I remember. Two years is a long time.”

“She hasn’t been very well. Sometimes I worry about her.”

“But you’ll see her after this work in Alabama?”

“Yes. Before I go to my job.”

“That darned singsong is over at last. I heard the door slam.” Lunt took the cotton wool from his ears and listened.

“Yes. They’re going.” Shaw dropped his two bits of cotton in the waste-paper basket.

The air, entering their ears, vibrated mysteriously. Shaw stared at Lunt’s shadow thrown on the wall. Soon Lunt and he would be separated. He felt that he would remember this black clear-cut shadow when Lunt’s features were blurred in his mind. He had a sudden feeling of happiness, of exhilaration. His head felt a little light.

“Are you immune to hunger?” asked Lunt.

“No. Let’s have something.”

“Let’s try the oatmeal.”

Shaw looked dubious. “To-night? I thought of having fried bread.”

“I think we ought to try it.”

“All right. Bring forth the feast.”

Lunt opened the cupboard. He took out a paper bag of oatmeal and a tin of cocoa.

“Is there milk for the cocoa?”

Lunt found a tin and peered into it. He filled it with water from a jug and shook it. He put the contents into a saucepan and lit the gas under it.

Shaw, rather disgruntled at the thought of a supper of uncooked oatmeal, thrust his hand into the bag and, throwing back his head, dribbled some of the meal into his mouth. He began to chew, then hesitated. He was going to choke. He stared owlishly at Lunt.

“You’d make a dog laugh!” said Lunt. His delicate-lipped mouth stretched in a grin.

Shaw glared at him.

“Yrmakinmechoke!” he mumbled.

He took a drink of water from the jug and somehow got the meal down.

“Lord, you looked funny!” said Lunt. “You shouldn’t take so much at a time. It’s got to be chewed a lot.” He showed how.

It was a silent meal till they came to the cocoa, then—“What do you think?” asked Lunt. “Do you feel full?”

Shaw made a grimace. “Sort of—I don’t know. Shall we go for a walk?”

They were out in the street. There was no moon, no stars, just a velvety black void arching above the town and a wind that shook the shutters and the signs and the bare branches of trees. They strode along, their steps in time, feeling full of energy after the cramped hours of study. They talked of their plans for the journey South and of Shaw’s bet with Klein.

“I feel scared stiff when I think of you losing it,” said Lunt. “Suppose it was my fault, if I’d an accident or something.”

“You’ll not have an accident,” answered Shaw, “and I’ll not lose my bet. When I get that twenty-five dollars we’ll celebrate with a big dinner.”

“How do you feel inside after the oatmeal?”

“Solid. How do you?”

“As if I’d had nothing,” answered Lunt dolefully. “Let’s go in somewhere and have pork and beans.”

“Not on your life! We’re hardy Highlanders. Hoots, mon! Do ye no’ ken when you’re fu’?”

He grasped Lunt by the arm and they marched in step through the quiet streets. The lights in the houses were being put out one by one. They could see people moving about in lighted rooms. Sometimes a voice sounded in a doorway. They had

lived in this place for almost two years, yet they had no part in it. To the townsfolk only two of the many students who came and went, who bought fruit and ice cream, cigarettes and magazines, had their shoes mended and their hair cut and disappeared leaving no record, outside the college walls. Their future was uncertain, fluid, almost fantastic in their imaginings.

Lunt was elated. He whistled as they marched, grasping Shaw by the arm. He said suddenly:—

“I wish you were an American.”

“Why?”

“Then you’d stay in my country and work. You’ll go off to your own country and that will be the end of our friendship.”

“Come with me! There’s plenty of room.”

“No. I’m a grim, puritanical New Englander. I can’t live under a king.”

“We have more freedom than you have.”

“You must remember that we’re a great melting pot. Our laws must be made accordingly.”

“Will you really melt?”

“Why not?”

“What will your country be in twenty-five years, I wonder?”

“Glorious! Don’t you forget that.”

They were outside the house where the girl lived. Lunt forgot everything else. He clasped his hands on his heart.

“Oh! Evelina!” he said. “I must leave you soon. And I’ll never even know your real name or the sound of your voice. For two long years I have adored you. Evelina, farewell! Let me kiss the knob where your dear hand has rested!” He ran lightly up the steps and pressed his lips to the doorknob. There was still a light in the front room. He came down the steps.

“Let me dream now,” he said. “Lead me home, Shaw. I am not quite well.”

He suffered Shaw to lead him to their room. Shaw could not decide how much in earnest he was. Lunt tied a wet towel round his head and they read for two hours more.

In bed Lunt lay face-down, his two fists doubled under his stomach. “It’s no go, Shaw,” he mourned. “The hardy Highland diet does not agree with me. Or do you think it is love-sickness?”

But Shaw was already asleep, flat on his back, his arms thrown over his head like a man drowning.

The mildness of early March was only a hasty promise, made to be broken. By

the time Shaw and Lunt arrived in New York it was almost as cold as winter. But the air was invigorating. They had made the journey without undue fatigue. Lunt carried their clothes in a pack on his back, and Shaw, as the stronger, two heavy blankets and a small camping outfit consisting of stove, frying pan, and kettle.

It seemed to them that they would never reach the heart of the city, so endless appeared the long streets and so alike. The keen wind rushed through them, carrying hard particles of snow mingled with dust. It was the noon hour and the streets were full of people walking quickly, with set faces and eyes interested only in their own affairs. The streets were dirty, with pieces of newspaper harried by the wind and, in the gutter, banana skins and scraps of garbage.

But when they neared Fifth Avenue it was different. The sun flickered out, illuminating the tall buildings, shining on the fine goods displayed in windows, the expensive motorcars and expensive women! Lunt and Shaw had seen nothing like it. Their eyes were awed, as the eyes of children, in a multitude of new impressions. Hiking was not yet fashionable. People turned to stare at the tall youths, their packs on their backs, their staffs in their hands. There was something in their faces, too. Because they spent their days reading about trees, talking about trees, or living and working among trees, the tranquillity of the forest had made its imprint on them.

They had found their way to the office of a steamship company that ran boats between New York and Charleston. They had bought tickets for the steerage. The next sailing was two days later. These two days could easily be spent in sightseeing. But what about the nights? Lodgings in a great city like this would surely be expensive. They might sleep in the open. There was Central Park. What about sleeping there, asked Lunt. Shaw said that he was game. They would choose their bed, then set out to see the city.

The Park was impressive with its walks and its fine trees. In summer it might be beautiful but now snow still lingered in the hollows. The trees were bare. Women walking there for exercise were wrapped in furs. "We've got our two heavy blankets," said Shaw, "and we can lie close together." They picked out a sheltered spot, with a knoll crested by evergreen shrubs rising above it and a spruce tree with low-growing boughs. The wind would very likely fall by sunset.

There was some sort of celebration, surely. Fifth Avenue was ablaze with flags. A band in gay uniform swung by playing a march. Every hour the traffic increased. Shaw had not thought there were so many motorcars in the whole country as there were in this street. To attempt to cross it seemed to risk one's life. He looked into the faces of the people swarming past; anxious, shallow, hard faces they seemed to him. He remembered Searle and Varney. Their faces were hard too, but the

hardness was that of adventure, of struggle with the elements, of hard physical work, of danger. This was the hardness of narrow space, of human contacts seething like the press of ants in an anthill, of windows that stared into windows, of eyes that were always conscious of other eyes watching.

They went in an elevator to the top of the Woolworth Building. They lingered in the grandeur of the Carnegie Library. They passed through the bewilderment of department stores. They ate chop suey in a Chinese restaurant, sausages and hashed potatoes in a German. "We must stoke up with lots of fuel for the night," said Lunt.

"You have changed your tune," observed Shaw, "since you advocated tramping on oatmeal and water."

Lunt was not usually touchy but now his feelings were hurt. For half an hour there was a coolness between them. Shaw bought a packet of cigarettes and offered one to Lunt, with his rare smile. They drew the smoke into their lungs. Their shoulders touched. At night they were in the theatrical district. Burning red and yellow and green electric signs bewildered them. Photographs of the first moving-picture stars were framed outside the doorways. People were pouring out of the theatres. A girl with redder lips than Shaw had ever seen touched him on the arm, smiling up into his face.

"Hello, boy!" she said.

"Hello," he returned, but suspiciously.

"You're a regular snail, aren't you?"

"Snail?"

"Yeh—castle on your back. Where y' off to?"

"My hotel." He began to move away.

"Come and see my apartment. I've got seventeen silk sofa pillows. Come an' try them."

"Thanks. I prefer a park bench."

"Well. You are a mutt!" She turned to another man.

Lunt was white with anger. "What were you saying to that girl?"

"Nothing—except a polite refusal."

"It's a good thing for her she didn't tackle me!" His profile looked like one of his Puritan ancestors.

Shaw smiled secretly as they moved through the crowd. He saw the girl's face as it was separated from the thousand other faces.

What had she done to her lips? Painted them? Her face was pretty and rather silly. Shaw had not expected a woman of the streets to look like that. You could tell she was in earnest about her sofa cushions. But she'd been mad at him all right. How

quickly her face had been lost in the crowd! She'd had a big white forehead with a curl in the middle of it and her features all in a bunch.

Great plate-glass windows invited them to join the crowds inside, sitting at small tables, opening their mouths wide to receive the spoonfuls of soup or forks mounded with potato salad.

"What about something hot before we hit the hay?" asked Lunt.

"Coffee," agreed Shaw.

The coffee was strong, blazing hot, and they lingered over it. Suddenly they felt tired, their eyes ached from staring at lights and crowds. Lunt sat shielding his with his bony white hand. The coffee, the smoke from their cigarettes, made them dreamy. Four young Jews were sitting at the next table talking about music. They were fat and their lips slid easily over their small teeth. They nestled in their fat, absorbed in their talk of music, except one who gave curious sidelong glances at Shaw and Lunt and their packs on the floor by their feet.

It seemed a long way to Central Park, facing the wind that swept between the tall buildings. They bent their heads to it and pressed on, their bodies still warm from the coffee. It was not easy to find their chosen spot in the hollow but at last they were secure in it, the two benches turned together, Shaw's blanket laid on them, the clothes from Lunt's pack for a pillow. They stretched their long bodies on the blanket, then put the second one over them, tucking it in as tightly as they could. Shaw lay against Lunt's back, his arm clasping Lunt's thin frame.

"How do you feel, Calvin?" he asked.

"Grand. Are you all right?"

"Fine and dandy. It's as good as a house, eh?"

"Funny light in the sky?"

"That's the reflection of a billion electric lights. The treetops look nice against the sky, don't they? That's a good spruce."

"Yeh . . . Shaw, I wonder if Eveline missed my face at the window."

"She might. It was always there when she passed."

"What do you suppose I did?"

"Can't guess."

"You'll think I'm crazy."

"Is it something about Eveline?"

"Yes. . . . I couldn't bear to leave without some sign. So I bought a little bunch of violets and hung it on the door handle and rang and got out of sight."

"Poor old boy."

"Well, it's over now. That chapter's closed."

"I wonder if that street walker got anyone to go home with her?"

"I hope not."

"You're a queer mixture, Calvin."

"Queer? How?"

"Puritan and romantic."

"You're queer too, if it comes to that."

"Me?"

"Yes. You're tender and you're hard. Imaginative and stolid. Pugnacious and yielding. Lovable and cold."

"I sound like a half-wit." But he was pleased to think of himself as a complex character.

The wind had indeed fallen but the quiet air was icy cold. Fine particles of snow drifted on it, now sinking, now rising, as though they shrank equally from sky and earth. Some of those formed a little ridge on the back of the bench. Others found their way into the folds of the blanket and after a little melted. A few clung to Lunt's hair, streaking its darkness with white as though he had aged in the hour, the wan light heightening this effect. Shaw's head was hidden under the blanket. In the loneliness of his childhood he had formed the habit of hiding himself in the bedcoverings and it still persisted. The roar of the traffic, like the growl of a many-eyed monster, seemed held at bay by the trees that guarded the two sleepers.

At midnight a policeman turned the light of his lantern on them. He exclaimed in an Irish accent:—

"It's the babes in the woods y'are! I'm glad to find ye so innocent."

"Where are we?" asked Lunt, starting.

"You're safe in Central Park. I'm yer kind uncle. Don't be frightened." He moved on.

Shaw burrowed his head against Lunt's shoulder blades. He did not wake. His dream continued. . . . He was struggling through an almost impenetrable forest, carrying his mother in his arms. It was a terrible struggle, though she constantly whispered encouragements in his ear. One of her hands, which was icy cold, played continually with his hair. After what seemed ages of struggle the trees of the forest thinned and out of them rose a towering mountain peak. As he reached the base of the mountain his mother's weight became less and less; her hands, which played with his hair, cruel. They tugged it, as though she strove to raise herself by it. He turned his head to look reproachfully into her face. But it was not she he carried! It was Louie Adams, the wretched little girl he had known at school. . . . "I hate you, Shaw Manifold!" she hissed as she twined her skinny fingers in his hair.

Toward morning it grew very cold. Shaw opened his eyes and saw Lunt's forelock standing stiff and white. He saw the trees motionless, powdered with snow, and above them the chill grey-blue arch of the sky. His flesh ached on the hard bench and his feet were like ice. He slid from under the blanket and began to do violent exercises. He ran along the paths, the chill wind whistling in his teeth. When he returned to Lunt he found him sitting on the bench pommeling one of his thighs.

"It's all prickly," he said. "I can't stand on it."

Shaw took him by the foot and moved his leg rhythmically. "That better?" he asked.

"Yeh, but it hurts."

"Do some exercises."

"Not I. . . . I want some hot coffee first thing."

The coffee put new life into them. In a public washroom they made themselves presentable. They set out on their second day of sightseeing. In and out and round about they went, staring, wondering, absorbing. They stood by the harbor, Lunt anxious that Shaw should be impressed by the Statue of Liberty: Shaw resolutely unimpressed. His eyes were on a great liner majestically parting the tumbling grey waves that closed behind her in a lacy train of foam. He thought, Here am I, Shaw Manifold, standing on the shore of the Atlantic, as a little while ago I stood on the shore of the Pacific! When shall I go to Europe? When shall I go to Asia? How soon, how soon, shall I cross the water to the old lands? In a few months I'll be free to begin my work. And then . . . and then . . . trees and the sea!

That night it was still colder. They got up toward morning and beat their arms across their breasts to make their blood move. They divided a bar of chocolate between them and lay down and slept again. Again Shaw dreamed the dream of Cristabel and Louie Adams.

At daybreak the wind changed and a little later it began to rain. They crouched under their blanket and slept. The rain pattered swiftly, making its way into every crevice. The air grew milder. When they woke they felt that their journey was now to begin in earnest. As they gathered up their belongings they had the sensation of breaking up camp, here in the heart of this great city.

Low mild clouds hung over the Park and the first crow of the season opened his beak and sent out a challenging "Caw! Caw!" to the rumble of the early traffic.

After breakfast they bought a supply of food for the boat trip—bread, cheese, wieners, bananas. They were at the pier an hour before the boat left. The time passed quickly, for there was the bustle, the activity of the strange port to investigate. They were traveling steerage. They found that their companions were to

be negroes returning to South Carolina. A procession of them straggled slowly up the gangway, negroes of all ages, shouldering bundles, leading children and old people, carrying babies.

When the first harsh warning from the boat whistle sounded, Shaw and Lunt joined the procession and found a corner for themselves in the part of the vessel given over to the steerage. First-class passengers looked over the rail from the upper deck at the dun-colored procession. They talked together, sometimes laughing and pointing out this one or that who amused them. Shaw raised his face as he passed beneath, his cool speculative gaze taking in those above. A girl going to spend the winter in the South held an armful of flowers brought by her friends. She tossed one to Shaw. It missed him and struck the cheek of a fat negress. She caught it and looked up laughing.

“Thank you’, honey!” she called, and fastened the flower on her dress.

Shaw was annoyed. It was the first time a girl had ever thrown a flower to him. It would probably be the last. He would like to have caught it. The black woman waddled cheerfully up the gangway, her fat hips shaking.

The space in the steerage was crowded. Shaw and Lunt became disagreeably conscious of the peculiar smell of a different race. The negroes talked loudly, cheerfully, showing their red gums and the dingy whites of their eyes. There was a young woman with twin babies that clambered incessantly over her, filling their fat little hands with her woolly hair, helping themselves up by her nose and ears as though they were handles. An old woman had a deaf-and-dumb boy of fourteen in her charge. She led him continually about through the crowded rooms and passages. Everything he saw pleased him. He rolled his eyes and made loud crowing noises. Two young men had been quarreling before they came aboard. Now they continued their quarrel from opposite sides of the saloon.

“Shut dat face o’ yourn, nigger, or Ah’ll push it fo’ yo’!”

“Huh! Ah don’ wan’ no lip from yo’!”

“Yo’ jus’ wait till we-all gets offen dis boat!”

“Dat’s what Ah is waitin’ fo—jus’ countin’ de hours till Ah can mak yo’ lick de dust.”

Sometimes the others gave no heed to them. Sometimes they egged them on. Once Shaw and Lunt were afraid there was to be a bloody fight. Sinister reference to razors had been made. But a little later the boat began to roll. The darkies seemed singularly vulnerable to seasickness. Even the prospective combatants succumbed. The deaf-and-dumb boy was noisily vocal in his retchings.

There was no fresh air for the portholes must be kept shut. The negroes lay

huddled in the wan light of unshaded bulbs. The twins looked suddenly like dark cherubs. The eyes of the old woman were caverns in her head. She brooded over the mute. Lunt and Shaw lay stretched on a bunk, sleeping, resigned to the interminable rolling. From the deck above came the sound of an orchestra.

As darkness fell the waves subsided. The creaking and straining of the weather-beaten timbers ceased. A steward went about opening portholes. A fresh wind swept away the sour-smelling air. The occupants of the steerage raised their heads. Bundles were opened and food taken out. The twins woke and were given a banana apiece. The old woman began once more to lead the boy about, a doughnut in his hand. The quarrel was renewed. Dance music came from above and moonlight touched the dark sea with fire.

The white youths sat close to a porthole eating, hungrily drinking in the fresh air. Lunt said:—

“Just think, these niggers’ lives are as important to them as ours are to us!”

“They couldn’t be,” said Shaw.

“Look at that old woman’s face as she leads the boy about.”

“Look at the boy’s face.”

“That should be your answer. He’s almost crazed with self-importance. Every time he opens his mouth and makes that crowing noise he thinks the whole world is listening. Look at the twins, those two fellows that want to fight—gosh, I am sure they feel self-important.”

“They have nothing to work for,” said Shaw; “they don’t know what life can be.”

“According to their lights they do. All we know is what we’ve been told and read.”

“I’ve seen the Rockies and the forests on the Pacific.”

“Perhaps they’ve seen God.”

Shaw was silent. When Lunt said things like that it embarrassed him, yet he was not at all embarrassed when Ian talked religion; Ian spoke as an artist, Lunt as a saint.

As they settled down for the night Shaw saw that Lunt was going to say his prayers. He did wish he wouldn’t. He touched his sleeve.

“Say, Calvin, do you think you’d better?”

“Better what?”

“Kneel. Couldn’t you say them lying down for once? You don’t know how these darkies may take it. Perhaps they’ll say something; interrupt you.”

“I’ll be sorry for them if they do.”

There was no stopping him. He was kneeling by the bench. Shaw turned his face away as though he would disown him. "I'm a regular Judas," he thought, "but he makes me so uncomfortable."

Lunt did not bend his head but raised his face toward the open porthole. The light from a lamp on the wall fell on his long lean face. The line from his nostril to the corner of his mouth looked deep and as though drawn in pain. His sensitive lips were moving. The negroes were beginning to take notice of him.

"What's dat man doin'?"

"Why, he's a prayin'!"

"Shore enough, he's talkin' to de Lawd."

The old woman called out—"Say de words so we can hear 'em, brudder!"

One of the fighters added—"Speak up, don' be afraid to speak out loud to de Lawd!"

Lunt began, in his oddly pleasing voice:—

"Our Father which art in Heaven—"

One after the other the negroes were joining in:—

"Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come—"

The deep rich tones of the fighters were added:—

"Thy will be done—on earth as it is in Heaven—"

The old woman rocked the sleeping mute in her arms and her voice rose beseechingly:—

"Give us this day our daily bread—"

Out of the steerage the blended voices rose strongly, drowning the sound of the orchestra above:—

"Forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive them that trespass against us—"

What were their trespasses, Shaw wondered—chicken stealing—petty theft—and against them, in the old days, slavery; in later days, lynchings.

Their faces were raised like Lunt's, but—how different! His was almost austere. Theirs were impassioned, but yielding, trustful; his, seeking, questioning. The last noble words came:—

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.”

“Amen!”

“Hallelujah!”

“Thank yo’, mister!”

“You’re a grand good pray-er.”

The night was peaceful but the next day there was a long ground swell. The boat rolled slowly, pompously. The sun blazed. It was hot in the steerage. With the pompous rolling of the boat the head of the mute boy lolled from his right shoulder to his left as his grandmother led him about. She had taken off his upper garments and his torso was round and smooth. The twins too were half-naked. They felt well and were never still. They reeled about, falling against the grownups’ knees. The men played pinoche or craps, except the two belligerents who could not forget their quarrel.

Between bouts of seasickness they reiterated their accusations and threats till their voices rose to screaming pitch and Shaw and Lunt prepared themselves to prevent murder. Then an officer of the boat came rattling down the stairs and threatened to put them both under arrest if they made any more disturbance. That made them sick again, and when they had recovered they contented themselves with low mutterings of what they would do to each other when they reached land.

That night Lunt again led the negroes in prayer. Then the old woman asked him to lead in singing. “Yo’ sure has a lubly voice, mister!” Lunt began “The Glory Song.” Like spirits soaring upward from a rolling, seasick hell, their voices burst forth. They raised their eyes to the rocking sky they could glimpse through the portholes:—

“Oh, that will be
Glory for me!
Glory for me!
Glory for me!
When by Thy grace
I shall see Thy dear face,
That will be glory,
Be glory for me!”

Tears streamed down the old woman’s face and she rocked the sleeping mute in her arms.

They sang one song after another, ending with "One more river to cross." As night fell and all lights save one at the foot of the stairs were extinguished, the monotonous singsong of that refrain continued. One more river . . . one more river to cross. . . . Shaw, his arm thrown across his eyes, lay submerged by the rhythmic heaving of the boat, the endless-seeming repetition of the words. One more river . . . one more river . . . one more river to cross. . . . All these souls . . . himself . . . had one more river to cross. . . . What were their rivers? If the boat went down, what things would remain undone? This last term of his—his last river—let him once cross that and he would be free. . . . All the long years—the years of boyhood, of study, of waiting—would be over. He would stand unshackled on the shore of freedom—to work—to do the things he had dreamed of . . . a good life lay ahead of him . . . one more river . . . one more river to cross. . . . On its opposite shore stood his mother and, beyond her, another figure, shadowy, elusive, her face half turned away . . . was it Elspeth?

At Charleston it was glorious to feel the solid earth beneath them, above all to smell the pure air. The sun shone. It was spring. The negroes poured on to the pier laughing, eager to get to their homes. They called out good-bye to the two white youths. The old woman shook Lunt's hand. The two fighters bundled themselves down the gangway and turned in opposite directions without one glance behind. The mute jumped straight into the air in his joy.

Shaw and Lunt spent an hour walking about the town, which to them had an unaccustomed air of picturesque mellowness. The trees were different. The trees interested them most. The houses, the people, were different. It was a peaceful-looking place.

They bought a supply of food, ate hot cornbread with cane syrup, drank coffee, and stretched two pairs of long legs with delight in movement after such cramped quarters. After leaving the town the roads were muddy but there was a good footpath alongside. There were farms and shacks where negroes lived. They turned their faces westward to cross South Carolina. The great state lay before them stretched out in her spring blossoming, her cocks crowing, her sap running, her seeds sprouting. They covered forty miles that day and slept in a barn by permission of a farmer.

In the days that followed they chopped wood in exchange for meals, or cooked food on their little stove by the side of the road. They crouched in the shadow of railway buildings to scramble, when the chance came, on to freight trains, dropping off them again at daybreak. They washed themselves under farm pumps or on the

banks of streams. They wore out their boots and bought new ones. As they walked they talked: politics, philosophy, religion. When they wearied of talking they sang: Lunt tunelessly, Shaw very much out of tune but in happy ignorance of the fact. They passed through one small town after another. There were more and more negroes. They were in Georgia. They took off their coats and carried them slung on their shoulders. They walked between forty and fifty miles a day.

One morning, tramping along a narrow road that led through a swamp, they heard the mournful howling of a dog. In that lonely spot the howls were heart-piercing. They stood still, looking at each other in consternation. There was a moment's respite from the sound. Then it broke out again, deep as a bell, thinning to a high tremolo, seeming the very voice of the desolate swamp.

"Come," said Lunt. "Let's get out of this!"

"Perhaps someone's been murdered."

"Better go for the police."

"Probably it's just a lost dog." Shaw whistled. "You're as white as a sheet, Calvin."

"You're not so rosy yourself. . . . Look! Here he comes!"

A fine English setter came loping through the stunted cedars and steamy undergrowth. At ten yards off Shaw he stopped and gave him a troubled, searching look, his long, feathered tail rigid.

"Good dog," said Shaw. "Good dog."

The setter drew near cautiously. He submitted to Shaw's laying a hand on the fine silken dome of his head. He raised his eyes mournfully and a little slobber ran from his drooping lip.

"Where's your master, eh?"

Lunt had begun cautiously to prowl among the cedars.

"Where's your master, boy?"

The dog trotted after them as they searched, but he led them nowhere. There were no footprints, no sign of life. At the next village they made inquiry. No one knew the dog. No one was interested. He was a stray. There were often strays. The tobacco-chewing police officer was lethargic.

So the setter joined the two walkers, but trotted close to Shaw. It was Shaw who divided his lunch with him, who begged a bone for him from a butcher. Because of him they missed the opportunity of a ride on a freight train. Lunt felt that he was justified in being annoyed. His mouth went down at the corners. He walked on one side of the road. Shaw and the setter took the other.

They slept in an empty shed by the roadside that night. It had turned cool. The

setter lay across Shaw's chest and he was glad of the warmth. After a while Lunt crept close and laid his arm about the two.

They walked on and on. Now they were halfway across Georgia. The huts of the negroes became smaller and smaller till they were mere hovels, without windows, a few lean hens scratching their way in and out through the one door, a ragged shirt switching on the line. The sun came out hot and at noonday Shaw and Lunt lay, with the setter resting his muzzle on Shaw's leg, in whatever shade they could find.

One evening they came upon a farmer and his horse pulling a motorcar out of a ditch. The thistles were knee-deep and the man swore as the horse pulled without effect and the thistles tore his legs.

"Hey, you!" he shouted. "Want a job?"

"What doing?" asked Lunt.

"Haven't you got eyes in your head? Pushing this yere autymobile outa the ditch!"

"What will you give us?" asked Shaw.

"Fifty cents each."

"Where's the owner?"

"Gone into my house to get his head tied up."

"Jehoshaphat!" exclaimed Lunt. "It's Klein's automobile!"

Hilariously they put their shoulders against the car. They pushed and heaved. The bony grey horse flung himself forward. The car floundered in mud and thistles and at last was on the road. At the same moment Klein appeared, his head bandaged and a piece of sticking plaster on his cheek. With him was a weak-looking youth who was his very shadow and seemed to live by Klein's favors.

"Well, mister," said the farmer, "I got your autymobile outa the ditch."

"What do I owe you?" asked Klein.

"Just wait till I pay off my helpers and I'll tell you." He handed Lunt and Shaw fifty cents apiece. Then Klein discovered them.

"You!" he gasped.

"Yes, us," answered Shaw.

"Why, if I don't watch out you'll beat me to the camp!" He laughed good-naturedly. "I wish I could give you a lift."

"We'll be on hand to pull you out of the next ditch," said Lunt.

"Are you much hurt?" asked Shaw.

"A mere scratch," returned Klein, in the airy tone of a gallant who had been fighting a duel. But he was humiliated.

"Three dollars, please," said the farmer.

“And we did the job!” said Lunt.

“I’ve paid you for your help,” said the farmer, “and I want my money.”

Klein handed him three dollars. “Get into the car,” he said to his friend, and was about to follow him when he noticed the dog.

“What a beautiful English setter!” he exclaimed. “Whose is he?”

“Mine,” answered Shaw. “I found him in a swamp.”

Klein patted the setter and looked him over appraisingly. “Are you sure his former owner won’t turn up?” he asked.

“No,” answered Shaw. “But I made inquiries and no one knew anything about him.”

“I think he was murdered in the swamp,” said Lunt.

Klein stared. “Well, he’s a swell-looking dog. He’d look fine sitting in my auto. I’ll buy him from you if you’re willing to part with him.”

“All right, but I want twenty-five dollars for him.”

“That’s fine! I’ll pay you when we get to the camp. Unless I win the bet, of course.”

He opened the door of the car and the dog clambered in and settled himself, looking out between his long silken ears with dignity. He did not give a glance behind as the car sped away. Shaw felt hurt. He trudged behind Lunt in silence. Darkness was beginning to fall.

“He didn’t give a darn about leaving me,” he said at last.

“Life is strange,” said Lunt. “I’ve just been brooding on Evelina.”

There was one consolation in parting with the setter. They were free to steal or beg rides when the chance came.

The weather turned wet. They walked on and on over flooded roads, past rivers that were torrents. Through towns, through hamlets, through swamps, past farms and cotton fields and hovels, forty miles a day and, at last, into Alabama.

It was a mild cool evening, with a saffron light in the west, when they limped into the lumber camp. The pinewoods loomed black against the sky. Pale lights showed in the windows of the camp buildings. To-night they would sleep in snug bunks. There was a smell of cooking. Lunt’s heel was blistered.

One of the first men they met was Klein. He was delighted to meet them and paid Shaw his fifty dollars on the spot.

“Thanks,” said Shaw, pocketing it. “How is the dog?”

“He’s fine. I’ve bought him a beautiful silver collar with my name on it. I’ve bought him a currycomb. You ought to see him. But he’s a darned aristocrat. He isn’t grateful for anything. You can do your best for him and he doesn’t give a darn.”

The next day the setter disappeared. They never saw him again.

CHAPTER XII

On a warm late September day when the first night frost had repented into a state of true summer and shrubs and plants were wavering in the impulse of a second budding, Cristabel was getting ready Shaw's bedroom. She was happy in his coming. Like a plant in the warmth of the sun her mind put out fragile buds of hope in a new future for herself and her boy. It was two and a half years since she had seen him. He had looked almost a man then. Now he would surely be one.

She looked doubtfully at the bed. Would it be large enough? She wished she had asked Mark to carry Luke's bed to Shaw's room. She was sure Shaw would want to sleep in his old room under the eaves, even though there were now empty rooms on the floor below. Shaw would find the house very different. His aunt married and gone; Luke married and gone; Mark married and living at home with a wife Shaw had never seen. But these changes were as nothing compared to the change that had come over the head of the house.

A year ago Roger Gower had had a stroke and since then he had only been able to walk from his bed to the armchair, where he spent his day, with the help of a stick and a strong arm on his other side. He had always been a quiet man but now his silence was rarely broken. It would seem very strange to Shaw, she thought, to find his grandfather so altered, so helpless.

Now the room was in order. Cristabel gave a glance at her own reflection in the mottled glass. She looked quite nice, she thought. But Shaw would see many grey hairs on the head where there had been only glossy brown. She heard the clock strike twelve. His train was past due. It would take him half an hour to walk from the station. She wished she might have met him but there was too much to do at home.

Then suddenly she saw him walking up the farm lane, swinging along, in his hand a stick he had picked up. The stick had life in it, for there was a bunch of green leaves on its tip. He carried his suitcase in his other hand and it crossed her mind that whenever she saw him he was always either going or coming somewhere. She had no stationary vision of him.

Now he was on his way to Ottawa to take up the work for which he had been engaged by the Government. How proud she was of him! Barely through college, yet already chosen for important work. Invariably passing his examinations with honors. Yes, he was a son to be proud of. She had done her work, what she had laid herself out to do, with all her might. She had brought him up to the best of her power, to be a good man, to have a good profession, to feel the obligations of life

and to face its hardness without wavering. . . . Oh, but she wished his life might have been easier! She would have given ten years of her own to have remembered him as a happy little boy.

She leaned out of the open window and called:—

“Shaw!”

He threw back his head and looked up at her with a delighted grin.

“Oh, hello, Mother!”

“Come in at the front door and straight up here. I’d like to see you alone for a little.”

“All right.”

She heard the door open and shut, his step on the stair. Then they were clasping each other close.

“Shaw, I am glad to see you.”

“I’m glad to see you too, Mother.”

They were silent then, patting each other gently on the back, as though each would comfort the other for the years of separation. They had been child and young mother in this room. He had shot up and up, till now his shoulder was her head’s rest, she looked upward into his face.

“You look pretty well, Shaw. Have you been well?”

“Yes, excepting for a spell of malaria in the lumber camp. They fixed me up with quinine.”

“Malaria!”

“Yes. I had chills and fever. It was pretty mean while it lasted.”

“How did you get it?”

“Oh, it turns up sometimes in that locality.”

“Is your friend well? The young man you wrote me of—Calvin Lunt?”

“He’s fine. He’s gone home too. He’s got no job yet. He’s not so lucky as me.”

It was balm to her to hear him call himself lucky. She squeezed his hand, then led him to the bed. They sat down on the edge of it together, her arm about his waist.

“I think I should have brought Luke’s bed here for you,” she said. “Perhaps you’d like to have his room.”

“This is all right. I’d rather have my old things around me. How’s Grandpa?”

“He’s pretty well, considering. You’ll see a great change in him. He’s feeble and it takes a good time for him to get out his words. But his appetite’s good. Some days he seems like his old self almost. Ma’s been wonderful through it all.”

She began then to tell him the news of all her twelve brothers and sisters, giving him details with concentrated interest, knowing well that he cared little for this family

gossip but unable to resist the pleasure it gave her. He listened, his eyes fixed lovingly on her face.

A smell of burning cake came to them from below. She sprang up.

“Sakes alive! My cake is burning!”

He held her by the skirt. “Let someone else take it out of the oven. You haven’t told me anything about yourself. How does the school go?”

She sighed, whether in resignation at being detained or at the thought of her work he could not tell.

“It’s a good position,” she said. “The fall term will open in a week.”

“One year more!” he said. “No—less than a year! Give me till next spring and you’ll have a house of your own again!”

“That will be lovely, Shaw; I don’t dare let myself think of it.” She went to the door and called—“Aggie!”

A voice answered.

“Aggie, will you look at my cake?”

“All right,” returned the voice.

“Who is Aggie?” asked Shaw.

“She’s Mark’s wife. I’ve mentioned her name time and again in my letters.”

“You can’t expect me to remember all their names,” returned Shaw sulkily. “What’s she like?”

“She’s a nice girl but she’s not very well. She’s had a miscarriage.”

Shaw made a movement of distaste with his broad shoulders. All this breeding. . . . He’d not mind if he never had a child, if he could have the girl he loved. He asked abruptly:—

“How are the Blairs?”

“I suppose you know that Ian’s been working where the new silver mines are, in New Ontario.”

“Yes, I’ve had letters. . . . I was thinking of his father and mother—and Elspeth.”

“His parents are well. For a while Elspeth went about with Douglas Scott, but nothing’s come of that. Those Scott boys are fickle and Douglas wasn’t good enough for her. He’s wild and he drinks too much. Her mother was pleased, because she’s ambitious for Elspeth, but Mr. Blair was worried. He told me so. He said—‘I’d rather it was a poor young man like your son, trustworthy and clean-living.’”

“Hmph!”

“Shaw, why do you look annoyed?”

“I don’t like his description of me. He hasn’t seen anything of me for years.”

“He knows all about you. Every time he and I meet we talk about you. Ian looks on you as his best friend.”

“I guess I’m envious of Douglas’s reputation. He makes me sound like a prig. . . . There is one thing certain—I’ll not be poor for long. Oh, Mother, I’m dying for the day to come when you’ll no longer be the mother of a poor young man! A poor young prig! I could be a little wild too—if I had the chance.”

Cristabel knitted her forehead and smiled.

“I do *not* understand you, Shaw. I couldn’t be prouder of being your mother if you were worth a million.”

“That’s nonsense,” he returned grimly.

They went down the narrow stairs to the dining room. Jane Gower was laying the table. She looked smaller and more bent than Shaw had remembered her, her hair more silver, her face pinker. She gave her crooked smile up at him.

“Well, Shaw, so you’re here. I didn’t know you’d come in.”

They stood rather awkwardly facing each other.

“You look pretty well, Grandma,” he said. Was this the woman, he thought, who used to drag me into that bedroom and thrash me? This little pink-and-white benevolent-looking old body, not taller than my shoulder!

“I am pretty well, considering. My sakes, you *have* grown! You’re taller than Mark, isn’t he, Cristabel?”

Mark’s wife came in from the kitchen. She was scarcely bigger than a child and held her little body close, as though she would make herself even smaller.

“This is Agnes,” said Jane, as though she approved of her daughter-in-law, who in truth had brought a little land and a little money with her.

Agnes put a hard little hand into Shaw’s and showed two deep dimples in a smile.

“Now,” said Jane, “your grandfather will want to see you. He’s sitting on the verandah.”

It seemed strange to think of Roger Gower sitting at this time of day, a time when he had always been hard at work. Shaw followed his grandmother with a feeling of unreality in the scene, even a feeling of depression.

But Roger Gower looked extraordinarily natural. His stocky body was well covered with flesh, his face fresh-colored. The neatness of his clothes, the clean, unused look of his hands, there was where the difference lay. He moved his eyes slowly to Shaw’s face, as though with a great effort he included him in the restricted world where he now had his being.

“Here’s Shaw, Pa,” said Jane, in her low gruff voice.

Roger’s eyes were now full on Shaw’s face. How amazingly blue they were above the grizzled expanse of his spread beard! The sun glimmered on the smoothness of his bald head, the delicate whiteness of the wen on its dome. After a profound stare he brought out the words:—

“Howdy-do, Shaw?”

“Howdy-do, Grandpa?” said Shaw. He took Roger’s right hand in his. The hand was smooth and scarcely returned the clasp. It lay thick and soft and acquiescent. Shaw returned it to the arm of the chair. He did not know what to say.

“Want anything, Pa?” asked Jane.

He appeared not to hear her. Then slowly he brought words up from his chest, out through the density of his beard.

“Did I hear the churn?”

“Yes. There’s nice fresh buttermilk.”

“Bring me some.”

The men were left alone. Shaw said:—

“I’m sorry to find you like this, Grandpa.”

Roger Gower stared straight ahead of him into the changeful sunshine and shadow that flickered among the branches of the old elms. A full minute passed before he answered:—

“I’m mending.”

“That’s good.”

They sat silent. Jane returned with two glasses of buttermilk on a small black tray with a bunch of tight little dahlias painted on it. Particles of rich butter floated on top of the milk. Shaw was embarrassed to have his grandmother wait on him.

“Thanks,” he muttered, and put the drink to his lips.

Roger took the goblet in both hands and raised it with protracted caution to the streak of darker hair that showed where his beard and moustache met. Jane watched him anxiously. With a long steady drain the buttermilk disappeared. She took a corner of her snow-white apron and wiped a trickle from his beard.

“Don’t make him talk too much,” she said to Shaw. “It tires him.” She left them.

“The place looks just the same,” said Shaw.

Roger turned his eyes on him. Words were coming. He said ponderously:—

“The old dog’s dead.”

Shaw had not noticed the absence of the collie.

“That’s too bad,” he said. “What did he die of?”

Roger considered the question for some time and then returned:—

“I don’t remember.”

He turned his gaze once more into the green depths of the elm, as though there he expected to find a solution to some problem that troubled him. Shaw said:—

“I think I’ll have a look round the farm.”

He went down the steps of the verandah and passed the kitchen windows. He could hear his mother and grandmother talking inside. Behind the house there was the woodpile, and an axe propped against the sawhorse. Here was the scene of boyhood tribulations. He had not forgotten them, nor was their bitterness softened in his mind. He remembered how, in his helpless anger, he had hurled sticks against the woodshed. Well, he had been a miserable kid, but it was all over. He was free. A year more would see his mother with her own roof over her head, a modest one perhaps, but she at no one’s beck and call. He pictured the two of them sitting down at table together. There would be flowers on the table and fine linen and fruit in season. . . . He’d buy a phonograph for her and, on each birthday, an additional article of silver for her dressing table. He would choose the design carefully. He would buy the hairbrush first. Then the mirror, the clothes brushes, the manicure set—whatever was needed to complete it.

He met his uncles in a distant field, on their way home to dinner. Mark was more robust than ever but Herbert looked wizened. The stubble fields lay golden in the ruddy sunlight. Crows walked along the furrows seeking what grain had been dropped. Overhead a flock of swallows flew compactly, with sweet twitterings, on their way South. A huge sow lay in a fence corner suckling a troop of struggling piglets, all clean and pink, with hard hams and neat little hoofs. Behind them flamed a clump of goldenrod.

Herbert and Mark were friendly.

“Well, you’ve traveled some since we last saw you,” said Herbert enviously. “We never get away, now that Pa’s laid up.”

“I suppose you’ll be off to British Columbia next,” said Mark. “You were sensible not to go in for farming.”

“I never liked farming.”

The two farmers laughed. “We’ll bet you didn’t. You were the laziest kid I ever saw.”

“Did you ever have any other kid working with you?” asked Shaw.

They confessed that they hadn’t but they were irrevocably convinced of his idleness.

In the house Shaw’s eyes sought his mother as of old, but no longer with yearning and dependence. Now there was a protective light in them. He had a

feeling that she was always being imposed upon in this house. She felt his gaze that scarcely left her and shook her head smiling, forming with her lips the words:—

“Shaw, don’t stare so.”

But that grave stare, how it went through her like balm—filled her with happy pride! At one and the same moment she hoped her family would notice and hoped they would not. No one noticed.

Roger Gower, assisted by Mark, shuffled to the table. He looked very natural sitting there in his black-painted armchair but he no longer served the food. Jane cut up his for him and he ate it with a spoon like a child. It put life into him and he asked:

—
“What day is to-morrow?”

“Sunday,” answered Mark.

“Then Merton will come to see me . . . and Becky.” His eyes sought his wife’s face. “You tell Shaw what Leslie has.”

“He’s got an automobile,” said Jane in grudging admiration.

Roger blew through his beard. “Goes like the wind,” he mumbled.

Herbert and Mark spoke scornfully of the car. “Leslie’s a loon. He can’t talk of anything but the automobile, and half the time it’s broke down.”

“He used to be the same about horses.”

“Uncle Merton and Aunt Becky had one drive in his automobile and they never wanted another.”

“Beaty screams her head off, she gets that scared.”

Roger wanted to speak but no one noticed. The words were struggling behind his beard. He hit the table a feeble blow in his exasperation.

“What is it, Pa?” asked Cristabel.

He stared at her, his large blue eyes disturbed.

“Leslie . . .” he got out.

“Yes, Pa? Leslie . . .”

“He wants me . . . to have . . . a drive with him . . . and . . . I’m a going to!”

He was being funny. That was plain by the quirk where his beard and moustache met. His sons grinned good-naturedly, but Jane said:—

“I guess that would be the end of all for you, Pa.”

In the afternoon Cristabel and Shaw set out to call on Dr. Clemency. They looked on him as Shaw’s benefactor and had a keen sense of gratitude. During the long walk to Thornton Shaw poured out his doings of the past months, his plans for the future. Cristabel clasped his arm. She drank in all he said.

The village looked just the same. There were the great blue and green glass urns

in the window of the drugstore. There in the baker's window were the sugar sticks and caramels and bull's-eyes that had once made his mouth water.

"Would you like some candies, Mother?" he asked.

"No, thanks, dear. They make my teeth ache."

"There's a nice-looking hat," he said, outside the drygoods store. "Do you need a hat?"

"Goodness, no! And, if I did, I'd not buy that girlish thing. It looks more like Elspeth."

He felt a little rebuffed. They walked on in silence. They came to Dr. Clemency's house set far back behind a hedge, his name, Morgan Clemency, on a brass plate on the door. The lawn was somewhat below the level of the street and was green with the strange intensity of autumn. The paved walk was bordered by beds of cannas in brilliant red flower.

As Cristabel was about to pull the bell the door opened and the doctor appeared, ushering out a young woman. He looked quite unchanged to Shaw. Time seemed to have no effect on him. He was as erect, as haughty-looking in his sallow aquiline way, as ever. But there was a kindly light in his deep-set eyes when he looked at Cristabel.

"Come in, come in, Mrs. Manifold! And Shaw—walk right in! No need to ask how you are. You both look very well indeed." He shook them warmly by the hand.

The young woman was staring at Shaw with a self-conscious smile. She was stylish, he thought, but had a shrewish air that rather spoiled her. There was something vaguely familiar in her pale searching gaze, her sharp, cold-looking nose and the deep dimple that incongruously dented one cheek when she smiled.

"This is Miss Adams," said Dr. Clemency. "I think you and she were at school together. In fact she and I have just been talking of you."

"Are you Louie Adams?" asked Shaw as they shook hands. Her hand was very small, very bony, and gripped his almost painfully.

"I am," she answered, with a note of defiance. "I suppose I've changed a lot. You haven't changed at all. You look as solemn and as dogged as ever."

"Did you say doggish?" asked Dr. Clemency, showing his teeth.

"No. I said dogged. No one could stop Shaw doing what he wanted to."

Cristabel thought the girl was rude. She said:—

"I think Shaw is very reasonable. Not a bit dogged, like you say."

"Well, well," said the doctor, "don't you young people begin to quarrel. I'm going to take you all into the garden to see my wife."

He said this as though he were about to confer on them a great honor and,

leading the way down the steps, escorted them to the garden at the back of the house. Here they found Mrs. Clemency ensconced on a rustic seat with a number of shawls about her and a hot-water bottle on a cushion at her feet. She had the pleased air of a little girl proud of being the centre of grown-up attention. Beside her sat Elspeth Blair. They turned their two faces, Mrs. Clemency's pale, sandy, pointed, Elspeth's rosy and round, toward the newcomers.

"I have brought more visitors for you, my dear," said the doctor.

His wife greeted them kindly but with an invalid's detached air. He tucked the shawls more closely about her, brought another seat for Cristabel and himself. Louie and Shaw dropped to the grass. The air was heavy with the lazy sweetness of September, and laggard bees raped the scant honey of late flowers to augment their winter store.

Mrs. Clemency talked of her sweet peas, her poodle, her ill-health, the doctor giving his profound attention to her every word. When she talked of her sweet peas he stalked to the corner of the garden where they grew and brought back a few large blooms which she declared were paltry compared to those of the early summer. When she wondered a little anxiously where the poodle was, Dr. Clemency went to the house and brought back the comforting word that he was asleep on the gilt chair in the parlor. When she turned to the subject of her health he laid his long ivory-colored hand on the hot-water bottle to see that it was still a benefit to her.

Cristabel's eyes had a gentle longing in them when she looked at him. Her mind went back to her dead husband and she pictured him living, with a good practice and herself the mistress of a happy home. What must it be like to be cared for—to have one's every wish anticipated? But she would never have changed places with Mrs. Clemency. She had her boy, her health. Soon they would be together under their own roof. As the doctor took her to see his melons, she said:—

"Shaw had a touch of malaria at the lumber camp, doctor."

"He did! I am sorry to hear that. Was it caused by bad water?"

"He doesn't think so. No one else had it. I get so anxious about him when he has any sickness."

"Don't you worry, Mrs. Manifold. Your son looks very well to me. The malaria has come from a germ he has picked up on that journey of his."

"A germ!" Cristabel had never heard of such a thing.

"Well—a microbe. One never knows where they may lurk. The South is a good place for breeding them. I saw a lot of sickness in the American Civil War."

"It must have been terrible . . . and to think that you were a prisoner and almost shot for a spy!"

"I said my prayers and never thought to see Canada again. But thanks to a Yankee whose wounds I had dressed, I escaped." He repeated the story she already knew well but never tired of. The golden-green melons lay unnoticed at their feet.

They heard the voices of the young people from beneath a pear tree where Mrs. Clemency had sent them to get themselves fruit. Louie's laugh came high and shrill.

"That poor young girl," said the doctor, "is far from well."

"Louie Adams?"

"Yes. She has a touch of—what your husband died of. She has spent the summer in a tent in an orchard. It's now considered the best treatment to keep them out of doors."

"Yes. So I've been told. Poor Louie! She's worked so hard. And she's doing so well at schoolteaching. How long will it be till she's cured?"

"A year. The school board is keeping her school for her. They ought to, for it was the unshoveled paths and the freezing cold of the schoolroom that started her trouble."

Cristabel felt a deep compassion for the girl. Yet Louie's face was bright with laughter when they saw her collecting pears in a basket. She was so improved that Shaw could scarcely believe in her. Her hair, which had been drab and stringy as a child, was thick and well cared for. Her pale eyes had a new brightness and her thin bluish lips were scarlet. She set herself violently to attract him, but he turned from her to the unaffected sweetness of Elspeth and Elspeth's honest grey-blue eyes.

On the walk home Cristabel told Shaw of Louie's illness. He was sorry for her but his mind was on Elspeth. She had invited him and Cristabel to tea the next day. She had said that her parents would be glad to have them. Ian would be home.

"Didn't she ask Louie?"

"No, Mother. Louie never has gone to the Blairs'. You couldn't expect Elspeth to invite her."

"I feel very sorry for her, Shaw."

"Yes," he agreed. "It's a pity." But his mind was too full of the new life opening before him to dwell on Louie's misfortunes.

Cristabel continued—"I do admire the way she's got on. Did you notice how nicely she was dressed? And her hair was done in the latest style. But there was a feverish excitable look about her." Cristabel pressed Shaw's arm as though she would hold him with her strength against all dangers. He looked down at her, feeling himself a wall between her and the future. From now on her life would be different.

Already life seemed changed to them. The years of his education were over.

Before him now lay achievement. For her, security and pride. They felt lighter, as though they had laid down a burden. The road, with the golden stubble fields and little woods and gentle hills on either side, was scarcely long enough for the happiness of that walk. If only, she thought, he were not going away so soon! Since he was eight years old it had always been meetings and partings for them.

The next day was Sunday. Since Roger's illness, that meant a succession of visits from his married sons and daughters who were within reach of the farm, and a crowded table for the two-o'clock dinner and for tea. Wilfred, the manager of a branch bank in a small town, brought his wife and three children in a shiny new buggy. Letitia and her husband walked from Thorriton, pushing a baby carriage, their three older children marching alongside swinging empty baskets which they would fill with pears and apples from the orchard. Leslie and Beatrice and their children arrived in the motorcar which was a source of envy, derision, and sometimes anger when horses were frightened. But Leslie and Beatrice were favorites, he for his knowingness and jokes, she for her unfailing laughter which bubbled all the more spontaneously as she put on flesh with each succeeding child.

Uncle Merton and Aunt Becky did not come to dinner but appeared in midafternoon, she in a new blue velvet dress and a beribboned hat for which she had discarded her bonnet, he looking a little smaller, a little more bent, but benign and good-humored as ever. He sat himself down by his brother and laid a stubby hand on his knee.

"Well, well, Roger," he said, "you don't look at all ailing. We'll soon have you working on the farm again."

Roger fixed his large blue eyes on his brother's face. Words were on the way but they were slow.

"I'll not work on the farm again," he said.

"Well, perhaps not hard work, but you'll get about and see that the others are doing their share."

Roger stared and brought out—"I hope so."

"You should have been at our church this morning," said Becky. "It was the Harvest Festival. 'Twould have done you good to see the pumpkins and squashes and grapes and ears of corn. The rector preached a fine sermon."

"And only twenty minutes long," added Merton. "Not one of those long-winded harangues like your minister gives you."

The eyes of the two old brothers met; Roger drew a deep breath. Then he said—"Your rector . . . can tell . . . all he knows . . . in twenty minutes."

A quirk came at the corner of his moustache. He had seen the pleased look Jane

gave him.

Merton, delighted to have roused his brother to retort, went on—"It would cheer you up to hear the singing, Roger. No droning of psalms but good hearty hymns. Leslie led the choir."

"The decorations were lovely," repeated Becky.

Roger turned his gaze on her. "Was . . . your . . . hat . . . a part of them?" he asked.

Jane, whose merriment was usually in undertone, cackled out loud.

Beatrice came to the door of the parlor.

"Tea is ready," she said. "Can I help you, Pa? Or would you like one of the boys?"

"I'll help him," said Merton. "My goodness, he'll scarcely need any help at all, the way he is improving."

He heaved Roger from his chair. Roger grasped his stick and the two moved towards the tea table. Jane was still chuckling over Roger's quip at Becky's hat.

But Becky was not annoyed. She tossed her head with the hat on it in spiteful pride. To come to table in a relative's house wearing a hat was an unheard-of thing. It was an insult. Jane, from feeling amused at Becky's expense, now was disconcerted. She pushed out her upper lip and fiddled nervously with the cups and saucers.

The massive beards of the old men gave solidity to the scene which otherwise would have seemed frivolous in this house. Leslie was making jokes about his mother's hat, knowing it pleased her. She sat with it perched high on her black head. Her relations-in-law said that she dyed her hair, but this was not so. Black as a coal it remained though her face was wrinkled as an old apple.

"Where did you get that hat?"

Where did you get that tile?"

Leslie sang softly in his reedy tenor.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Becky, "to sing comic songs with a voice like yours. Coming out of church people told me they almost cried when you sang the solo part of the anthem."

Leslie flushed a deeper hue with pride. Jane thrust out her lip still further. Luke gave a snort. Roger made as though to speak. Watching him, Jane was torn between the wish to have him say something that would prick Leslie's conceit and the fear that such a remark would hurt Beatrice. Her mother love prevailed.

"Will you have stewed blueberries or pears, Pa?" she interrupted.

Roger's eyes were still fixed on Leslie. A tremor went through his beard. The words began to come.

"I'd cry too," he said.

Jane hurriedly repeated—"Blueberries or pears, Pa?"

Roger's gaze was turned on the fruit.

"Plums," he said.

"Roger's like I am," said Becky. "He finds blueberries sloppy and pears windy."

Jane was now thoroughly disconcerted. Leslie drummed with his fingers on the tablecloth and sang:—

"Where'er I go they shout 'Hello!
Where did you get that hat?'!"

Becky addressed him—"You must sing the solo from the anthem after tea, Leslie. There's no use in hiding your light under a bushel."

"It would take more than a bushel to hide your hat, Ma," returned Leslie. "It would take a barrel."

Becky cackled delightedly. "When I gave up bonnets I thought I might as well go in for hats that were worth looking at."

"Pa, do you want plums?" asked Jane. Roger was troubled.

He did not know what he wanted. When Merton laid a slice of layer cake on his plate he began to eat it docilely.

Jane rose from the table.

"What do you want, Ma?" asked Letitia.

"Plums. I'll get them myself."

They heard her heavy tread descending the steps into the cellar. Soon she returned and set a glass bowl of golden plums on the table.

"Help your Pa to some," she said to Esther.

But Roger shook his head. "No . . . no!" he said, quite briskly.

"Roger's like I am," put in Becky. "If he doesn't get a thing when he wants it, it's no use to him." She nodded gayly at Roger.

He was bewildered, but he was pleased. He felt a smile rippling up through the cords of his throat to his lips and his cheeks. It came rippling softly, even to his beard, and quietly vibrated there.

"Where are Cristabel and Shaw?" asked Merton, thinking it would be well to change the subject.

Becky had not missed them. Now her beady eyes flew about the table. "To think of their going off when we were expected! Where are they?"

“They’re to tea at the Manse,” returned Jane primly.

“Out to tea!” Becky’s sense of dignity was outraged.

“To *tea*—and *us* here!”

“I’m not sure they knew you were coming.”

Becky pushed back her chair. Her voice was like a file.

“Well, if we’re of as little importance as that I think we’d better be off, eh, Merton?”

Merton ran his fingers nervously through his beard, scratched his head. “Just as you say, Becky,” he mumbled.

Those about the table began to be conscious that something was wrong. Leslie saved the situation. “Keep your hat on, Mother,” he said. “Cristabel told me she was real sorry to miss you and hoped to be back before you left. The folks at the Manse wanted to see Shaw.”

Becky was only partly mollified, but the reference to her hat amused Roger. He chuckled deeply. He wanted to speak. Everyone waited for that.

“She . . . is keeping . . . it on, Leslie,” he drew up from the depth of his chest. “I’ll bet . . . she . . . sleeps in it. . . .”

Jane quite graciously urged her sister-in-law to another cup of tea.

Becky drew in her chair. “I always liked Shaw,” she said. “He’s got brains. I like people with brains. He takes after his father’s folks.”

“Shaw may have brains,” said Luke, “but he was a poor tool on the farm. I never saw a lazier boy.”

Mark grinned. “I remember once putting him to saw wood and I found him lying on his back reading. He’d rigged up a contraption that he could work with his legs and make the noise of sawing. He’d been fooling us for days that way.”

Becky cackled in delight. “That’s a boy after my own heart! He’ll make his mark in the world and it won’t be like his grandmother’s Mark, either.”

This pun completely restored her. Her eyes twinkled from one face to another. Jane knew the joke was against her but she could not make it out. She sat dumbly making puzzled faces while her needle-pricked fingers nervously pleated the edge of the snowy tablecloth.

When the meal was over Mark and Luke helped their father to his feet, then resumed their places. Roger still said grace. There was a long silence before he was able to bring his tongue to the point of speech. Leslie gave Beaty a look from under his lowered lids and she had difficulty in restraining an hysterical giggle. From across the table Wilfred stared at her disapprovingly. She saw her mother’s lips forming the words “Behave yourself, Beaty!”

Then from their father's beard the grace issued:—

“For what we have received . . . may the Lord . . . make us . . .”

Silence again fell.

At first it was a soft light silence, then it grew heavy, pressing upon them, with Roger as its centre. Jane's lips quivered. She prompted:—

“Truly thankful, Pa.”

But he could not speak. He made a sign with his head to his brother.

From the other beard came the remainder of the grace:—

“Truly thankful. For Christ's sake, Amen.”

But instead of the Presbyterian “Ay-men,” Merton intoned the long “Ah” of the Church of England. The two pairs of china-blue eyes of the brothers met: Merton's defiant, Roger's truculent. He found his voice.

“Ay-men,” he growled.

Cristabel and Shaw were very happy at the Manse. The Blairs were kind. They were deeply interested in Shaw, Cristabel could see that. She felt that Elspeth was more than interested. She felt that Elspeth was very fond of him and thought how much she would like the girl for a daughter-in-law when the time came for Shaw to marry. Shaw seemed to have eyes only for Ian. But how could one look away from Ian when he was in the room? He made one feel light-hearted. She thought that was why Shaw found so much pleasure in his companionship. When he was laughing and talking with Ian, Shaw's face softened. He looked boyish and his laugh made Cristabel's heart glad.

Ian wanted to talk of nothing but the trip up the coast of British Columbia the year before. He recalled one incident after another. Where was old Varney to-day? Where was Searle? How they had bickered! What workers they were! Far better than the lot Ian had since had working under him in the mining country of New Ontario. He wished he were going West with Shaw. He reiterated that never again would they have such a summer.

Elspeth was pensive. She wandered off by herself to find her little kitten that was chasing moths in the dusk. Beyond the white picket fence she could see the windows of the Presbyterian Church shining in the afterglow. She walked slowly, peering into every shadow for the kitten. Because it was black it was not easy to find. It heard her coming and crouched in the long grass in the fence corner. But its glowing eyes betrayed it. They were like two little green moons. . . . “Oh, now I've got you!” she exclaimed, and caught it and held it to her cheek. It snuggled there as though it had wanted nothing so much as to be captured. She could feel the flutter of its tiny heart and she was filled with tenderness. She felt a little lonely, too, and she was glad

when she saw Shaw coming along the path toward her. Ian had monopolized him. Now she would have him to herself for a little. She wished she could think of something clever to say, something witty like Ian would have said. She wished that the things that came into her head to say were not always so sensible. People were always calling her a nice sensible girl. Well, it could not be helped. . . .

“I have found the kitten,” she said.

“Oh, have you?” he said, as though relieved.

“Yes, I found it in that dark corner.”

“Did you?” He put a finger under the kitten’s chin and tickled it softly.

“I’d never have seen it if it hadn’t been for its eyes.”

His hand touched her cheek and he withdrew it quickly.

“It’s a pretty little kitten,” he said.

“Yes, isn’t it! It weighs next to nothing. Feel it.”

She offered it to him and he took it gravely. It sat in his hand as though there it wanted to be of all places in the world. But a moment later it leaped to the fence and scampered along it, its tail erect, and from the fence dropped among some currant bushes.

“Oh, say, Elspeth, I am sorry!”

“Never mind! We’ll find it again. Kitty! Kitty!”

He called too. “Kitty—Kitty—Kitty!”

They knelt side by side peering under the bushes. They could hear it moving. The sweet smell of the black-currant leaves rose on the soft air.

Before he knew what he was doing he put his lips against her cheek.

All motion ceased for them—the stir of the leaves, the sigh of the breeze in the poplar tree, the very beat of their hearts. All the life of the village, the life of the whole world, was suspended as his lips pressed the round firmness of her cheek.

They rose slowly from their knees. She struck her palms lightly together because particles of the garden loam clung to them. The kitten darted into view and sidled down the path. Cristabel’s voice came from the lawn.

“Shaw! We must go now. Where are you?”

On the long walk home she kept thinking:—

“I shall remember this night. It is so nice, walking home with Shaw after being out to tea together. It has been a happy day. The remembrance of it will help me bear up all the while he is away.”

“Let’s not go in yet,” he said when they had reached the house. “Let’s sit on the steps for a little.”

“But we ought to go in, dear.”

Still she humored him. They sat on the steps of the verandah and he laid his head on her lap.

“Stroke my hair,” he said. “The way you used to when I was a kid.”

CHAPTER XIII

Shaw secured the same room he had before in Ottawa, but his work was now permanent instead of temporary. He had a salary of two hundred dollars a month and might have taken even better quarters and still saved money, but there was the loan from Mr. Scott to be paid. When that was accomplished he would save all that was possible for furnishing a home for Cristabel. Her home and his! In a year she would come to it. In a year she would be freed from the long thralldom of her successive situations. For the rest of her life, free—to rest, to enjoy, to spend the money he would surely be able to lavish on her.

For he would get on! The heads of the Department were interested in him. He was a queer young fellow but worth watching. When he talked of forests his face lighted as a young priest's might when he spoke of his religion. That was the sort of man who was wanted. One whose mind could keep pace with the expansion of the West. All through the West there was the invasion of new settlers. From the east of Canada, from Britain, from the States, from Europe. Later on Shaw was to choose what parts should be set aside for forest reserves and what tracts kept free for settlement.

His body, his mind, were vibrant with energy as he strode through the clear frosty air one March evening to the Scotts'. In his pocket was the payment of the loan. No more would that shadow hang over him. Now he could save. His eyes swept the houses he passed. He considered each in the light of its suitability as a home for Cristabel and himself. Size did not baffle him or sense of proportion to his salary depress. That house, with the tall white portico, that would do. The room next the conservatory should be her own sitting room. The one with the round end, like a tower, his study. There was a house with a fine garage—well, why shouldn't he own a car before long! He saw himself driving through tree-shaded streets, along the road by the river in a handsome car, Cristabel at his side, a white motoring veil flying over her shoulder. Or was it Elspeth at his side? He narrowed his mental gaze to make sure. . . . Yes, it was certainly Elspeth at his side. Cristabel was at home in the garden picking sweet peas. Her arms were full of them.

He was so deep in thought that he turned in at the Scotts' gate without being aware that he did so. He stared at the door. Where was he? Oh yes, he had come to pay his debt! He had the money ready in his pocket and that was the end of money's ebb. Now the flow would begin. Next month he would buy furniture. Always paying cash. But he would have only good things. He already had an eye on

a brass bed for Cristabel, very ornate, on which she would rest like a queen. In one shop there was a study lamp he wanted. In another a parlor table with carved legs and a top like satin. . . . He saw Cristabel setting a silver vase, with red roses in it, on the table. . . . What was she wearing? Why . . . a lovely new dress, like one he had seen on a lady in Charleston—blue silk, with a lacy thing falling down the front. . . . The door opened. He must have rung the bell! The maid looked at him inquiringly.

“Mr. Scott,” he said hesitatingly. “I’d like to see Mr. Scott. I’m expected to dinner.” And he added apologetically, “I’m afraid I’m early.”

Mr. Scott was sitting at a desk in a small room furnished in a style suitable for what was then called a “den.” His shrewd tired eyes took Shaw in as he entered. He welcomed him warmly.

“I’ve come,” said Shaw, “to pay my debt.” He took out a wallet and from it fifteen twenty-dollar bank notes. “I’ve brought it in cash.”

Mr. Scott took the notes and looked at them thoughtfully.

“You’re sure you want to pay now?”

“Yes. I’m anxious to have it off my mind.”

“Well, I admire you for that. I’m glad you’re getting on so well, Shaw. What are you earning?”

“Two hundred a month, sir. But I could have made more than double that if I’d gone to Oregon.”

“Oregon?”

“I was offered a job there to take charge of the Forest Department.”

Mr. Scott stared. “Then why didn’t you go?”

“I like the job here better.”

Mr. Scott’s face fell. “Well, that’s a funny reason. I thought you were out for success.”

“So I am. There’s a wider scope here. I’ll learn more. Next summer they’re sending me to inspect the Glacier National Park, so we shall know what the Americans are doing in that way. The heads of the railway and the ministers have to decide what we should include in our National Park. I’m to make the choice next fall.”

“Well, well, well,” said Mr. Scott, “I hope you’re doing the right thing, but in your place I couldn’t possibly have forgone the bigger salary.”

“I want to learn all I can about forests,” said Shaw. He set his lips in a stern, almost ascetic line. There was a hungry look in his eyes.

Why that look, Mr. Scott wondered, fingering the notes he hated to take. But it

was good for the boy to pay his debts. "If you want another loan at any time . . ." he said.

"I'll not want another," said Shaw. "I'm on my own feet now and I don't intend to stand still."

"It's a wonderful thing to like your work," said Mr. Scott. "I've never liked politics but I expect I shall be submerged in them for the rest of my days. . . . I like an outdoor life."

They were silent as the thought of mountains and rivers and forests came into the room like a palpable essence. Mr. Scott straightened his sagging body. "I'd not have this corporation," he said, "if . . ." He did not finish the sentence but picked up a framed photograph from his desk. It was Ronald in uniform.

"Taken in India," he said.

Shaw examined it. "He looks fine," he said.

"He's lost to us," returned Mr. Scott. "And now Douglas has got himself engaged to a society girl—as hard as nails." He sighed and again slumped in his chair. "You'll meet her at dinner."

Shaw did, and felt uncomfortable in her presence.

Douglas was just the same, talkative, bold, and restless. He and the girl were like opponents in some game rather than lovers. They spoke a language Shaw could not learn. He had never liked Mrs. Scott, who had held herself aloof from the country people and had resented her husband's whim of sending their sons to the common school. He had wanted them to be educated as he had been, but the boys were like their mother.

Mr. Scott tried to draw Shaw out but Shaw felt that anything he had to say bored Mrs. Scott and mystified the young girl. He grew silent and was glad when the evening was over.

He had a day with Cristabel on his way to Glacier Park. She looked well, he thought. Her blue eyes were bright. Never had they had so much to talk of, so many plans to discuss, but they found few words. They were silent at times, while she held his hand and his imagination strained, now toward the West, now toward the moment when he would take her away from the life that was hateful to him. He said something of this and she replied:—

"I don't hate it, Shaw. I'm fairly happy. And why shouldn't I be? I do wish you wouldn't hate things." But she was glad he hated to have her work.

"This summer is the turning point in my life," he said. "If I carry this job through successfully, our future is secure."

"Is anything secure, Shaw?"

"Mother, that's not like you."

"Well, just once in my life I have felt secure. It lasted only a little while."

"Don't you believe in me?"

"Yes . . . in you, but . . ."

"But what?"

"I'm no great hand at explaining what I feel."

"Then you don't believe in me!"

"I think . . . oh, I don't know . . . I guess I'm just afraid to be happy."

"Don't be afraid, Mother."

"I'm not really. It's just these everlasting meetings and partings."

He put his arm about her. "Everyone says what a courageous woman you've been."

"Courageous! That's too big a word. . . . Shaw, I do worry about your clothes. I wish you had sent me your trunk to go over."

"Mother, clothes simply don't matter where I'm going."

"What time is it?"

"Forty minutes to train time."

"I hate trains."

"Who's hating now?"

"I can't help it—I hate them."

In the late fall Shaw was on one of the foothill ranches in the valley of the Belly River that flowed from Montana into Alberta. He was making preparations for the final survey for the National Park but he could find no one to go with him. It was his first experience of the kind. There had always been men eager for such expeditions. But this was the time of the fall roundup and every available man was needed for the bringing in of the cattle. They came in russet hordes across the dry plains, their horns shining in the October sunlight. No one was interested in Shaw's expedition. Among these scattered ranches he found himself and his work unimportant. For so long he had looked on it as the most important work in the Western provinces, himself as dedicated to it, that he was irritated and a little baffled to find it held of small account. He had traveled from ranch to ranch—they were twelve and fifteen miles apart—finding no prospect, no immediate hope of getting a man. He could not delay much longer, because of the coming cold weather.

His host, Mr. Barton, was an Englishman, an erect man of medium height, the bronzed skin drawn tightly over his aquiline features, his eyes searching, defensive

yet tolerant. He kept repeating:—

“It’s too bad. I’m very sorry, very sorry.” Shaw was not certain whether the rancher really was sorry for him or whether he was just being polite, but it was the first expression of sympathy he had had and it cheered him. He said:—

“I don’t know what to do about it. I’ve a good mind to set out alone.”

“You can’t do that,” said Barton decidedly. “It would be too dangerous.”

“I will, if I can’t get a man,” returned Shaw doggedly.

“You see the way I am fixed. I can’t possibly let you have a man.”

“I know . . . but this is my job . . . I’ve got to do it.”

“If only you could wait till the roundup was over!”

“I daren’t wait. It’s getting late now.”

“Have a drink,” said Barton.

“No. Thanks.”

They stood silent in front of the low irregular house. Half a dozen dogs were stretched in the mellow sunlight. A servant brought Barton the copy of the *London Times* which was handed out to him daily from the packet that came every fortnight. Barton began to glance at the headlines.

Shaw’s attention was caught by a weedy youth strolling across the space between the enclosure where the first cattle of the roundup were confined and the back of the house.

“Who is that?” he asked.

“Why, it’s Freddy Chase! I wonder if you could get him to go with you. He is not much of a prize but he’d be better than nobody. Hi—Freddy!” he shouted.

The boy turned his head.

“Come here!”

“You can tell by the way he moves,” said Barton, “how energetic he is. But he’s a decent boy. He’s a nephew of my cook. He comes from the Mormon colony.”

Freddy now stood before them. He was very fair, tall, thin, taciturn. Barton explained in a few words what was wanted of him. Freddy fixed his light blue eyes on the far horizon, as though nothing either of them might say could interest him.

“Well,” said Barton, “what about it?”

“About what?” asked Freddy, in a thin high-pitched voice.

“Making the trip with this gentleman?”

“What would I make out of it?”

Shaw told him.

Freddy considered. “Well,” he brought out at last, “I guess I’ll go.”

Shaw could almost have embraced him. He arranged with Barton for horses and

spent the rest of the day in putting the packs in order and gauging the weight for each horse. He was much more nervously exact than usual. Nothing must go wrong in the expedition. He could look back with content on his summer's work in the American Glacier Park, his early autumn in an old Hudson's Bay Company's fort from where he made long trips on horseback. But this was the most important, this was the apex. With this well done he could go back to Ottawa with a light heart. He dreaded letting the boy out of his sight for fear of losing him. He felt nothing stable in him.

"Must you go to your home before we leave?" he asked.

"Sure." Freddy's eyes rested languidly on the sharply etched line of the horizon.

"I go to git my clothes."

"You promise to be back here in time to leave at seven to-morrow morning?"

"Yeh." Freddy began to roll a cigarette in thin tobacco-stained fingers.

Shaw was tempted to threaten or bribe him but he only said:—

"Well, you must be here on the tick. I depend on you."

The rancher was glad to have Shaw's company for the night. They sat up late talking. The Englishman prophesied a war in Europe and said he would be off to it when it came.

"What about you?" he asked.

"War doesn't interest me," answered Shaw. "I'm not interested in destruction. I'm all for building up."

"But if the Empire was involved in a war?"

"I suppose I'd go—but I'd hate it. The fight against forest fires is war enough for me." His sombre eyes turned toward the blackness of the uncurtained window. He pictured the mountains and the mountain torrents rearing themselves, rushing down through the night. The air coming in at the window was cold. He shivered.

"Have a drink," urged Barton. "Then we'll go to bed. I hope you'll stop with me on your way back."

"Thanks. I'd like to," answered Shaw.

They drank in silence, the smoke from Barton's cigar lying in a bluish plain between them. Shaw looked at the clock, longing for morning. He felt tired but as though sleep were far away.

It was not. He slept dreamlessly till he was roused by a knock on his door. His first thought was—"Will the boy come?" He was so anxious about the boy that he could scarcely eat his breakfast. The word came from the kitchen that he was there. Shaw, at that moment, loved him. He felt that he would do anything for him.

This morning Freddy looked more businesslike. He wore corduroy riding breeches and a cowboy hat and scarf knotted about his thin throat. He had on three

sweaters, he said. The air was indeed as sharp as steel at that moment. It had different degrees of heat and cold, turning sometimes soft, bearing on it the scent of the manure from the cattle enclosure, then suddenly sharp again. The sunrise was red against the purple sky as they rode out into the open. The horses were fairly good ones. They lifted up their feet as though eager to be off. The breath from their nostrils hung white. There were two saddle horses and two pack horses. Eight pairs of hoofs sounded their clip-clop on the morning sharpness.

“How old are you?” asked Shaw.

“Seventeen.”

“Ever been up in the mountains before?”

“No, I went to school three years—no, it was four years. Since then I work round the cattle ranches.” He added, after a little—“I’m a Mormon.”

“I don’t suppose you’ve begun marrying yet, have you?” asked Shaw.

“There’s time enough for me,” answered the boy. “But my father has three wives. They all have sisters. I’ve got a lot of nice aunts. One of them is Mr. Barton’s cook.”

The only subject on which Freddy would willingly talk was the doings of his aunts, his uncles, and many cousins. His interest in them was apparently greater than his interest in anything he himself could possibly do. Whenever the horses came abreast and Shaw tried to draw some information about the country from the boy, Freddy would turn the questions aside with: “My Uncle Alf in Seattle says,” or “My Aunt Mary in Winnipeg once had an awful experience,” or “My Cousin Elmer pretty near broke his neck on this trail. . . .” Shaw resigned himself to the prolonged saga of Freddy’s relations, in Freddy’s tired, high-pitched voice. But he never referred to his parents. Shaw concluded that the father’s matrimonial relations kept him too busy for intercourse with his children and that, of the three wives, Freddy was possibly uncertain which was his mother. But he was a willing boy and Shaw thanked Providence for producing him.

Now that they were well on their way, Shaw gave him scarcely a thought. In the distance the mountains rose up and up, vast, grey, snow-capped. Serene and glittering, a glacier towered like a wall. Down through the forest of spruce little streams flung themselves from the mountains. The horses trotted across a great gravel flat where small willow trees whispered in the breeze. Here once a lake had spread.

Shaw followed an old trail remaining from the days of Indian traders. It left the low-lying land and followed a stream toward its mountainous source. He would follow this, he thought, to a six-thousand-foot elevation where the timber line was.

From there what a godlike survey of the country! The sound of the horses' hoofs, the creaking of the saddle leather, the enticing Indian-summer breeze in his face, were the orchestral accompaniment to the aspiring song of his spirit. He became more and more absorbed in his own thoughts. He gave less and less thought to Freddy.

At night they made themselves a shelter of spruce boughs and curled up in it together. Bacon and eggs and hot coffee lay comfortingly in their stomachs. The smell of the spruce boughs was spicy on the air. Moonlight glimmered between the needles.

They could hear the soft stumbling movements of the horses, their slow crunching of the coarse grass. Freddy would begin to murmur something about an uncle, an aunt, or a cousin. Then they would be asleep, and so on for three days and nights, getting higher and higher, up from the lap of the plain to the shoulder of the mountain.

Each day the beneficent warmth of the sun increased, the harebell blue of the sky deepened, the flaming autumnal colors became more piercingly beautiful. The four horses, the two men, moving up the mountainside became but figures in a tapestry depending from the wall of heaven. They could not escape the design by their progress or alter the pattern by their changeful poses. They were immutably interwoven there.

On the fourth day, and it was the last of the upward climb, Freddy fell behind with the two pack horses. He often did this but to-day it was farther. Shaw had the great hump of the mountain to himself, for all of hoof sound or echoing voice. He was happier at this moment than ever before in his life. The state of his mind approached bliss. He scarcely thought but, in every fibre, he absorbed the well-being of his world. There was understanding between him and his horse. The going was easy. Her solid flanks and shoulders moved with little effort.

Evening came in a blaze of purple and saffron. The purple clouds hung low, as though weighted. The wind rose and sang itself into a gale that bent the trees and hastened the clouds onward, but still it was not cold. The trail ran through a narrow valley where were glossy-leaved shrubs and red shale and boulders that seemed to have been rolled down from the peaks by sportive giants. Through the valley the gale blew restlessly. Shaw was on the summit above the timber line and the permanent snow spread to its verge.

Shaw rode in his shirt, for the day had been very warm. Now suddenly the sun sank and he wanted his sweater. He remembered that he had left it on a pack horse. He wished Freddy would come along with the camp things and the food. He

dismounted and stood by the trail, the bridle on his arm, the mare arching her neck and looking sideways down the trail for her companions. The shadows that had been growing each moment longer now merged themselves into one violet dusk. A windy afterglow flared in the west. The gale, like a naked barbarian, raced through the valley.

Shaw stroked the mare's neck and they heaved a mutual sigh. Both were happy, but she wanted the comforting presence of her companions and Shaw wanted his sweater and some food. A little farther on they would find a good place to spend the night. He whistled softly between his teeth and his fingers played an accompaniment on the curve of the mare's neck. Suddenly she gave a joyful whinny. Shaw strained his ears. A pine cone fell and rolled down the track. Then came an answering whinny. The boy appeared riding the mare's brother.

"Hurry up!" shouted Shaw cheerfully. Then his jaw dropped.

"Where are the pack horses?" he shouted.

"I've lost 'em!" The boy looked ready to cry.

"*Lost them!*"

"Yeh. Down there." He pointed down into the valley. "I bin huntin' for them ever since, till now."

Shaw snapped his teeth together and spoke through them. "Are you telling me that you've *lost* the pack horses?"

Freddy's lips trembled. "Yeh."

Shaw stood petrified. His mind refused to take in the disaster. Instead it noted the hastening purple clouds, a cluster of little red berries growing at the side of the trail.

Freddy was telling him a rigmarole about tying the three horses while he went to investigate something, the remains of a trapper's camp, a charred circle, something—it did not matter what—and when he came back . . .

"On'y the saddle horse was there," he blubbered. "The other two sons of guns had got away on me, mister."

Shaw stood silent, his fingers still drumming on the mare's neck. She was gently nuzzling her brother's face.

"Honest to goodness, mister," said Freddy, "I tied them two horses tight but the sons of guns fixed it up between them to get away. They never wanted to come on this trip. My Uncle Jake had a horse that didn't like mountains. There was no use trying to get him up them. He—"

"To hell with your uncle!" interrupted Shaw. "We've got to find those pack horses!" He sprang into his saddle and led the way furiously down the trail. Freddy

came galloping after. The horses' tails and manes flew out on the gale. They were glad to be together again.

They found the hoofprints of the pack horses where Freddy had tied them. They found the prints again far down the valley, facing towards the ranch. But now it was almost dark and a flurry of snow swept toward them on the gale. Shaw shivered in his thin shirt. The boy was lucky. He had kept on his sweater.

The night came down on them like the wings of a great bird. There was nothing to do but surrender oneself to the blackness, for the food, the blankets, the matches, were on the pack horses. There would be no food, no warmth, that night. Unless a miracle restored the horses to them, they must turn back the next day. Every time Freddy came near to Shaw he began some story of an uncle, an aunt, or a cousin. Shaw no longer cursed the boy or his relations. He cursed only himself as they lay huddled together under the shelter of spruce boughs they had cut with their penknives.

"Fool . . . fool . . . fool," Shaw repeated over and over to himself. "What a fool—to set out with this boy—a fool to leave him in charge of the pack horses—a fool to carry no matches on me . . . a blasted blithering fool who is just getting what he deserves!" His lips moved continuously, as though in prayer. He clutched Freddy close to him. His breast was warm but chills were running up and down his back.

He heaved himself over so that the boy was against his back.

"Put your arms about me," he growled. "Hug me, you young devil!"

They huddled together under the saddle blankets. Freddy's breath came warm and soft against Shaw's ear. In and out from the centre of his being, as though in deep peace, it came against Shaw's ear, warming it while the rest of him shivered. They were safe from the wind that still winged its way through the valley, swifter and swifter, unhampered by its weight of snow.

What was to be done? Shaw considered the position as coolly as he could, yet—"Fool! Fool! Fool that I was!" he kept repeating. By the time they had returned to the ranch, recovered the pack horses, a week would be lost—and he could hear the breath of winter in the singing of that wind! If it were humanly possible he would get a man who knew something of the mountains to come with him. If he couldn't—well, he must just make the best of Freddy. On the ride back to the ranch he must be civil to Freddy, much as he would like to thrash him, or the boy might refuse to return with him. . . . He pressed his back against Freddy's chest to stay its shivering. "Come closer to me, can't you?" he growled, and pulled the blanket over his head.

They were still in that position when he woke. He felt half-suffocated under the blanket. It lay heavy on his face and smelled strong of the horses. It was heavy and

sodden and he flung it off almost wildly. He sat up and looked around.

Surely he was dreaming! Why . . . it couldn't have snowed like that! It *couldn't* and he not know it! Everything was weighted, buried, smothered, in snow! His body and Freddy's were one white mound like a grave. What if Freddy were dead! He shook him wildly.

"Freddy! Freddy!"

The boy grunted and wriggled into the blanket.

"Wake up!"

He opened a pair of lazy, mild blue eyes.

"Look what's happened!"

Freddy raised himself on his elbow and looked round.

"My cousin Jake . . ." he began.

Shaw clambered up and went to the horses. The snow was at least two feet deep and still falling fast in feathery flakes, prime for mounding, heaping, burying alive what it encountered.

"Thank God I woke!" he exclaimed. Freddy called after him: "My Aunt Henrietta always says that you've lovely dreams when you're being frozen to death. Did you have lovely dreams, mister?"

"Not a darned dream," said Shaw.

"I did. I dreamed that I was stopping with my Auntie Belle. She's Mr. Barton's cook. I always call her *Auntie* Belle because . . ."

Now Shaw was out of earshot. He was glad of that. It would be hard to be kind to Freddy on the journey back. The horses looked at him with reproachful eyes. They had kept the snow stamped down in their space.

"There is no breakfast for you," said Shaw, "so you need not look at me like that."

He slapped them encouragingly on the flanks. Freddy was rolling up the blankets.

"There's a terrible lot of snow, mister," he called.

"So I've noticed!" answered Shaw.

"There's more coming, too."

"It looks like it. Never mind. We'll get back quickly—the horses will be glad to go."

Freddy came plodding through the snow carrying the blankets. His nose was a deep pink and his lips a sort of magenta. He said in his expressionless voice:—

"My Cousin Elmer says it's dangerous to ride a horse over rough ground after a fresh fall of snow. He says you're liable to break their legs if you do."

“I had no intention of riding,” answered Shaw curtly. But he was hot all over with the thought of his own ignorance. He had intended to ride! He had intended to ride!

“Then what made you say we’d get back quickly?” asked Freddy.

“I meant we’d have to walk quickly.”

“Walk quickly through two feet of snow!” There was a jeering note in Freddy’s voice.

Shaw longed to plant a kick on the boy’s thin behind but he said cheerfully:—

“Well, the sooner we set out the sooner we’ll get there.”

They began to lead the horses down the steep trail. Coming up, the horses had picked their way delicately, but now their hoofs struck the sharp points of hidden rocks. They started nervously. They looked with suspicion into the snow. They had to be urged and pulled along. The snowflakes fell thick and grey, jostling each other in haste to smother the earth. The mountains, the glaciers, were hidden behind the moving curtain of the snow. The streams were lulled. The forest life was still. Massive boulders were turned into more massive snowballs. Horses and men moved monotonously, in shuffling, stumbling Indian file down the trail.

Shaw envied the boy his heavy sweater. His own thin shirt was soaked with melted snow. The exertion made him sweat profusely. The progress was so slow that he began to doubt if by nightfall they could reach the trapper’s hut they had sighted on the way up. He planned to spend the night there, buy food, a coat, fodder of some sort for the horses. After that, as they approached the level country, they would make better time. He turned these things over in his mind as he stumbled down the uneven trail.

The indefinite sweep of the landscape about him made him acutely conscious of the loneliness of his own personality. He saw himself a solitary figure moving from birth to death across the inviolable monotony of the seasons. What he had done so far seemed no more enduring than footsteps in snow, all his hopes nothing more than the beating of a bird against the immensity of a glacier. . . . Sometimes he roused himself and spoke encouragingly to Freddy, who always capped what he said by some experience of uncle, aunt, or cousin. Sometimes, in an excess of self-blame, he repeated over and over in his mind—“Fool . . . fool . . . fool . . . you deserve all you’ve got!”

When dusk fell they had little idea how far they had traveled but no sight of the trapper’s cabin gratified their straining eyes. They cut branches of spruce, hacked and tore them off with pocketknives and fingers. In sudden mercy the snow had stopped. They had no fear of being buried alive. The horses pawed the snow

beneath the sheltering branches and discovered a little grass. Freddy ate a handful of the snow itself, making his lips red and sore. "A feller could kill hisself eating this," he said. "My Aunt Lizzie knew a feller that did."

"Come to bed! Come to bed!" urged Shaw peevishly. Under the horse blanket he clutched Freddy to him and shuddered against his back.

He scarcely slept for the aching in his legs. Somehow he must have strained his back, for a spot below his shoulder blade burned and pained. Oh, to be up and struggling on! His restless brain tortured him. Oh, to find the trapper's cabin, to dry himself in front of a fire, to have food! Above all, to be back at the ranch—to make a fresh start!

The grey dawn changed to a delicate blue. The blue was suffused by pink. The red sun disclosed the theatrical immensity of the landscape. The mountain peaks looked fragile as eggshells. The glittering glacier towered, as a mirror for the world. Mist curled like a white snake in the valley and the mountains called to each other from gorge to gorge.

But now the snow had gone wet and heavy. It was all a man could do to walk through it. Deep and heavy it sank beneath their feet. The upward lift was a cruel drag on the muscles. One foot, one leg, sunk deep, the other dragged out by a dogged effort of the will. By noon the sun was hot. Shaw's shirt was dripping with sweat. His hair clung in wet locks to his forehead. Into his eyes, down his cheeks, into his mouth, the salt sweat trickled. Freddy said:—

"I'm as hot as fire but I know better than to take my sweater off. My Uncle Hank always says . . ." Shaw did not hear. He was examining the mare's hoofs, which were cut to ribbons by the points of the rocks.

A bear came out from among the trees to look at them, a light-colored bear with a silvery tip to every hair. Shaw had his revolver but the bear was not unfriendly. It looked at them out of patronizing, quizzical little eyes. Then humped itself softly away, giving grunts of amusement as it went.

A moose thrust its fine clean antlers from between the boughs of a spruce, its liquid gaze fixed in wonder on men and horses. Then, as though to express its contempt for their struggles, it gave a grand sidewise leap that shook the snow from the weighted boughs and galloped into the forest.

The snow was melting into slush. The sun blazed with the ardor of June. Shaw's clothes were wringing wet. He said:—

"I don't see how you can bear that sweater."

"I am pretty hot," said Freddy, "but it's safer to keep it on. My Aunt Jimmy says your body is a temple and you'd ought to take care of it."

One of the horses fell and there was difficulty in getting it on its feet again. It did not want to walk because its hoofs were cut to the quick. The other one had discovered a patch of grass beneath an overhanging branch and was tearing stubbornly at it.

“Come on!” shouted Shaw. “We’ve got to find that cabin before night.”

He strained his bloodshot eyes down the trail.

“It’s the other side of that boulder,” said Freddy. “I know the spot, the very spot.”

But the cabin was not there.

As the shadows lay clean and blue on the snow and the wind rose again and swept down the valley and clouds of rose and amethyst heaped themselves in the west, Freddy cried out:—

“I see the smoke of the cabin! Down in that gully.”

Shaw answered, with a break in his voice:—

“Good for you, Freddy! If you’re right I’ll give you that knife you admired.”

They cursed the horses and dragged them forward, but the smoke of the cabin was transformed into a fantastically shaped branch hung with a cobweb of snow.

“My Aunt Hetty . . .” began Freddy.

“Shut up!” shouted Shaw. “If you speak of one of your relations again I’ll brain you!”

They struggled on for a while, then made themselves a shelter for the night. In it they lay wrapped close like two people that loved each other. The horses stood, head to tail, their sides pressed together in loving heat.

“Are you all right, Freddy?” Shaw asked gently, in a voice that had gone very hoarse.

“Sure. I’m all right.”

“When we come up next time it won’t be like this.”

“No—we’ll have it swell next time.”

“I’ll bring a good supply of chocolates and cigarettes for you.”

“Yeh. I’ll bet you will.”

They slept.

It was afternoon of the next day when, without warning, they came on the trapper’s cabin. They stood staring unbelievably at it. The trapper sat on a bench outside the door doing something to the skin of a fox. He rose and came toward them smiling. He had a French face, a French head, but his smile was Indian. Two black bear dogs rushed out yapping, light as feathers blown across the snow. They circled about the horses, as they would about a bear or wapiti, harassing them.

“Hi—hi!” The trapper called them off and they returned reluctant to him.

“We want some food,” said Shaw hoarsely, “and a dry coat. We’ve lost our pack horses.” And as he said the words the bitter refrain sounded in his humming ears—“Fool . . . fool that I was!”

The cabin stank horribly of a heap of coyote skins but there was a fire, and a stew sizzling in a pot. The two dogs drifted in like leaves and sniffed the rich reek of it. The trapper began to ladle out the stew.

“I seen your horses,” he said; “they went down the valley like the wind. A pack had got loose and was flapping against the legs of one.”

Shaw groaned. He dropped on to a stool and put his dripping head in his hands. His hair stuck out in stiff locks. The trapper handed Freddy a tin dish of the stew. Then he brought out a mug half full of brandy.

“This is for you,” he said.

Shaw gulped it down.

Freddy ate only a small amount of the stew, then set the dish down. “It’s safer,” he said, “to eat just a little at a time when you’re pretty near starved, my Uncle Jake says.”

Shaw lay on the heap of coyote skins babbling feverishly. “Horses . . . bring the horses . . . I must go . . . no time to spare . . . up to the mountains.”

Freddy looked down at him dispassionately.

“The poor stiff,” he said, “thinks he’ll git back to the mountains this fall. But he’ll never do it. My Auntie Belle says . . .”

CHAPTER XIV

Snow . . . was there a spot in the whole world that was not smothered in snow? As the train sped eastward through valleys, along the precipitous sides of mountains, across the white monotony of plains, Shaw conjured up the thought of greenness for the relief of his mind. Beautiful gentle greenness, the color of repose, of intellect, of the young leaves of trees. He closed his eyes and saw hills clothed in the green of May, he saw them gently rolling toward the greenish-blue horizon, and, on the level places, young maples fluttering their silken green. . . . He saw books bound in green, shelf upon shelf of them, the titles in gold, but he could not read the titles. . . . He saw green curtains hanging in front of an arched window . . . then an unseen hand drew back the curtains and he saw the emerald depths of a garden and a kingfisher flashing towards a pool. . . . His mind was content to occupy itself with pleasant images for in the past weeks it had been tortured by delirium. While his body in the small space of a cot had struggled against death, his mind had ranged the world to discover fantastic scenes for its own distress. Now the two had come together again, the body relaxed, renewing its strength, the mind submissive to the soul's need.

But even while Shaw imagined the color of springtime the train stopped at a station and a number of people entered the coach where he sat. They were talking loudly, shaking the snow from their clothes, stamping it from their feet. Shaw opened his eyes and peered through the frosted window. It was midafternoon but already dusk. He could see the lights of the station blurred by the heavy flakes and as the train moved out whiteness again . . . always whiteness.

He shut his mind against the snow and tried to turn his thoughts to the future. After all it was not so bad but that it might have been worse. He might have died in that trapper's hut. But he had pulled through. Freddy had nursed him till he was able to be taken back to the ranch.

There Mr. Barton had had everything possible done for him. The cook, Freddy's aunt, had taken him in hand. Telegrams, letters, had been sent to Ottawa and to Cristabel. The heads of the Department had taken his failure philosophically. He was to work in Ottawa during the winter and return to the West next spring. Then he would have the open season before him. His achievement was postponed. That was all. He would give himself heart and soul to the work of the winter. . . . But his mind refused to dwell on the work of the winter, or any work. It returned to its imaginings that were now placid and seen through a greenish mist, now faintly sad, as though with longing, he knew not for what. He was in truth convalescent, not

recovered.

And his state remained much the same throughout the long journey. He did not separate into individuals his companions in the railway coach. His heavy eyes regarded them with detached interest and he noticed some peculiarity of face or gesture and watched for it as the only important characteristic of that person. He was hungry for his meals and allowed the negro waiter to choose what food he would for him.

When he neared Southern Ontario a change came over the landscape. Though it was December there was very little snow. It lay on the fields between the dark ridges, and as the train sped onward even that disappeared and a dim sunlight discovered the dark farmlands.

Shaw had made up his mind to see Dr. Clemency before returning to Ottawa. He had a childlike faith in him. He thought he would go to his grandfather's house and spend a few days there. It might be even possible to arrange a meeting with Cristabel. It might be that he would have a glimpse of Elspeth. But he had no strong yearning to see either of them. He was too conscious of the failure of his expedition. He did not want to return to them disappointed.

At the station he arranged to have his baggage kept there and he set out on the long walk to the farm. Reason told him that he was not fit for the walk but he could not bring himself to hire a conveyance. He had never done so, why should he begin now? But he was not halfway there when he wished he had written to ask Herbert or Mark to meet him with the buggy. There would be little work on the farm these days. Surely they would have done that for him.

The absence of snow, the damp air without sharpness, the sparrows chirping on the roadside, were a relief to his spirit after the soundless snow of the West. He plodded resolutely on till he reached the farm gate, then rested against it while the muddy length of the lane stretched before him.

In the lane he met Herbert carrying some harness over his arm. He stared at Shaw as though he scarcely recognized him.

"Well," he said, in his dry voice, "this is a surprise! I didn't know you were coming back here."

"I thought I'd stop off for a day or two on my way to Ottawa," said Shaw. "I thought I'd see Dr. Clemency and get some medicine from him."

"His medicine didn't do Uncle Merton much good," said Herbert.

"Uncle Merton! What's the matter with him?"

"Why, he died a week ago. Ma wrote you and I suppose your mother did too. Didn't you get the letters?"

“They must have come after I left the ranch.”

They walked on in silence for a little. Herbert had turned back with Shaw. In his dry way he seemed pleased to see him. He said:—

“We’re all sorry. It’s made a difference in Pa. He talks less than he did.”

“How about Aunt Becky?”

Herbert gave a short laugh. “Oh, she made a fuss at the *first*. Leslie and Beatrice are taking over the farm.”

They were at the door now. Herbert opened it and they found Jane Gower in the living room. She did not seem to feel surprised at seeing Shaw. His gaunt appearance touched her, though his gaunt boyhood had made no appeal to her compassion.

“Cristabel told me how sick you’d been, Shaw,” she said. “Sit right down by the fire and I’ll make you a cup of tea. Land’s sakes, it’s a pity you had to turn back before your work was done!”

“Yes,” he agreed, “it is a pity.”

He moved toward the “self-feeder” stove which, though the day was mild, glowed hotly. He discovered his grandfather sitting in the corner behind the stove.

“Here’s Shaw, Pa!” said Jane. “He’s come back from the West. He’s been sick.”

Roger Gower stared at his grandson. He looked immovable and uninterested as a rock, but Jane knew from the clear protuberance of his eyes that he desired to speak.

“He’s going to say something,” she remarked in her low gruff voice, and she and Herbert and Shaw stood waiting as though for an oracle to speak.

The clock with the roses on its face ticked hurriedly as though to fill in the gap. The funnel of the self-feeder let down a fresh supply of coals that tumbled over those which were already ignited, dimming their glow. Roger’s hands pressed the arms of his chair. He brought out the words:—

“Merton’s . . . gone.”

“Yes,” said Shaw. “I’ve just heard about it. I’m very sorry.”

Jane’s eyes scrutinized her husband’s face.

“He’s not finished,” she said. “He wants to say more.”

Again the three stood waiting. Again Roger brought up words from the depth of his being.

“Merton . . . suffered,” he said. “I . . . don’t.”

It was evident to Jane that he had no more to say. She turned her attention to making a cup of tea for Shaw. Herbert, still carrying the harness on his arm, went

out. Shaw sat down in a chair near Roger. His legs shook from weakness. He took out his handkerchief and mopped his dripping face and neck. He said:—

“I’m glad you don’t suffer, Grandpa.”

If Roger heard him he made no sign. They sat silent while Jane made the tea. As she set it before Shaw she said:—

“My goodness, Shaw, you look hot!”

“I’m shivering just the same,” he answered. He gulped the scalding tea. “Thanks, Grandma,” he said. “This is just what I need.”

“When are you going to see Dr. Clemency?” she asked.

“In the morning. Then I thought I’d stay here over Sunday if you don’t mind and go on to Ottawa on Monday.”

“Stay here as long as you like.”

“How is Mother?” he asked.

“She’s pretty well. She was here for your Uncle Merton’s funeral. But she’s worrying about you. They gave her a scare with their telegrams. She was pretty near ready to go to you.”

“I’ll write to her to-morrow and tell her I’m all right.”

Mark and his wife came in. They had had a long drive to the nearest town to do shopping. The young wife was cold but exhilarated. Mark had bought her a winter coat with a lynx collar and a muff. She was like a child in her excitement. Even that house could not subdue her. Her hands trembled as she undid the packages. She hopped up and down with the coat on and her hands in the muff.

“Feel it! Feel it!” She rubbed the soft fur of the muff against Shaw’s cheek.

“Quit that, Aggie!” Mark said gruffly.

She laughed teasingly but there was no fun in Shaw, she thought. She gathered up the purchases, and she and Mark went to their room.

Roger showed that he wanted to speak. His beard vibrated with the effort.

“Yes, Pa?” encouraged Jane.

“The girl . . .” he got out, “the girl’s . . . a fool . . .”

The next morning Mark offered Shaw the grey mare and buggy to drive to the doctor’s. I must be looking pretty bad, Shaw thought, for him to do that. Mark harnessed the mare and brought it to the door for him—gosh, I must be looking pretty sick!

“Thanks,” Shaw murmured, in some embarrassment. “Thanks, Mark, it’ll be a good deal easier than walking.”

The mare trotted briskly down the lane. Shaw had rested better than of late and

this morning he felt stronger. The soft damp air was refreshing against his face, which felt curiously hot.

He thought of the hundreds of times he had walked along this road on his way to the country school and, later, to the railway station when he went to the high school. He had trudged along in the soft thick dust of summer, over its ringing hardness in the fall, through the snow ruts of winter and the half-frozen slush of spring. He had passed over it in eagerness, in depression, in apprehension. Up and down, up and down, this road had been woven like the guiding thread in the pattern of his boyhood. Over there lay the pool where he had met and bathed with Searle. What was Searle doing now, he wondered, and how did Searle's wife and child fare? There was the orchard beyond, in which the pirates' cave was hid. His mind turned toward his three companions of those days and while it dwelt on them he saw Ian walking along the road ahead. He could not mistake the slender grace of his carriage.

"Hello!" he called. "Hello, Ian!"

Ian halted, turned toward him, startled and pleased.

"Shaw!" He strode to meet the buggy. "I'd no idea you were here."

Shaw pulled in the horse.

"Blood on your brow," he said.

"Blood on your brow, brother," returned Ian.

Shaw stretched out his arm and touched Ian's forehead with his fingers.

"Bloody deeds are to be done," continued Shaw.

"Our deeds will be bloody indeed, brother."

Ian clambered into the buggy and settled himself beside Shaw. He looked into his face with concern. "What have you been doing to yourself?" he asked. "You look all in."

"I'm all right now, but I was a pretty sick man in the West."

He told Ian of his misadventure and that he was on his way to see Dr. Clemency.

"I'll go with you," said Ian. "I'd like to know what he says. Do you mind if I come?"

"I'd like to have you. . . . Look, Ian—over there is the pirates' cave! Will you ever forget the fun we had?"

"Never! Nor the lickings you got, after the fun."

All the way to Dr. Clemency's they talked of those days, interrupting each other in their eagerness. As always, Shaw, in Ian's company, felt younger, threw off something of his sense of responsibility toward life. His face flushed.

“Why, you look better already!” exclaimed Ian as they stood before the doctor’s door. “A bottle of tonic from him and you’ll be fixed up.”

An elderly servant opened the door. A wave of air so hot that it smelt scorched came through it almost palpably. The doctor greeted them in his consulting room. He was immaculate as ever and his ivory-skinned face showed no sign of the excessive heat of the house. He shook hands with them in turn. When they inquired after Mrs. Clemency’s health he gave a sigh.

“It is all I can do to keep her alive,” he said. “From the time winter sets in I never allow the temperature of the house to fall below eighty if I can help it. If by any chance I do, she instantly becomes depressed, shows signs of nervous chill and even hysteria.”

The young men looked impressed.

“How is the poodle?” asked Ian.

“Still flourishing at sixteen.” Dr. Clemency turned to Shaw. “Now tell me about your adventures in the West.”

“I had a pretty bad time out there. Haven’t you heard anything about it from my folks?”

“Your mother told me she was anxious about you. But it was at your uncle’s funeral. We had not much time together. A very nice man, Mr. Merton Gower; I was sorry I could not save him. But he had had a long life. Now what about your sickness? A chill, wasn’t it?”

Shaw, with a feeling of depression at the mere recital of his misadventure and the disappointment it entailed, told him briefly what had happened.

“You did well,” said Dr. Clemency, “to pull through. Now what do you want me to do for you?”

“I thought you might give me a tonic or something.”

“A tonic or something!” echoed Dr. Clemency sarcastically. “Really we’ve hardly advanced from the days of charms and witchcraft! You expose yourself to the point of death. You struggle through what was apparently pneumonia—then you come to me and ask for ‘a tonic or something’ to repair the damage!” His tone became suddenly harsh. “Well—let’s strip off that coat and shirt and see what’s wrong with you!”

“Strip!” repeated Shaw vaguely.

“Yes. Don’t you know how?” He turned to Ian. “These clever people—how stupid they can be!”

“Oh yes,” said Shaw. “I understand.”

He took off his coat and laid it on a chair. His waistcoat, shirt, and vest

followed. His broad-shouldered, well-developed torso was uncovered. Dr. Clemency took a stethoscope from a drawer and placed it against his chest.

“Breathe deep,” he said.

Shaw did.

“Say ninety-nine.”

“Ninety-nine.”

The stethoscope moved from spot to spot over his chest.

“Ninety-nine.”

“Hm . . . again.”

“Ninety-nine.”

“Now your back! A good flat back, isn’t it, Ian? A very good straight back.”

“Very good,” answered Ian with a strained smile.

The stethoscope moved delicately about Shaw’s shoulder blades. Dr. Clemency blew softly between his pursed lips.

“Now, Shaw, ninety-nine.”

“Ninety-nine.”

“Breathe deep!”

Shaw did as he was told. The examination continued. At last Dr. Clemency laid down the instrument. He looked at Shaw almost accusingly out of his deep-set eyes.

“I’ve some bad news for you,” he said.

“What sort of bad news, sir?”

“Well . . . you’ve got to be very careful of yourself for a while.”

“Yes. I suppose I shall . . . not go about with wet feet or sit in draughts, eh?”

“More than that. . . .”

Shaw frowned. “What do you mean, doctor?”

“I was going to suggest . . .” Dr. Clemency turned sharply to Ian. “Young man, do you realize the importance of health to you in your work?”

Ian’s smile was still more strained. He tapped his white teeth with the tips of his nails. “Yes . . . yes . . . it’s awfully important, I know.”

“You two will never make your mark as civil engineer or forestry expert without it, will you?”

“Certainly not,” agreed Ian, with overemphasis.

“What do you think, Shaw?”

“I’m as strong as a horse.”

The doctor laid his ivory-colored hand on Shaw’s breast.

“All but here,” he said.

Shaw turned white. “Do you mean that I show signs of . . . the trouble my father

had?"

"Yes, that's what I mean."

Ian got up quickly from his chair and went to the window. His body threw a shadow over the room. In another part of the house the poodle began to give the muffled monotonous barks of an old dog.

"What had I better do?" asked Shaw. He moved back from the pale hand that lay like death on his chest.

He spoke in a tone of childlike meekness. He stood with his body stripped, like a youth prepared for pagan sacrifice.

"I was going to suggest," said Dr. Clemency, "that you should go into a sanatorium for a few months."

"Am I as bad as that?" asked Shaw.

"I am not quite sure how bad you are. But I don't think the disease has made great progress. Now is the time to take it in hand. In these sanatoria they keep you right outdoors. They have every facility for your cure."

"Oh," said Shaw blankly. His body looked very white and vulnerable in the shadowed room.

"I am convinced," went on Dr. Clemency, "that a few months under the right treatment will cure you. They'd never allow you to breathe a dry hot atmosphere like this. They'd keep you right out on a balcony, day and night."

"Oh," repeated Shaw, "I see."

"I'm thinking of a very up-to-date sanatorium in the Adirondack Mountains. I'll write to-day and find out about terms if you agree."

"I can't go," said Shaw. "I can't afford it."

"Haven't you saved any money?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Don't say you cannot afford it. You *must* afford it. Your future depends on it. Let me tell you that."

Shaw began to put on his clothes. "If it comes to living outdoors I can do that on the farm."

"Listen to him!" exclaimed Dr. Clemency irritably. "He doesn't know the difference between the air in this hollow and mountain air."

"I ought to know," said Shaw. "It was mountain air that put me where I am."

Ian turned from the window. He said:—

"If you will go to Ottawa and see the Minister of your Department, he'll help you. Mr. Scott will help you. You've got to do what Dr. Clemency says, Shaw. Just think of your mother!"

"I am thinking of her," said Shaw bitterly. He fumbled with his tie. Ian came to him and put it straight.

"I'll write for particulars to-day," said the doctor, "and you arrange for an interview with the head of your Department. See your mother, too. Tell her you'll be as sound as a nut in three months."

"I'll take him home with me," said Ian. "We'll talk it over."

But the young men were almost silent as they drove through the village street. They avoided each other's eyes as though they had some shameful secret between them. They were relieved when Ian's father met them and seconded Ian's invitation to dinner.

Like other country people of the time they had dinner not much later than noon. Elspeth came in a little late. She pulled off her gloves hurriedly and her cheeks flushed a deeper pink as she shook hands with Shaw. Something in the way he greeted her was a disappointment. She spoke little during the meal. Her grey eyes searched Shaw's face when he talked to her father or mother, but when he turned to her she looked down at her fingers that crumbled a bit of bread on the cloth.

Ian too was less talkative than usual. He marveled at the way Shaw had accepted the bitter news, the postponement of what he had so eagerly been straining toward for years. Shaw seemed more excited than depressed. Ian had never known him so voluble. He was amusing in his description of Freddy and his train of uncles, aunts, and cousins. His eyes looked hot and bright, his prominent cheekbones were flushed. He did not refer to what the doctor had discovered, but toward the end of the meal he asked abruptly:—

"What became of that girl, Louie Adams?"

"I don't know," answered Ian. "Do you know, Elspeth?"

"I think she's quite well again but she's not teaching. She is in the States."

Shaw had lifted his head as though he felt a fresh breeze on his face. "She's well again, is she?" he said with relief in his voice.

Elspeth's eyes sought his face. Why was Shaw concerned over Louie? What was that peculiar expression in his eyes when he spoke of her?

"I hear that Louie has gone into business in New York. It's a strange business. It's what they call a beauty parlor over there. They do hairdressing and sell cosmetics for the face and somehow rub wrinkles away." Elspeth looked shamefaced for Louie.

"Cosmetics!" echoed Mrs. Blair. "Paint! Powder! However did Louie get into such a business?"

"When I think of her at school!" said Ian. "But she had always something

different about her. Do you remember the day you threw her down in the road, Shaw?"

"And I came along in my buggy," said Mr. Blair, "and picked you both up!"

"And got a licking for Shaw from the teacher!" added Ian.

"Did I? I'd forgotten about that and I'm sure Shaw has, haven't you, Shaw?"

"Yes, sir. I'd forgotten it."

Mrs. Blair said—"What a skinny miserable-looking child Louie was!"

"I'll bet she's a screaming beauty now," said Ian. "I wish I could see her."

"She wasn't hard to look at when we saw her last year," said Shaw.

"I wish I could see you look a little stronger, Shaw," observed Mrs. Blair.

"I'll be all right," answered Shaw curtly.

His animation left him. He spoke little through the remainder of the meal. Later, in the stiff parlor of the Manse, he was alone with Elspeth. The room was cold and indeterminate raindrops trickled down the pane.

"It seems strange," she said, "to think that it will soon be Christmas. It looks more like early November."

"Christmas!" he echoed. "Yes, it will soon be Christmas."

"I suppose you will be in Ottawa. Christmas must be lovely there."

"I don't expect to spend Christmas in Ottawa."

"Don't you? Where will you be then?"

"I . . . am not quite sure."

A cat had leaped on to the window sill and was looking in at the window. It opened and shut its pink mouth in inaudible mews. Between these it sought angrily to dry its draggled fur with its tongue.

"Poor puss," said Elspeth. "She wants to come in so badly but I can't let her in here. She is wet."

"Is that the kitten we searched for in the garden?" asked Shaw.

"Yes. She's grown, hasn't she?"

"I'd not have known her. She was as pretty as a picture then and full of play. . . . Elspeth, I'll never forget that evening when we found her among the bushes. Do you remember?"

"Yes, Shaw."

Her voice was scarcely above a whisper. She twisted her fingers together. What is he going to say now, she wondered. Is he going to ask me to marry him?

"Everything is different with me now," he said.

"You mean you've been ill?"

"I mean . . . I am ill."

She looked at him startled.

“But you’re not frightened about yourself, are you?”

“Not exactly frightened . . . no, not that. . . . But Dr. Clemency says I ought to go into a sanatorium for the winter and I guess he’s right.”

She drew a deep breath. “Oh, Shaw, I’m so sorry!”

“I’m sorry too, Elspeth. I’d made up my mind that when I saw you next I’d ask you to marry me. But—I’m not fit to be married now. . . . I mustn’t think about that till I’m well again.”

“If you had asked me—I’d have said yes.”

His face flushed. “Would you, Elspeth? That’s beautiful of you. . . . Do you guess what’s wrong with me?”

“Yes, I think I know.”

“Marriage is out of the question then, isn’t it?”

“Till you’re well again! Dr. Clemency says you will be well again soon, doesn’t he?”

“He thinks it will take about three months. He’s going to arrange for me to go to a place in the Adirondacks. That’s where I’ll be spending my Christmas, Elspeth.”

Her lips trembled. “I don’t mind waiting for you, Shaw. I’d wait much longer than three months for you. And if you’re willing to be engaged—I am too.”

He drew his brows together. “I oughtn’t to ask you to do that. But it would be wonderful. It would help me to go through with it—more cheerfully—if I thought you were waiting.”

“Well, we shouldn’t neglect anything for your cure, should we? If it will help you, I think we ought to consider ourselves engaged.”

“All the money I’ve saved will go into this, you know.”

“When you are well again you’ll make more money. What does money matter anyway?”

Shaw looked into her eyes. “I’m a lucky man,” he said, “to have two such women to love me . . . to trust me. Of course, it’s natural for my mother, but I don’t see why you . . .”

“Oh, Shaw, I’ve always thought you wonderful!” She raised her face toward his eagerly.

She wants me to kiss her, he thought, but I mustn’t do it. I’ve got to be careful for other people—especially young people. . . . He touched her hand with his, then withdrew it and thrust it into his pocket.

“How hot your hand is!” she exclaimed.

“I am shivering,” he said.

Elsbeth thought she was going to cry. She had so wanted him to kiss her. Abruptly she threw open the window.

“I must let this poor cat in!” she said.

But the cat, now that the window was open, needed to be coaxed. It came sidling, half of it in the room, half out, rubbing its back shyly against the window frame. Elspeth gathered it into her arms. “Poor, poor Kitty!” She felt an access of pity for the cat. Tears dropped on its fur as she stroked it. Shaw also laid his hand on it. In some mysterious way it became the symbol of their sadness.

They stood close together stroking the cat, which stared up at them out of strange green eyes.

Ian brought the mare and buggy from the stable. He stood talking, with rather self-conscious cheerfulness, of Shaw’s plans for the immediate future.

Back at the farmhouse Shaw told his grandmother briefly what Dr. Clemency had said to him.

“A sanatorium!” said Jane Gower. “It’s ridiculous! You stay right where you are, Shaw, and I’ll nurse you till you’re well again. I’ve nursed a good many people in my time.”

“I don’t think you could have nursed my father to health, Grandma,” said Shaw.

“Yours is a very different case from your father’s. He went on and on with his practice long after he should have given up, but you’re taking it in good time. I wouldn’t think much of myself as a nurse if I couldn’t pull you round.”

“That’s kind of you, Grandma. I’ll talk it over with Mother.”

“It’ll be a terrible shock for Cristabel.” Jane Gower’s face softened in pity for her daughter. “It was a shock to me when you told us.”

Roger Gower had listened to the conversation without apparent interest. Now it was evident that he wanted to speak. A preliminary heavy breathing came from the dim corner behind the stove. His wife and grandson turned toward him expectantly but it was a long time before the words came. They came mumbling through the depth of his beard.

“I knew,” he said, “he’d got . . . the consumption . . . the minute . . . I set . . . eyes on him.”

Shaw lay awake that night going over and over in his mind what he would say to the head of the Department in Ottawa. He had pictured a triumphant return. Now he must frame sentences to mitigate the folly of his defeat. In the distortion of night thought no words he could conceive made him seem anything but futile. He pictured them laughing at him, dismissing him with a shrug, pushing him into some routine job, giving the work of choosing the Park to someone else. He searched the Department

for the probable candidate, selected him, sent him with proper equipment to the mountains, saw himself languishing at a desk. Then, dripping with sweat, flung himself on his other side and began the spinning of the fateful web once more. All that was real to him became unreal.

But with the dim December dawn hope and resolve fortified him once more. He saw Dr. Clemency again and by a late train left for Ottawa. Two days later he stood in Cristabel's little sitting room in the boys' school waiting for her. He saw the familiar objects belonging to her and thought how long she had lived in this place and he not seen it. Always it was so. The everyday life of each was an unknown world to the other. . . . He opened her workbox that had a picture of Niagara Falls on the lid, and saw the familiar shabby sweet implements of her sewing. He took the thimble that was worn into a tiny hole in one place, and put it on his smallest finger. He heard her step. He replaced the thimble.

He turned toward her. How pale and tired she looked! Had she been worrying over him? Her eyes devoured him. His looked gravely into hers.

"Well, Mother, I'm back."

"Shaw, you do look poorly! How do you feel? Are you really better?"

"I'm much better."

She took him in her arms.

"Why have you come to see me, Shaw?"

"Well, it's natural that I should want to see you, isn't it?"

She answered almost irritably—"Naturalness has nothing to do with it." She held him from her and looked into his face. "What have you come to tell me, Shaw?"

"You've got to be sensible, Mother."

She gave her little crooked smile.

"Haven't I always been sensible?"

"Well—folks admire you for it."

"What is it I must be sensible about now?" she cried in a tense voice.

There was a fire in the small grate. He went to it and began to break a lump of coal with the poker. She repeated her question.

"About my sickness, Mother," he answered.

She stared at the smooth back of his head, his broad shoulders.

"Your sickness?" she repeated tremblingly.

He turned and faced her.

"You're not to worry. Dr. Clemency says three months in the sanatorium will fix me up. Please don't worry, Mother."

"Then—" her voice was barely audible—"all my worst fears are true."

A spasm crossed his face. For a moment he thought he would put his head on her shoulder and cry. They would cry their two hearts out together in their disappointment and defeat. But there was something in her that restrained him. She could not have borne at this moment to have him touch her. He was sure of that.

Some boys outside were kicking a football about.

“Hurrah!” came their thin treble shout.

Shaw felt his bones melting in compassion for Cristabel.

“Mother!” he said. “Don’t look like that.”

“How would you expect me to look?” she answered harshly. “Would you expect me to laugh and say, How lovely it will be for you to have three months in a sanatorium?”

“No, Mother, but . . .”

“Would you expect me to jump for joy to hear that my child, my son—my only —” Sobs extinguished her voice.

From outside came the treble shouts. “Hurrah! Go it! Go it!”

Now he could go to her. He took her in his arms and held her close against him, patting her back, pressing his lips to her hair.

“I know how disappointing it is, Mother. But it might be worse. They were very kind to me in Ottawa. Everything is fixed up. My salary will go on just the same for the three months. It just means a little delay. That’s all, Mother. . . .”

“But you . . . you’ve what your father had . . . that’s all that matters to me!”

“But my father went on working. He struggled against it, instead of giving up to it and resting. Rest is the thing for it. And dry mountain air. You must believe that, Mother. It will help me to get well if I know you believe I shall.”

She released herself gently from his arms and stood staring before her out of the window. Her face looked so pale and drawn that he was conscious, for the first time, of its bony formation, the contours of the eye sockets and cheekbones. The shadow beneath her eyes was dark as a bruise.

The football bounced with a soft thump against the window. Cristabel went to it, rapped on the pane and shook her head sternly. The boys called out to her, unafraid, but they scampered away.

“Little brutes!” exclaimed Shaw.

His show of the jealousy he felt for any boys she was connected with in her work relieved the sense of despair that was engulfing her. She gave a little smile and laid her hand on his arm.

“Poor Shaw,” she said, “you haven’t much of a mother! Just when you need her to comfort you, too!”

“Everything is going to be all right!” he said with almost feverish eagerness. “I’m sure of it. It took a load off my mind the way they received the news in Ottawa. And the Scotts are keeping furniture for me. I’m to go back to B. C. in the spring. You will give up this job and move into your own house next fall—just as we planned. So do say you won’t fret any more, Mother!”

“I won’t fret any more, Shaw,” she answered as though repeating a lesson.

They sat down side by side on a small hard sofa and he told her of his illness, his visit to Dr. Clemency and his afternoon with the Blairs. He said:—

“You know, Mother, that I’m very fond of Elspeth.”

“Yes, Shaw, and so am I.”

“Well, she’s promised that when I’m better and able to afford it, she’ll marry me. Does that please you?”

“Yes, I can’t think of any other girl I’d like so well for a daughter.” Then she added, as though to herself— “Poor little Elspeth!”

“Why do you say poor little Elspeth?”

“I don’t know. I should say lucky Elspeth! The girl is lucky who will have you for a husband, Shaw. You’re the sort of man who will be loyal to the woman he loves.”

“Yes—I think I am. But I’m not a passionate man, Mother. There’s so much in life besides that.”

“I’m glad to hear you say that, dear. You and Elspeth will be happy together, I am sure. . . . Now about your clothes—I do worry about your clothes! I don’t think you can say they won’t matter where you’re going. I guess there’ll be some very well-dressed people in the sanatorium.”

He gave a short laugh. “I don’t know how fashionable it will be.” But he did know what a comfort it was to her to put his clothes in order.

“I’ll give you a bundle of my things to mend,” he said. “You can send them after me.”

“When are you going, Shaw?”

“I’m leaving to-night. I’ll be there in time for lunch to-morrow.”

She caught her breath, then laid her hand against her throat, stroking it as though to ease the strain there.

“I guess it’s better not to waste any time,” she said.

He felt such a relief now that he had told her all and she was reconciled, or resigned, to the change in his life, to the new obstacle he had to overcome, that he felt almost happy. He looked about the little room.

“You’re very comfortable here,” he said. “I’m glad of that. I’m glad I’ve seen

where you live. It will be nice for me when I'm in the sanatorium to know just what sort of place you're in. . . . Do you know, Mother, I'm hungry! I haven't enjoyed a meal since I've come East—I've been so worried."

With fervent eagerness she rose to get him something to eat, as though she could in that moment of effort instill strength and courage into him. She brought him an eggnog and a plate of brown bread and butter.

"This will be very nourishing for you," she said. "You will need plenty of good food to make you well again."

"From what Dr. Clemency says they'll feed me well, and you know I have a good appetite."

They talked almost cheerfully and when he left her she stood straight and smiling in the door. By a great effort she stood so—till he was out of sight.

On through the December night the train rushed, bearing him and his belongings, his burden of thought, southward toward the Adirondacks. He lay in his berth looking out through the window, seeing the landscape turn from black to white in the pale moonlight. He saw fields hidden under snow, roofs white with it, before he slept.

In the morning it was bright winter weather under a clear blue sky. At the little station where he left the train there was a small car to meet him. The road led through a hamlet, then rose, steeper and steeper, toward the mountains crested with pinewoods. On a sunny slope stood the sanatorium, a long, low, frame building with many windows and balconies in which he could see people sitting.

CHAPTER XV

It was a pleasant enough corridor, Shaw thought, as he walked along it that afternoon, very clean and airy, not quite so stark as a hospital but rather more like an hotel. His own room was at the far end, and as he passed the long rows of closed doors he wondered what lay behind them. He felt uncomfortably nervous as he went down the wide uncarpeted stairs and entered the narrow passage that led to the room where examinations were held. His heart beat heavily, as indeed it did most of the time now, and he breathed with some difficulty as though he had a cold in the head. He took the wrong turning and was led finally to the door by an attendant in a white coat and apron. He knocked.

“Come in!” called a hearty voice.

He opened the door and closed it behind him. He was in a small, very white room, with charts tacked to the walls, a bookcase full of books, a filing cabinet, and three desks. Behind one sat a nurse in uniform and at the others, in swing chairs, two men who were in great contrast to each other. One was tall, fair, athletic-looking, with a skin so pink, hands, teeth, and hair so well cared for, so superlatively clean, that he looked like a walking advertisement of shaving soap, hair tonic, and mouth wash. He came forward and took Shaw’s hand in a grip that corresponded to his voice.

“Glad to meet you,” he said. “You’re the young man from Canada, aren’t you? Sent here by a doctor with a funny name—Clem—something.”

Shaw agreed to both statements.

“I’m Dr. Maybee and this is my colleague Dr. Knott. Welcome to our sanatorium. We’re here to fix you up and send you home as sound as a nut.”

Dr. Knott was short, fat, and of nondescript coloring. He wore a look of complete pessimism and it took all of Dr. Maybee’s heartiness to overcome the gloom of his presence. They both wore horn-rimmed spectacles.

“It will take about three months to cure me, Dr. Clemency says,” observed Shaw, attempting to make it clear from the start that that was the limit of his stay.

Dr. Maybee burst out laughing. “Well, he’s cleverer than we are if he can tell that at the start! Isn’t he?” He grinned at his colleague.

Dr. Knott gave a grunt that expressed complete contempt for Dr. Clemency’s diagnosis. He examined a broken thumbnail as though it were of deeper interest to him than the patient.

“Now, let’s have your upper garments off!” said Dr. Maybee in a businesslike

tone. He whistled through his teeth as Shaw undressed.

Shaw hung his clothes on a rack provided for them and stood gravely looking at the two doctors. He felt calmer now. He had a feeling of detachment from his body, as though he were no longer responsible for it. The nurse regarded him speculatively.

Dr. Maybee took him by the shoulder, moved him peremptorily a little nearer to his desk, and began to tap his back high up on the shoulder blade with a practised middle finger. He swung him about then and tapped his chest, tapping his way across and above and below the breast. Then he went over him with the stethoscope, throwing phrases abruptly over his shoulder to the nurse, who entered them in a book.

“Breathe deeply,” he ordered.

Shaw breathed deeply and was then ordered to cough. When he started coughing it was difficult to stop. He went on and on till his face was flushed and his eyes moist.

“Stop it!” exclaimed Dr. Maybee. “There’s no need to cough all over the place.” Shamefaced, Shaw controlled himself.

“Thank you!” said Dr. Maybee with extra heartiness, as though to counteract his former harshness.

“You’ve done very well indeed! Very well indeed!” He laid the stethoscope on his desk.

“What do you think of me?” asked Shaw.

“I think it’s a good thing for you that you didn’t delay coming here.” With springy step he took a turn up and down the room. Then said abruptly:—

“Your father died of tuberculosis, didn’t he?”

“Yes.”

“Either of his parents?”

“His mother.”

“What about your mother’s family?”

“There’s nothing of the kind in them.”

“Well, as I said before, you’ve come here in good time. I wouldn’t give much for you if you’d delayed. You have old scars. You’re not a fresh case. When did you last have a sickness?”

“I had a touch of malaria in Alabama last year.”

“Malaria! Who said it was malaria?”

“A local doctor who came to the lumber camp.”

Dr. Maybee gave a hoot of laughter. “He said you had malaria, did he?” He turned to Dr. Knott. “A queer sort of malaria.” He almost pounced on Shaw. “What

were your symptoms?”

“I was very heavy and felt sick all over. I’d quite a temperature.”

“Well—you show the scars of that. And you’ve a fresh place. Actually a focus of softening. Well . . . as I said before, you haven’t come here a minute too soon, has he, Dr. Knott?”

Dr. Knott gave a pessimistic nod.

“Now the first thing you’ll do,” continued Dr. Maybee, “is to stay in bed for a couple of weeks and get thoroughly rested. Then your regular treatment will begin. We’ll have another examination then and they will continue once in every three weeks. You must come back here to-morrow morning and have an X-ray. Now you can put on your clothes.”

Shaw began to dress himself. He felt a little dazed but still detached from his body.

“I hope you’ll find living here agreeable,” said Dr. Maybee, with a smile that showed his large, perfectly cared-for teeth. “There are a lot of interesting people among our eighty guests. We have all sorts of amusements. Oh, I think you’ll get along fine! I think he’ll make a good patient, don’t you, doctor?”

Dr. Knott gave a sickly smile. There was a tremulous knock on the door.

“Come in!” called out Dr. Maybee in the same hearty tone with which he had bidden Shaw enter.

At the door Shaw passed a young woman. She gave a frightened, appealing look at him as though she would ask him to save her from the two doctors. The door closed behind her and Shaw set out to find his way back to his room. He did not feel unwilling to go to bed.

He was very tired after the succession of long journeys by train, the anxiety he had felt before his visit to Ottawa, and the emotion attendant on breaking the news to Cristabel. All he wanted to do at this moment was to rest. His room was cold. The bed looked inviting and from it he would be able to see through the window the pinewoods that clad the mountainside. The Adirondacks were unimpressive after the Rockies, still he was conscious of the dry clarity of the air as compared to the air of Southern Ontario.

He folded his clothes neatly and arranged himself in the bed with the two pillows behind him. Dr. Maybee had said he believed he would be a good patient. He intended to be. He would concentrate on his cure as he would on a college examination. He would, after this term of three months, pass with honors to health and strength.

He lay with his eyes resting on the pinewood, striving to absorb repose from the

proud trees that reared the sombre steeples of their pride against the cold blue sky. They had grown from a hard stern soil and so had he. They had fought their way upward against storm and drought and all that had impeded them, and so would he. Root and branch he would be unafraid.

He had not been long in bed when an orderly came in carrying a tray loaded with a substantial meal. Shaw was beginning to be drowsy. He felt no hunger but the food was temptingly arranged; it was well cooked. "Here goes the first plunge into the cure," he thought, as he helped himself to the thick cream soup. It was followed by fish, vegetables, and stewed prunes with cream. He lay back on the pillows replete and drowsy. He did not let himself think, but sought to absorb the goodness of the food into all his being. . . . What was that Dr. Maybee had said? A focus of softening? That sounded pretty bad! The nurse's expression as she wrote it down . . . well, it hadn't changed . . . yes, it had! It had! He was a sick man! Far worse than he had expected! He might get worse instead of better! A flush of heat rushed over him. A singing sound raved through his ears. He flung off the quilt. His heart was pounding.

Now was this the way to get cured? No—never, never—he would make himself worse instead of better. . . . He must pull himself together—digest the nourishing food—drink in the pure mountain air—keep his mind empty except for hope. . . .

Dr. Knott had a strange face. He looked at you as though he didn't care whether you lived or died, as though he was pretty sure you were in for a tough time. There had been a moment when Dr. Maybee had tapped and listened and not said a word. He had just exchanged a look with Dr. Knott. . . . God, what had that look said?

He pulled the quilt close over him, for now he was shivering. The pillow was a nice soft one, pleasant to burrow in. His burning eyes drank in the deep soft darkness. Thought slowly receded from him as he willed it to recede, and he was left to rest. . . . Three whole months for rest and recuperation—that would do the trick. Funny how a country practitioner like Dr. Clemency could give you a feeling of comfort while these two specialists made you feel that the earth was no longer solid beneath you. . . . That was what he felt—the round earth turning beneath him and he balancing himself like a clown on its slippery curve! If only he hadn't been such a fool as to leave the matches with Freddy that day on the mountain! He wouldn't be where he was to-day! He wouldn't be burrowing in the pillow trying to keep torturing thoughts out of his head! Let's see—what would he be doing?

A knock came on the door.

"Come in," he said, fearing it might be one of the doctors.

The door opened and a small pale man of about thirty, with a high forehead and a sharp-featured boyish face, came in.

"I am your next-door neighbor," he said. "My name's Pember. I thought I'd better call on you as we're likely to see a good deal of each other in the coming year."

Shaw sat up and shook hands with him. "I'm only here for three months," he said, "but it's very kind of you to come and see me. Won't you sit down?"

Pember sat down. "You're lucky," he said, "to be able to do the cure in three months. I've been in here off and on for the last six years."

Shaw stared at him incredulously. How could anyone make such a statement with such an air of cheerfulness! He said:—

"Then you've never been really cured?"

Pember coughed softly. "Oh, I get cured but it always attacks me again. Fortunately I have private means and I find my time here does not pass unpleasantly. I'm a keen amateur photographer and I find the atmosphere here very good for taking pictures. I'd like to show you some of them if it would interest you. It helps to pass the time."

Shaw said he would like to see the photographs and Pember went out, returning shortly with a folio full of them.

The photographs were very good and Pember had something interesting or amusing to say about each of them. The time passed quickly. Shaw, who had never had leisure, whose body and mind had always been active, had a sense of unreality in this relaxed atmosphere. Pember's soft drawling voice soothed him. He liked Pember and was glad he was to have him for a neighbor. Shaw had brought with him the sketches Ian had done during the summer on the Pacific Coast and he produced them to show Pember. Pember was enthusiastic.

"What a country!" he exclaimed. "I'd give anything to spend a year there and take photographs in all seasons. I think your friend's sketches are very good." He examined them again and again as though he would draw out the pleasure of them to its utmost.

Shaw questioned him about the sanatorium, the other patients, the doctors.

"But you mustn't call us patients," said Pember. "They call us guests. It sounds much homier, don't you think so?"

"Yes," agreed Shaw, "I suppose it does."

"I'm a shy sort of man," said Pember. "I make very few friends, though I've been in and out of the place for six years. For instance, I'd never have come in to call on you if you hadn't been my neighbor, and if I hadn't thought you were in here

for a good long spell.”

“I hope,” said Shaw, “that me being here for only three months won’t frighten you away.”

Pember looked at him out of large grey eyes. “Oh no, the ice is broken and I think we’ll enjoy each other’s company. I can put you on to the ropes and introduce you to the few people I think worth while.”

He rose and collected his photographs, saying as he did so:—

“I must go and do my cure now. I oughtn’t to have stayed here so long.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Lie out on my balcony.”

“Gosh, it must be pretty cold, in this weather.”

“We’re well wrapped up. You’ll find that the weather doesn’t count for anything here. No sort of weather keeps us indoors. Well, ta-ta, see you later.”

The door was scarcely shut behind him when Shaw fell asleep. He slept for hours. The shadows were falling when he was waked by a touch on the shoulder. Dr. Maybee was looking down at him.

“I said you’d make a good patient!” he smiled. “How are you feeling?”

“Pretty good,” murmured Shaw sleepily.

“Had a good meal?”

“Oh yes.”

“Well, I thought I’d just drop in and see how you are and bring you your thermometer. I’ll show you how to measure your temperature. You must do it twice a day and make a note of it for me.”

“I had a visitor,” said Shaw, and then wished he had not spoken. He could not have explained why, but he did not like the thought of discussing anything personal with Dr. Maybee.

“Who?” asked the doctor.

“His name is Pember.”

Dr. Maybee thrust out his lips in an expression of contempt. It changed almost immediately into a wide smile that gave a fine view of his healthy mouth.

“Yes, yes,” he said. “Pember’s been here a good deal off and on. The trouble with him is that he is too impatient. He never waits to make his cure complete. There’s no use being impatient with this disease. Now you’re an entirely different type. You’ll go through with it. I can see that. Before I go I must tell you the story about . . .” And he repeated an amusing and slightly ribald story with the air of administering a dose of medicine.

After he left Shaw remained relaxed in mind and body for a long while. He felt

too indolent, too weary, to move or think. He was very comfortable and gently allowed the sounds of the sanatorium to penetrate his mind, giving himself up to becoming accustomed to his surroundings. He heard the muffled sounding of a gong, then the passing of feet and cheerful voices in the corridor. A little later another substantial meal was brought to him.

And so the weeks in bed passed. He was drowsy, feverish, resigned, and restless in turn but on the whole he was not unhappy. In his mind he set apart the months of his stay in the sanatorium as a sort of postgraduate course in the making of character and courage. "It's being a pretty stiff lesson," he thought, "but I'll learn it well. I know now that I have a weakness and I'll guard it. I know now what a bit of stupidity can bring about and I'll watch my step as never before."

Sometimes he almost persuaded himself that the disaster would, in the long run, be good for him. After such an experience he was bound to be more mature. He sought as ever to leave boyishness behind him. Yet, as he lay in bed, his thoughts were a boy's thoughts and it was with a boy's love that he kissed Elspeth's letters and put them under his pillow to comfort him. She wrote every few days. There had been no such arrangement between them and it was a surprise and a delight to him as her succession of letters flocked like birds bearing straws of comfort for the building of the nest of future happiness. For he came to know Elspeth through her letters as he had never known her before. There was a freedom of phrase in them which there had never been in her talk. There was a depth of love and feeling she had been too shy to show.

Ian wrote, too, letters in which nonsense did not quite conceal anxiety and flippancy was a transparent cloak for the latent melancholy of his nature.

Cristabel's letters were what they had always been, restrained and gentle. She was no letter writer but with each one the dark sweet bond of her motherhood drew Shaw's heart close. She was not well. It was nothing serious, she said, but he was anxious about her. "Health—health—we must get health and keep it!" he said over and over to himself. He grew more and more interested in watching his own progress, in measuring his own temperature and making notes of it for the doctor.

He and Pember compared their curve every day. Pember visited him twice and sometimes three times a day, always cheerful, talkative, and eager to display his latest photographs. He presented Shaw with some of these, pictures of mountain scenery, and pinned them on the wall alongside the sketches made by Ian. Shaw felt that he was fortunate in making such a friend in that place.

When his time for lying in bed was over he felt a little shy about meeting the other patients, but Pember took him under his wing and they went to the dining room

together. Shaw's knees felt shaky after the prolonged inactivity.

The dining room was light and airy, with open windows though the day was cold. Hot radiators made a sizzling sound and the food was admirably cooked and served. There seemed a great crowd of people in the room. The tables were all small with the exception of one in the middle at which a dozen people were seated, including the two doctors. Dr. Maybee was smiling and talkative, Dr. Knott somewhat gloomy, though he seemed a favorite with the women who sat on either side of him. Shaw found himself seated at table with Pember and another man about Pember's age of whom he had often spoken to Shaw. This was Such, a handsome man who had rather a foreign look about him. He had thick dark hair, a small dark moustache and closely trimmed beard. His brown eyes were long and pensive. He had a clear fair skin. One of the women patients, Pember said, was "crazy" about Such.

Shaw did not know whether or not he liked this man. The beard, he thought, made him look conceited. He was used to young men who grew beards in the wilds and shaved them off on the return to civilization. But Such was agreeable, though not nearly so friendly as Pember. Everyone settled down with apparent determination to eat as much as possible.

In a corner of the room there was a second large table at which were seated ten young men. They were there, Pember said, through some Government fund. He did not quite understand it but they had special terms and seemed not to worry at all about when they would leave or recover. Perhaps it was a matter of complete cynicism. A few of them looked very ill, a few quite normal, and two in the pink of health. They were noisy and ate enormously.

When they left the dining room the patients scattered about the lounge and living room. A young girl put on a gramophone record. Shaw and Pember followed the group of young men to the verandah, where the sun was now shining brightly and with a certain warmth. One began to sing a snatch of something. Others joined in.

"Listen!" said Pember smiling, with an air of showing them off.

Shaw made out the words they sang:—

"Doctor, can I go home next year?
Now don't go talking rot!
Doctor, shall I ever go home?
Maybee—Maybee—Knott!"

"Pretty cynical, eh?" said Pember. "But those young fellows are like that. They just don't care a darn for anything. I was afraid you might be the same but you're

not.”

“No, I’m not.”

“Tell me what you think of Such. Handsome, isn’t he? I’m always at him to pose for me, but he won’t. Do you think you’ll like him?”

“I can’t judge yet. He’s not like anyone I know. Is he very bad?”

Pember gave a sly smile. “He says not but I’m inclined to think he’s worse than he lets on. He’s as proud as Lucifer.” Pember suddenly pinched Shaw’s arm. “Look—that’s Mrs. Mellon! She’s the one who’s gone on Such.”

A thickset young woman of about thirty with a mass of curly bronze hair came out through the door and went to where Such lounged against a pillar of the verandah. She began at once to talk animatedly to him. He answered languidly, scarcely taking his pensive brown eyes from the pine-clad slopes. After a little she turned to Pember and asked:—

“Aren’t you going to introduce me to your friend?”

“Certainly,” returned Pember. “Mrs. Mellon—Mr. Manifold.”

“How d’you do?” said Mrs. Mellon, taking his hand and holding it a moment. “I hope you’ll bring manifold blessings to us here.”

“I hope so,” said Shaw, with his accustomed gravity.

“Why, you’ve brought a mellation blessings yourself,” returned Pember gallantly.

“Oh, oh,” she cried, “what a horrible pun! Wasn’t it a horrible pun, Aleck?”

“Very horrible,” said Such in his rather precise accent.

“I guess you don’t agree with the sentiment either.” She looked challengingly into Such’s inscrutable face.

“Beards aren’t fair!” she cried. “You can’t tell what a man with a beard is thinking, can you, Mr. Manifold?”

“My grandfather,” said Shaw, “has a beard that would throw Mr. Such’s into the shade. I’ve never been able to guess his thoughts.”

“Now you’re so different—you have a frank, open, honest face. And what a strong face!”

She continued to flatter Shaw and to draw him out.

When Pember and he were taking their afternoon cure—they shared the same balcony—Pember said:—

“I think I ought to warn you that Mrs. Mellon makes a dead set at every passable-looking man that comes here. But it’s done to excite Such, that’s all. I think it’s sort of pathetic, don’t you?”

“I haven’t much sympathy for a woman who behaves like that,” said Shaw. “And she’s chasing a sick man. It isn’t fair.”

“Such can take care of himself. I just thought I’d better let you know that she isn’t really interested in you.”

“Don’t you worry about me,” said Shaw. “I’m engaged to the only girl who cuts any ice with me. We’re going to get married as soon as I can afford it.”

Pember was sympathetic. He wanted to hear about Elspeth. He appeared to have no connections of his own. Amateur photography satisfied the yearnings that others had for love, but he liked to hear of emotional experience. In the long clear winter afternoon, swathed in their blankets, they talked and talked, Shaw of his adventures and ambitions, Pember of the perils and pride of photography.

From a distant balcony came the noise and chaffing of the group of young men, and once again Shaw heard the refrain:—

“Doctor, shall I ever go home?
Maybe—Maybe Knott.”

When the sunlight became ruddy and a rich purple tone shone from the trunks of the pines, they gathered themselves from their reclining posture and rose from their rugs as from a chrysalis. They were a little cold, a little stiff, quite ready for the substantial meal which was being prepared for them below. They went into Shaw’s bedroom and took their temperatures. Shaw brought out a photograph of Elspeth in her graduation dress at the time of leaving the Presbyterian Ladies’ College and showed it to Pember.

“A sweet girl, a very sweet girl,” said Pember, “but if I had been taking the photograph I’d never have allowed her to hold that bouquet so stiffly. I’d have had her hold it gracefully and I’d have let the light just touch the eyelid on the off side and bring out the curve of the cheek. But it’s a very nice photo just the same. You don’t mind my criticism?”

“Not at all,” said Shaw.

Pember’s companionship was soothing. He and Shaw sometimes sat for long on their balcony without speaking, or talked in desultory fashion of the books they read. There was a strange collection of books in the lounge, brought there and left by the procession of patients. Shaw devoured them, for he was a fast reader. Pember read slowly, with long interruptions for the discussion or contemplation of photography. His great excitement was the day when the amateur photographer’s magazine he subscribed to appeared. Once it contained a picture of a group of pines at sunset, taken by himself. He showed it to everybody in the sanatorium. It was the day of his monthly examination by the doctors, but he was more interested in what they had to say of the photograph than of his condition.

Christmas, with an illuminated tree in the grounds and an elaborate dinner, came and went. Elspeth sent Shaw an embroidered case for his neckties. Cristabel a pair of fur-lined gloves. His grandmother a heavy knitted muffler. It was the first Christmas present she had ever given him and he was touched.

A month had passed. He settled down to complete the cure in the next two months, cheerfully and methodically. It was a bitter cold winter. He lay swathed in his rugs for hours, not speaking, scarcely thinking, feeling stiff and half frozen when he rose. The attitude of the doctors at his examinations was the same, Maybee aggressively cheerful, Knott determinedly the reverse in his expression, though in his brief remarks he always agreed with his colleague.

At the end of three months they both declared that it would take another three to complete the cure. Maybee seemed surprised that Shaw had contemplated going. "Haven't you studied your chart?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"What does it show?"

"My temperature measures about the same."

"A little higher!"

"Yes."

"Yet you talk of going!"

"I feel much better. I'm stronger."

"Of course you're stronger! When you came here you were just getting over a severe illness. You were worn-out. Now you are rested. You are fed to the limit of your capacity. Everything is set for your cure. But you're not out of the wood yet. The truth is that this high altitude is exciting to your disease at the beginning. Now you'll just have to be sensible and not risk your future by impatience."

"I *must* go!" exclaimed Shaw.

Maybee grinned athletically. "There's no such word as *must* here. Is there, Dr. Knott?"

"Not till the undertaker says it," said the other.

But the undertaker was never in evidence. Patients certainly died. Certain bedrooms about which there would be a good deal of activity would suddenly become very quiet and there would be the smell of disinfectant about their doors. That was all. One of the group of youths died, but soon a new arrival filled his place and learned to sing:—

"Doctor, can I go home next year?"

There was nothing for Shaw to do but write to the head of the Forestry

Department and ask for an extension of leave. It was hard but he had to do it. Harder still to write to his mother and Elspeth of the disappointment. Hardest of all to curb the wild longing of his own heart for the forests of the Pacific. He thought of them flaunting their April greenness. He saw the mountainsides rosy with flowers. He saw the coast where forest and sea met and his heart was sick with longing.

From official quarters he received a sympathetic letter granting him an extension of leave for three months, his salary to continue. The relief was great—so great that he felt almost reconciled to the protracted stay in the sanatorium.

Pember's heart was set on going that spring to the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia to take photographs of orchards in bloom and villages set among them. He could think and talk of little else. One day he announced to Shaw that he was leaving. The doctors were up in the air, he said, about his going, but he was determined to go. He was practically cured, he said. A summer of knocking about with his camera would complete the cure, he was convinced.

Shaw had not imagined that he would feel the parting with Pember so keenly. In truth he felt that his best prop in the place was gone. Pember was one of those weak, comforting people who are of more support to the strong than other strong would be. With him gone, Shaw drew more into himself. Ian had sent him a bundle of books and he buried himself in them. No one else came to share his balcony. He took long walks in the pinewoods, sometimes encountering Such and walking a while with him. They found little to say, for both were reticent, but they liked each other's company. Shaw gathered that Such was troubled by Mrs. Mellon's devotion to him. Her advances to Shaw had been passing. Now she ignored him except when he was with Such.

She would walk between them talking and laughing continually, stopping sometimes to cough. But she seemed to be in robust health. Her curly hair stood out from her head and her complexion was like a child's.

One day Shaw came upon her with Such in a remote spot on the mountainside. He would have turned back for she was crying bitterly. But she saw him and called out:—

“Don't go away!”

Shaw hesitated, turning his eyes from her and Such. He had seen that Such looked also on the point of tears.

“What do you suppose?” she cried. “They tell me I'm cured! They tell me I've got to go away! The brutes! I'm not cured. I'm just as bad as ever!”

Shaw went to them. He was embarrassed and said to Such:—

“I think I'd better go.”

“No, don’t go,” returned Such. “Stay and talk some sense into Lydia. Tell her that the doctors wouldn’t send her away if she wasn’t cured.”

“Wouldn’t they!” she cried bitterly. “Perhaps Knott wouldn’t but Maybee would. He’s jealous, I tell you! He’s as jealous as hell!”

Shaw looked puzzled. She threw out her hand in a tragic gesture. “He’s jealous of Such. He’s mad about me. Everyone knows that. If you knew the things he’s said to me! Now he’s having his revenge. He’s determined to get rid of me.”

“I wish to God he’d tell me I was cured!” exclaimed Such.

“You’re just as much cured as I am! I’m no more fit to go back into the world than you are. But I won’t be put out, I tell you! He can’t make me go!” She threw her arms about Such’s neck and hung on his shoulder weeping.

“Look here, Mrs. Mellon,” said Shaw. “I don’t believe that Dr. Maybee—”

She interrupted him fiercely. “What do you know about Dr. Maybee? I understand him, I tell you. He’s a brute and he’s determined to separate me from the man I love.”

Such gently stroked her hair. “Don’t go on so, Lydia. You’ll have your temperature up.”

“It is up!” she cried. “It’s never been down!” She began to cough violently. Shaw could not help feeling that the cough was assumed.

Such looked at him in despair. Together they urged her gently down the steep path, soothing her to a sort of calmness by the time they reached its end.

That night Such ate little and the next day he was in bed. He was much worse, it was said.

Returning from a walk, Shaw heard a commotion in the corridor where Such’s room was. He hesitated, his heart beating quickly, and saw Dr. Maybee pushing Mrs. Mellon out of Such’s room into the corridor.

“Oh, you brute!” she shouted, and struck Dr. Maybee on the cheek.

Such’s voice came from the room. “For God’s sake, don’t go on like that! I can’t bear it!”

“You’ll get out of here,” said Dr. Maybee roughly, “or I’ll know the reason why.” He pushed her down the corridor.

Shaw hurried back to his room. The next day Mrs. Mellon’s place was empty. Such was still confined to his bed. His curve had risen still more because of the emotional strain. Shaw felt lonely and depressed. The three people he knew best in the sanatorium were suddenly swept away from him, two by their recovery, one by illness. Twice he went to see Such, but they found little to say to each other and the memory of Mrs. Mellon’s distraught figure rose between them. Such gave the

impression that he was torn and confused by all that had happened to him since coming to this place.

In his walks under the swaying shadows of the pines, Shaw meditated on the love of women. The passionate love of Mrs. Mellon that had been a torment to Such, that could only drag down and embitter its object. The love of Laura Page for the worthless Searle, a love that begged no reward but the privilege of loving. The love of Elspeth for himself which enriched his life and quickened all that was best in him. He had unselfish love, he reflected, from a woman, and loved in return, but of passion could give only what was not absorbed by the forests.

The weather grew very hot. During the day exertion was impossible but at evening he walked solitary through the woods where the shadows of the pines dipped and bowed before him, under the cooling breeze where the pointed cones, glittering with resin, filled the air with their scent.

One day the mail brought him a letter from Mrs. Searle. It read:—

DEAR SHAW,

I hope you don't mind me calling you by your first name. As I knew you when you were a little boy, it seems more natural than Mister. I am in great trouble. Jack was sent to prison last March for six months because of a fight he got into with three other men and one of them got killed, though it was not Jack's fault. Some people are unkind enough to say that he got off easily but he didn't deserve any punishment. The other men started the fight. Jack swore that on his honor. Would you send me twenty-five dollars for old time's sake? I wouldn't ask you except for my little girl who is not getting enough to eat. She sends her love to you. She is counting the days till her poor daddy comes home and so am I.

I am terribly sorry to hear of your illness and hope you will soon be well again.

Your worried friend

LAURA SEARLE

P.S.—I still feel that I don't regret anything I've done.

How had Mrs. Searle got his address, Shaw wondered. He guessed that it was from Ian, who was now in British Columbia. Could he afford to send her the money? He could not, he knew, yet the thought of her want nagged at his mind, gave him no peace till he sent it. He wrote also to Ian, who answered by return post:—

The Searles have bled me dry! Don't send them another dollar. What a fool I was to tell her where you are! The woman has no conscience. . . .

For one reason or another Shaw's next examination was put off from time to time. Dr. Maybee had an operation to perform. New cases had to be diagnosed. The doctors were in turn called away from the sanatorium for consultations. But at last it came. Shaw, now so adept at going through his paces, held up his arms so that he might be tapped beneath the armpits, breathed deeply, coughed.

"I may as well tell you," observed Dr. Maybee shortly, "that the lobe of the other lung is badly affected. I was suspicious of it at your last examination but I did not want to worry you. But leaving any time in the near future is out of the question." He gave a hearty laugh. "In for a penny, in for a pound! You're a good patient, Manifold. Give us another six months of your company and you'll leave here so full of beans you won't know what to do with yourself. Isn't that so, Dr. Knott?"

"You bet it is," said Dr. Knott.

Shaw stumbled up the stairs and along the corridor to his own room. As he passed Such's door he saw outside it the tank of oxygen. From the balcony below drifted the refrain:—

"Doctor, can I go home this year?

Now don't go talking rot!

Doctor, shall I ever go home?

Maybee—Maybee—Knott."

Shaw threw himself on his bed and lay there face downward. Despair welled up in a black tide and engulfed him. He struggled against it, sprang to his feet and strode up and down the room.

"Liars! Liars!" he raged. "I won't stay! I won't stay! I'm better—I'm well—I'll leave to-morrow."

Suddenly he had a vision of himself as a little boy hurling sticks at the woodshed, declaring that he would chop no more wood. Pretending to revolt—not really revolting!

He found himself dripping with sweat. He took his thermometer and measured his curve. Higher. . . . Higher. . . . He would kill himself if he went on this way. . . . There was nothing for it but to acquiesce—to make the cure complete. He must write for an extension of leave. God only knew if they would grant him an extension of salary!

The leave was granted kindly enough but with a little less sympathy than before.

The salary was halved. This meant that Cristabel would have to use her savings to make up the deficiency.

The summer passed. In the valley the maple trees flamed but the pines remained green on the mountain. Patients came and went. Patients took to their beds and died. Among these was Such. His death made little difference to Shaw. He had not seen him in months.

When the cold fall rains and winds came, Pember returned. He looked sheepish as he greeted Shaw. He was tanned a dark brown and showed little sign of his malady.

“I’m afraid I left too soon,” he said. “But I had a wonderful time. Just you wait till you see the photographs I’ve taken. They’re perfectly marvelous. I’m going to enter some of them in an international competition.” He could scarcely bear to wait for the displaying of them to Shaw and the other patients.

There was a sense of comfort in his return. They took up the threads of the old life. Again he was in the room next door and came several times a day to see Shaw, who was at the time forced to remain in bed because of a chill. He was anæmic too, the doctors said. They were very careful of him.

Shaw had reached a state of almost complete acquiescence and lassitude. He no longer counted the weeks, the days, till his next examination. His mind was no longer tortured by delay. It was murky, like a fouled stream. His answers to letters became merely a few scrawled words, perfunctory and loveless. He was able to take no exercise beyond the fifteen steps between his bed and his chair.

One December day he and Pember were stretched in their chairs on the balcony. There was little snow yet, but a sharp wind sang its way through the pines and swept the rising road to the sanatorium. They lay watching the figure of a woman walking up the road, her garments pressed against her limbs by the wind, her head bowed to meet its buffeting. They watched her progress, indolently wondering what was her business, for now she had turned in at the gate and her face was raised toward the rows of balconies.

There was something in her walk that roused Shaw from his languor. She was now more sheltered from the wind and her skirt fell about her knees naturally. The skin of her face was whipped to scarlet by the biting air. He could see the blueness of her eyes. He raised himself to a sitting posture and stared down at her, astounded, almost horrified.

“Mother!” he shouted.

He fell back on his pillow. Blood gushed from his mouth.

She had come to take him away!

She could endure this no longer. She had come to take him away. Now he did not even want to go.

“Mother,” he said, looking up at her out of wistful eyes as she sat by his bed, “I’m not able to go. I don’t want to go. It will be the end of me!”

“You must be sensible, dear,” she said, stroking his hand which she held. “You are not getting well here. I am going to take you to a place that Dr. Clemency has heard of. He’s sure it will be better than this.”

“Is it less expensive?” he asked.

“It costs about half what this does.”

“That’s good,” he sighed, and resigned himself to her bidding.

He was her child again. She had only to stretch out the wing of her love, he thought, half dreaming, and under its shelter he would find oblivion, safety from life or death or whatever might be seeking him. . . . On her part she strove to forget the horror of her first sight of him—his red mouth against his white face—the caverns of his eyes.

CHAPTER XVI

“Are you comfortable?” asked Cristabel as they sat in the train two weeks later on their way to Quebec.

“Yes, Mother, I’m fine.”

They smiled at each other.

They were happy to be speeding away from the place that had swallowed a year of Shaw’s life, all of his salary, and much of his savings. She had had a time of it with Dr. Maybee. He had been rude to her, almost brutal. If her son died as the result of this change she would have only herself to blame. He would give Shaw no more than two months to live if he were moved. If people would be pigheaded they must take the consequences. Dr. Knott, however, had taken her aside and unexpectedly told her that he believed she was doing the right thing. Those words had cheered her, though support was not necessary to her. Her mind was set, with the energy of despair, on getting Shaw to the Quebec sanatorium while he still lived.

All the long journey she had scarcely taken her eyes from him. Her hands had fluttered over him like two birds over their feeble young. She had not allowed the porter to make up her berth but had sat up all the night across the aisle from him, ready to tend him, springing up in fear at the sound of a cough. Yet through all her anguish of spirit there shone a thread of tremulous joy at his nearness, of being able to care for him with her own hands.

He felt oddly happy, though the excessive heat of the train, the lack of air, caused him great discomfort. He sat gazing out of the window watching the snowy landscape wheel by, the villages, the towns, the frozen fields, the woods. His heavy eyes would brighten as he looked at the trees. He sought to make out their varieties, what species grew together, their breadth and strength. It seemed to him that the trees were conscious of him, that they wanted to make sure that he had a mind to them. It seemed that, when the country was open and bare because of the ignorant slaughter of them, they always contrived to set one of their number, even though it were only a stunted cedar, in some conspicuous spot, on the lookout for him.

As they crossed the border into Quebec the cold became more intense. The snow rolled beside the railway in great blue-white billows. The mufflers about people’s throats became heavier and fur caps were worn. But in the railway carriage the air was still breathless, parched by heat, as hot as steaming pipes could make it.

“Are you comfortable, Shaw?”

“Yes, Mother.”

“Will you have something to eat?”

“Yes, I must eat.”

She would give him a sandwich and a cup of milk, rejoice in his nearness. Since he was eight years old she had never so had him to herself as in the past fortnight. She had brought him back from death. Dr. Clemency said the air in that northern place could work miracles. Surely a miracle was needed to restore Shaw to health! His gaunt young face, his thin shoulders, his limp hands that had been so full of strength, each evidence of his stricken state pierced her heart with a fresh pang.

She leant toward him.

“Comfortable, dear?”

“Yes, Mother. Fine. Except for the heat. You don’t think I might have a window open?”

“I’m afraid the other passengers would object.”

“But they’re well. I’m not.”

“I shall open your window just a crack.” She struggled with it, clamped with ice as it was to the frame. The negro porter hurried to her.

“Land’s sakes, lady, yo’ ain’t gwine ter open de window, is yo’?”

“My son needs air.”

“He ain’t faintin’, is he?”

“It’s all right!” exclaimed Shaw, shrinking from the eyes turned toward him. “I don’t mind.”

The porter raised the window the fraction of an inch. A needle of pure air pierced the parched atmosphere. Shaw felt himself reviving. He turned the pages of the *Geographic Magazine* Pember had given him at parting. Cristabel’s hands moved nervously in her lap. She longed to be doing something for him.

On and on, on and on, across the frozen St. Lawrence, farther and farther north. . . . Sky and land embraced each other in a whirling snowstorm . . . little hamlets of wooden houses, each hamlet with its tapering spire, were scattered alongside the railway, and beyond them the stretch of whiteness, beyond the whiteness the vast dark forest. Cristabel peered through the pane. . . . Was this where she was to leave her boy? In this frozen vastness! Her heart felt the iron clutch of apprehension. Surely Dr. Clemency was mistaken! Surely no human life could be cherished or warmed to strength in such grimness! She felt her fortitude ebbing from her. She laid her hand on Shaw’s knee.

“Look out of the window, Shaw. What do you think of this country?”

He bent his head to peer out through the space he had scratched with his nail on the frosted pane.

“I like the looks of it, Mother.”

“You like the looks of it?”

“Yes. I guess the air will be good and you know I like trees.”

She gazed at him in wonder. To be able to look into that gloomy distance, where the massed trees seemed almost borne down by their weight of snow, while skeletons of birch and aspen stood outside the forest against the chill sky, and to say he liked the look of it! What sort of man was this! How had she got him—this odd strange boy of hers? But his words quieted her fear. If he saw no dread in such a prospect, if he thought only of the pure air and the trees, then surely the benefit must be there to cure him.

The lamps of the carriages swung dimly in the hot air as dusk came on. The faces of other passengers looked pallid. There were few of them now. The train was almost empty. This was a branch line to which they had changed at a junction. The seats were hard and uncomfortable. Shaw looked ready to drop when at last they drew in to the station where they were to alight. The little station looked no more than a lost outpost, but it was something to feel the steady earth beneath them again, after the whirling monotony of the wheels. Down the platform they could see Shaw's trunk being put off from the baggage car. Moving figures looked dim and unreal. Yet how real was the sudden, sharp, clear jingle of sleigh bells. Lights were seen through snowflakes. Shaw raised his head and drank deeply of the icy air. With a noisy outlet of steam and a grinding of wheels that scarce could grip the frosty rails, the train moved out. An elderly man, almost as broad as he was long, came across the platform and greeted Cristabel. He wore moccasins over heavy grey woolen socks, a short cloth coat lined with fur and with an upturned fur collar, a cloth cap with ear lugs lined with rabbitskin. He had a broad face and large grizzled moustache from which two icicles hung. He broke them off with his stumpy fingers before he spoke.

“I am Dr. Sullivan,” he said, speaking with a precise accent. “I suppose you are Mr. and Mrs. Manifold. I've come to meet you.” He shook hands with gravity. “Is that your trunk?” he asked.

Between them he and the stationmaster picked it up and, with the other baggage, carried it to the back of the sleigh. Dr. Sullivan courteously invited Cristabel and Shaw to seat themselves in it. He covered their knees with a bearskin rug and himself mounted the driver's seat. With another clear jingle of bells the bony grey horse sprang forward along the snowy road, straining toward his evening feed.

“Are you warm enough, Shaw?”

“Yes, Mother. Isn't this air glorious?” He felt as though he should never have enough of it.

In the distance they heard the shriek of the locomotive. A few luminous stars shone out. The bells kept up an incessant music which at times was pierced by the sharp screech of the sleigh runners on the snow. Sometimes a rut sent them forward on their seats. Sometimes they glided as though on wings, while the steam from the horse's nostrils hung white on the air.

Cristabel spoke close to Shaw's ear. "It's like a drive with Santa Claus."

He laughed.

"Oh, Shaw, how lovely it is to hear you laugh!"

"I'll get well here, Mother. See if I don't!"

"Are you comfortable?"

"Yes. Glad to be outdoors."

"There are lights ahead. Do you see?"

A cluster of lights showed where the hamlet lay. A little apart stood a house much larger than the others. It was, in fact, a house and a barn joined together by an addition, so that a kind of court was formed. Into this the horse turned so eagerly that the sleigh skidded. The driver shouted:—

"Hi! *Prenez garde, mon vieux!*"

The door of the house was thrown open and a shock-headed man in moccasins came out and shouldered the trunk.

"Welcome!" exclaimed Dr. Sullivan with a dramatic spread of his arms. He swung Cristabel down from the seat. She sank almost knee-deep in snow, yet she was on the shoveled path. On either side of her the drifts rose above her head.

Shaw alighted and stood weak and bewildered. Suddenly the two men came on either side of him. They made a chair of their arms and raised him on it. "*Alors!*" exclaimed Dr. Sullivan. "*Pas si vite, Napoléon!*"

Shaw and Cristabel found themselves in a small square hall where a Quebec heater was glowing, and in a niche in the wall a statue of the Virgin and Child had a red lamp burning before it. Cristabel felt that she was in a foreign country. She felt afraid for Shaw. What strange places his illness forced him into! He did not seem perturbed. He looked tired and resigned.

A thin dark woman with a brooding aquiline face came to meet them.

"My sister," said Dr. Sullivan.

She greeted mother and son in English almost as good as her brother's.

"You are puzzled," she said, "by our Irish name. We had an Irish great-great-grandfather. Our mother and our two sisters speak no English, but my brother studied medicine in Montreal and I nursing. We learned the language there. Then we got the idea of a sanatorium. We worked and saved for it. Now we have twelve

patients. Your son, madam, makes the thirteenth.” She smiled proudly.

“The thirteenth,” repeated Cristabel. “That’s an unlucky number.”

“There are no unlucky numbers here,” said the doctor confidently. “Now we must put this young man to bed, Hortense, and show him and madame, his mother, how good our cooking is.”

Two hours later Cristabel came to Shaw’s room and sat down by his bedside. He smiled up at her and took one of her hands in his.

“When must you go?” he asked.

“The day after to-morrow. But I must have to-morrow to see you settled. I’ve been talking to the doctor about you and he thinks . . .” She paused.

“He hasn’t examined me yet!”

“No. He can only judge by your appearance. He thinks . . .” Her voice faltered.

“Yes, Mother?”

“He thinks it will take a year, Shaw.”

“I am not surprised,” he answered in a resigned tone. Then he added—“Does he think I look very bad?”

“No—considering the long journey. He is very kind. I like him much better than those other doctors. But I wish it wasn’t all so Catholic. Did you see the statue with the light in front of it?”

“Yes. I have no religious prejudices, Mother.”

“There is someone here, Shaw, I must tell you about. I wouldn’t tell you before for fear it might be upsetting to you. A young person you used to know at school.”

He looked startled. “Not Ian?”

“Goodness, no! It is Louie Adams. She’s been here since last fall.”

“Then she wasn’t cured after all!”

“No. I know how sorry you will be. I hated to tell you.”

His hollow cheeks flushed. Cristabel knew little of the tremor of satisfaction that had run through the sanatorium when someone who had left returned, or when someone developed more advanced symptoms. Savagely Shaw thrust this feeling from him. He said slowly:—

“I’m sorry for Louie. Is she very ill?”

“She was, but I think she’s improving. Dr. Sullivan speaks hopefully. She’s up and about.”

“Does she know I’m here?”

“Yes. It was through her that Dr. Clemency heard of this place.”

A silence fell between them while their senses readjusted themselves to the new environment. The room was very small and furnished cheaply, the bed less

comfortable than the one to which Shaw was used. It was cold and Cristabel sat with her coat on. From the next room came the sound of coughing and from the room below, through the thin flooring, the sound of a rapid reiterated prayer in women's voices. An oil lamp on the table threw the shadow of Cristabel on the wall. Shaw lay looking at it, impressing it on his mind. He wished he might have outlined it in crayon, it was so perfect. He said:—

“There's something I want you to do for me, Mother.”

Her blue eyes turned to him eagerly. She was so eager to help him. “Yes, dear, what is it?”

“I want you to tell Elspeth that she is free. It's a shame to hold her to an engagement like ours. I should have told her long ago, but I sort of hated to.” His lips trembled.

“Oh, I don't think Elspeth wants that! I was talking to her when I was home last and she told me that you are the only boy she's ever cared for. She thinks you're wonderful, Shaw.”

“She should see me now,” he returned bitterly.

“I wouldn't give much for a girl who would throw a man over because he's sick.”

“It isn't fair to hold her in this case. Another year—think of it! And even then I'll not be able to marry—perhaps not for a long while.”

“Well, I'll tell her what you say.”

He flung across the bed in anger. “Tell her—tell her!” he reiterated. “I'm tired of it! I can't bear it any more.”

Cristabel was aghast. “You mean you don't love her any more?”

“Of course I love her! That's why I must be fair to her. Don't you understand? I can't chain the woman I love to a wreck!”

She laid her hand on his head. “I'll do just what you say. I'll repeat our conversation to her and tell her to write to you. Now you must rest. It's late.”

He saw how wan and tired she looked. He thought:—

“I'm wearing her out. I'm killing her. . . . What if she should die!”

“Mother,” he said, “you must go to bed. You're so tired.” Tears of pity for them both misted his eyes. He caught at her skirt. “Poor Mother. . . .”

She bent and kissed him, tucked the coverings close about his shoulders. “Have you got everything you want?”

“Yes, everything.”

“Good night, dear. . . . I'm glad those women have stopped praying. It sounded so mournful.”

“I sort of liked it.”

“It’s nice and quiet after the train.”

“I guess you hadn’t a wink last night.”

“Don’t worry about me, Shaw.”

She put out the light. The door opened and closed. He slept.

In the barn which had been transformed into a part of the sanatorium those patients who were bedridden were accommodated. There were six, all French Canadians. Two of the doctor’s sisters also slept there. In the house proper were the seven other patients, the doctor, his third sister, and his mother, who had been blind for several years. The house had a single long verandah enclosed at the ends and fitted with canvas curtains for protection in times of extreme cold.

Here, with the wintry sunshine pouring down on him and wrapped in a fur sack, Cristabel found Shaw the next day. She had been shown every corner of the sanatorium by Hortense Sullivan, with concentrated French pride. Cristabel was more tranquil than, the day before, she would have thought possible. These people were kind, she was sure of that. The place was genuinely clean. The food was plain but well cooked. The patients were given all they could eat. In the adjoining field, cows, pigs, and poultry were kept. Hortense had shown Cristabel all, down to the last hen. They had plodded through snow and frozen manure to see the hens and to collect the eggs before they would be frozen. Cristabel enjoyed this, being a countrywoman. Though this place seemed so foreign, the cows and hens were the same and it gave a comforting familiarity to her conception of it.

She and Hortense took off their heavy felt overshoes and, to make the final perfect impression, Hortense led her to the parlor, the best room of all, papered in dark red, with maroon plush chairs, figured yellow window curtains, a piano with a red felt cover with balled fringe, a highly colored lithograph of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and, under a glass case, a wreath of white wax flowers and a memorial card of the death of the father of the family.

Hortense showed all to Cristabel. The two women sat down and talked like sisters. Hortense promised to keep a special eye on Shaw, to write to Cristabel herself of his progress. Before they went upstairs she took Cristabel’s face between her hands and kissed her.

“Your son will recover!” she exclaimed. “I know he will. He will drink in the pure air of Quebec to heal his lungs. My good brother will watch over him like a father. I myself will not neglect to pray for him. At night by the shrine of Our Lady in my mother’s room, and at early Mass each morning in the Church of the Good Shepherd.”

Cristabel could not speak for the tightness in her throat but her eyes shone with gratitude as she looked into the fine dark face. Passing the statue in the niche, Hortense genuflected and, scarcely knowing what she did, Cristabel followed her example, then straightened herself in dismay. What would her mother have thought of that popish gesture?

Shaw smiled up at her. She sat down on the edge of his chair.

“Are you comfortable, Shaw?” she asked, while her eyes took in the ravages suffering had made on his strong-boned young face.

“Yes, Mother. I slept like a log.”

“I’m glad. You are to have your examination at two, so I shall know the doctor’s opinion before I go.”

“Don’t you worry. I’ll be all right. The air is wonderful.”

“It’s as cold as Greenland.” She shivered in her not very heavy coat.

“I’m used to cold.”

She lowered her voice. “Have you seen Louie?”

“Yes. She came to me first thing. She’s at the far end of the verandah.”

Cristabel peered in that direction. “Oh, I see her! She doesn’t look too bad, Shaw.”

“You can’t tell by looks. Some look in the pink when they’ve only a few months to live.”

“Poor girl! She sees me. I must go and speak to her.”

Louie peered up from her wrappings, a smile lighting her sharp little face.

“Oh, hello, Mrs. Manifold!”

“Well, Louie. I’m glad to see you looking so well.”

“I’m getting on wonderfully. It’s lovely seeing a face from home.”

“You and Shaw will be company for each other.”

“Yes. There’s no one here I much like talking to. Shaw’s intellectual. I guess he and I’ll have some great arguments. Of course, I’m leaving pretty soon.”

“I’m glad for you, Louie. I only wish Shaw were.”

“This air will fix him up. Dr. Sullivan’s just grand. We all love him.”

Cristabel’s eyes moved over the recumbent forms that separated Shaw and Louie. “I suppose you know them all,” she said wistfully.

“Yes. I wish I might sit next to Shaw, but they keep the sexes separated by that railing down the middle and the two next the railing are terribly gone on each other. They’re engaged to be married—when they recover—if ever they do!” Louie gave a hard little laugh. She drew back her upper lip from her teeth that looked sharp and

cruel.

Cristabel glanced with compassion at the two young people who sat with faces toward each other across the intervening space. They were talking rapidly together. "The woman between the girl and me is a dress designer from Montreal," said Louie. "The two men between the girl's fiancé and Shaw are priests. They're perfect lambs."

Louie's strange way of talking disturbed Cristabel. The idea of calling members of the clergy lambs! Shepherds—yes, that was natural and good, but lambs—well, New York must be a queer place. She stayed a little longer with Louie telling her news of the Blairs and the Scotts, then went back to her boy. It was hard to think that she must leave him so soon. Every moment was precious.

The examination was long and tiring to one in Shaw's weak state. He stood, bare to the waist, in a little room alone with Dr. Sullivan.

"You have been put through the paces often," said the doctor, "yes? You have been well taught but—not well cured! I shall do my best for you. But it will take a year! Perhaps eighteen months. If only you had come to me first!" He shook his shaggy grey head in a sudden abandon to melancholy. "Why don't people come to me sooner! I am tired of them coming on their last legs! It is not fair to me! It is very hard on me. It makes it difficult to build up a reputation."

"Yes," agreed Shaw, "it is hard on you." He began to put on his clothes.

With Cristabel's departure his life in the sanatorium began in earnest. Spiritually the change had already done him good. He was no longer resigned to defeat but woke each morning in new determination to hold his own, to gain if it were humanly possible.

"You are a good patient," Dr. Sullivan said to him, as Dr. Maybee had said.

After the exhilaration of the change Shaw's condition moved steadily in a decline. He might have been unconscious of its speed had not Dr. Sullivan's moving finger hesitated with palpable foreboding on his naked breast and back, had not the doctor given him that almost tender smile at the end of each examination. The doctor would put his arm about him and help him to his bed. Shaw would lie there, gazing out into the wintry sky through his open window, thinking, thinking, always thinking. The horizontal position became the natural one. He saw his long lean body stretched before him under the bed coverings. He felt his legs heavy and weak, his lungs shaken by coughing.

The doctor came one day and sat by his bed.

"Do you feel that you are getting better?" he asked.

"I don't know. I don't think about it now."

“Then I must tell you that you are not getting better.”

“Am I going to die?”

“I am afraid so.”

The northwest wind blew into the room. The sky looked colder and greyer, though Shaw, a moment before, would have said that was not possible. His heart sank in an abyss of despair. But his face remained impassive.

“The trouble is,” said the doctor, “that you are not trying hard enough.”

Shaw heard a hollow voice answer: “I have been trying for a year and a half.”

“Yes. . . . But there is one part of you . . . a small, a small invisible part of you, that is not trying. On that part rests the responsibility of your life or death. This feeble part of you must come out like a warrior and wrestle with your disease.”

There was silence between them. A gust of wind entered, carrying snowflakes that settled on the bed. Shaw looked up into the doctor’s eyes.

“I will bring out that final bit of me,” he said, “and it shall fight the disease.”

After the doctor went he lay motionless for a long while. Then he raised himself slowly and looked out through the window. The street was empty, except for two Sisters of Mercy belonging to the convent next the church, whose voluminous robes billowed on the wind. He watched them out of sight and then lay back.

The final struggle began. Shaw kept a chart, not only of his temperature but of the number of times he coughed each day, the time of his first cough each morning. He fought to delay that first cough to the last possible moment—to prolong the periods between spells of coughing with the utmost strength that was in him. He almost suffocated himself doing it. He lay rigid, with clenched teeth, bursting lungs, and distended ribs, fighting the cough, saying to himself, “I’ll fight you—damn you!—I won’t cough!”

In all his waking moments he fought. From the first moment of opening his heavy eyes, even into the realms of sleep, his will pursued the thing that would destroy him.

At last the turning point came. At last he felt the current of his life strengthening. He began to take more interest in what went on about him.

Dr. Sullivan was interested in forestry. He and Shaw had long talks about trees. And all along the mountainsides the forest spread dark against the snow, the trees reared their proud pinnacles toward the cold sky. Shaw set it as his ambition for the spring that he should then be able to walk into the forest. But now he was weak. It was long before he could walk down the village street as far as the church. It took all his strength to push open the heavy door and go inside to rest. It was warm in the church, for a fire burned in a stove near the door. Shaw liked it here in the twilight that was enriched by shafts of color from stained glass, and the glint of brass and

painted pictures, statues with bright-colored robes. But the smell of stale incense made him cough and he could not stay for long.

Sometimes Louie Adams went with him, their two frail figures passing unnoticed along the little street, for snow was mounded high in the yards and no footfall was heard. The two would lay their shoulders against the big door. Louie would breathe, "Now!" Their combined strength would open the door easily. They would smile at their achievement as they went softly along the aisle. They would sit side by side gazing toward the chancel, the stained-glass window showing the Good Shepherd with a lamb in His arms, the mystery and candlelit brightness. Sometimes their minds went back to the Presbyterian Church in Ontario and they remembered Mr. Blair standing tall and handsome in the pulpit. More often they were without thought and sat with blank faces gazing at the brightness. But, though they might be without conscious thought, the twinkling candles like distant stars, the brooding statues, gave them a sense of peace. The first time a priest and his acolyte entered the chancel when Shaw and Louie were in the church they hastened out, afraid of being caught in some service they could not understand, but they grew bolder and one day remained, rising and kneeling when the others did, not understanding, but reverent.

An odd exhilaration would possess them when they came out into the cold. They would feel stronger and the piercing purity of the air, after the scent of incense, would go through them like wine.

"Isn't it fun being together?" Louie asked him once as, arm in arm, they were moving through the blue-and-white twilight toward the orange squares of the sanatorium windows.

"Fun!" repeated Shaw.

"Yes. It makes you feel so young, so sort of carefree."

"I don't think it makes us feel young or carefree. I think it just makes us forget for a little."

"Well, that's almost the same thing, isn't it?"

"I haven't any carefree childhood days to look back on. Have you, Louie?"

She gave a shrill laugh. "No. I was always worrying. But one sort of thinks of childhood that way."

"I don't."

"What a funny little fellow you were, Shaw! Like a little man. But you were nice."

"Me nice! Do you forget the time I pushed you down in the road?"

"I don't wonder you did. I was a little worm. And I had such awful clothes. How I hated them! I always longed for pretty things."

“Did you really?” he asked, astonished.

“Well, I was human, wasn’t I?” she answered tartly. “Even if I did have a yellow neck and taggy hair and pale eyes.”

“You’re a lot better-looking now, Louie.”

He looked down at her almost admiringly. She walked prettily in her narrow black-and-white check skirt, her short black jacket with a band of fur at the neck, her hat with the backward-springing wings. Beneath the hat brim her hair waved about her ears, in which she wore imitation pearl earrings. Her skin was clear, her eyes bright—what had happened to change her eyes?

“Louie, your eyes are different.”

“Can’t you guess why?”

He could not guess.

“I wasn’t a whole year in a beauty parlor for nothing. My eyelashes are darkened.”

He stared at them, incredulous.

“No! Are they really?”

To him there was something indecent in the admission. A girl might do it but—to tell a man of it! What about her lips, then? Perhaps she had some sort of enamel all over her face!

Louie laughed almost brazenly. “Oh, New York is so different! Things that seem terrible at home are just nothing there. And the right kind of powder makes all the difference to a girl. I’ve the right kind on now, but my lips aren’t painted. The red is quite natural. Old man temperature sees to that!”

Well, it wasn’t his business to criticize her. And certainly she had improved her appearance. He said shyly:—

“I like the way you look, Louie. I think your clothes are awfully stylish.”

“Do you remember,” she said, “how at high school that rich girl gave me money to buy shoes and things—right in front of everybody!”

“It was a mean thing to do. Both Ian and I thought so.”

“What I thought won’t bear repeating! What I wanted to do was to throw the money in her face and spit at her!”

Why should she drag out her humiliations? He strove to forget his. He said:—

“Never mind, that’s all over now. You look pretty and I like your looks. We’re both going to get well. That’s enough, isn’t it?”

“Not quite,” she answered in a tense voice. “I want us to be friends for keeps. Better friends than we’ve ever been.”

She raised her dark-lashed eyes to his face in conscious allure. Her thin fingers

pressed his arm. Suddenly he remembered his dream about her, how she had clung to him and his carrying her through a rough wild land.

But their intimacy did not advance. For all her efforts she found herself facing the wall of his reticence. Their walks, their talks, grew longer but she made no progress into intimacy. Then she began to talk of a boy she knew in New York. He was crazy about her, she said. She couldn't help confiding in Shaw, she declared. This boy came of an old family in Virginia. His name was Randolph and his family had once owned slaves. Often he had taken her out to shows and to supper and a dance afterward. He was young but he was a man of the world. Sometime they might get married, though she wasn't sure she liked him enough for that. You had to know really a lot about a person and to love him a lot before you let yourself in for marriage and having children. She allowed Shaw to see her poring over letters bearing the American stamp and addressed to Miss Lucille Adams. Shaw had not known that her name was Lucille.

Now their intimacy did advance. He was interested in all she had to say of Randolph, though in his heart he disliked what he heard of him. On his side he told her of his love for Elspeth and their engagement. Louie said over and over, with tears in her eyes, that she'd always loved Elspeth and that she was glad that Shaw and Elspeth were to make a match of it.

The life of the sanatorium moved on in its own isolated orbit. Every morning in the bitter cold Shaw was waked by the sound of old Mrs. Sullivan and her daughters preparing to go to Mass. Through the thin partition he could hear them talking eagerly as they dressed. He could hear them leading the old woman carefully down the stairs. Then came the closing of the front door, the sharp crunching of footsteps in the snow. He could hear the clangor of the church bell. After a while they returned and Hortense made haste to prepare the breakfast for the patients. There were few days so wild or cold that they did not spend some hours on the verandah. Often no word was uttered except when the doctor passed among them with his heartening voice and sturdy figure, his moccasins making a soft shuffling sound.

Shaw came to know the other patients well except the two young lovers, who knew no word of English. He tried his scant French on them but his mistakes mystified them. They seemed to make no attempt to understand him but just stared and smiled, then turned again to each other. With the dress designer from Montreal it was different. She came from Paris and her name was Madame Dunois. She spoke English fluently. She and Louie became close friends. In the evenings, in the sitting room, they and Shaw sat together. Madame Dunois talked of France and drew the young people on to talk of their experience, of literature and life. She had friends

who sent her books and she lent these to Shaw. He devoured them, even the long French novels, with the aid of a dictionary. By spring he saw that Madame Dunois was getting worse and knew the supply of reading from that quarter would fail.

Louie was studying French and soon far outstripped Shaw. The philosophy of the French novels he accepted as too remote from him for criticism, but Louie absorbed it with her whole being. She began to talk as the people in these books talked and she picked up expressive little foreign gestures from Madame Dunois.

The two priests were approaching middle age. One was swarthy and stout, the other swarthy and thin. They sat close together all day reading their breviaries. But in the evening they gave themselves up to the game of chess.

In the sitting room there was an oil lamp set in a bracket in a corner, as well as the hanging lamp that was depended from the ceiling by chains. Under the bracket lamp the two priests, Père Lombard and Père Beaumont, established themselves with their chessboard each evening. There they sat brooding over the chessmen, oblivious of all that went on about them, their black heads bent, Père Lombard's face strongly marked in folds of swarthy flesh, Père Beaumont's finely etched in ascetic thinness. He was the more intellectual of the two and it had been in assisting him in the translation of a religious work that Père Lombard had contracted the disease which so far had made but little outward mark on his stout person.

Their pauses were so profound as they considered their next moves that they seemed at times to be carven statues rather than living men. Père Lombard would sit, chin in palm, his blunt fingers denting his dark cheek, his eyes of a greenish brown bent on the board. Père Beaumont would crouch, hands clasped as though in prayer, his luminous eyes half shut, his thin lips set in a brooding line. He was descended from the sister of a Jesuit priest who had been martyred after terrible torture by Indians in the days of French Canada, and in his face there was something of the beauty and tragedy of the martyr.

In another corner Shaw, Louie, and Madame Dunois compared notes on the books they were reading and on their experiences in life. Madame Dunois drew on the two young people to talk, which they did in the simplicity of their egotism, but when she told them of her life they felt young and inexperienced. Each week Louie became more proficient in the French language, more expressive in her gestures, her little shrugs of disdain or appeal. Was this the little girl he had known in the country school, Shaw asked himself. She talked a good deal of Randolph's passionate love for her. Shaw repeated to her the news that came in Elspeth's letters.

The spring was slow in coming. It was still winter in April, till one day the blazing sun set all the ditches raging and the gurgling of running water mingled with the sound

of church bells. Crows flew like black-robed choristers across the high arch of the sky. The twigs of maple saplings turned rosy. The sap of the sugar maple turned sweet and oozed into the bark. The rumps of cattle were plastered with mud. A cow in a field next the sanatorium had a calf and from the verandah the patients watched its first gambolings and heard its mother low in anguish when it was taken from her.

They heard other anguish too when a patient in the bedridden ward died. Here death was not tactfully concealed as it had been in the sanatorium in the Adirondacks. Relatives came and mourned without restraint. The church bell loudly tolled. The coffin, carried on the shoulders of black-garbed men, was borne through the street to the church, followed by weeping children and women.

The patients sat staring over the railing of the verandah at the progress of the little procession, subdued by the fact that one of their number had succumbed to the enemy, thankful that they themselves still lived.

They had many visitors, especially the two priests, whose former parishioners came when they could and poured out news of the parish and their own trials and triumphs. They often brought gifts of fresh eggs or jars of cream. The priests always sought to share these with the other patients.

“Alors, a little cream, M’sieur Manifold! A new-laid egg, Madame Dunois!”

What they could not give away they themselves ate with unfailing appetite.

The lovers, Marcel and Élise, had many visitors too. Parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, and sisters came to see them. The two were pale-eyed, fair-haired, shy creatures who were interested in nothing but their own love. As the spring advanced they seemed more and more wrapped up in each other. They strained their strength to walk to the forest’s edge to gather the first blossoms of the bloodroot and the downy-stemmed hepaticas. These had already faded in their feverish hands by the time they returned to the sanatorium. Dr. Sullivan would scold them for walking so far and for a short while they would satisfy themselves with climbing the winding path that led to a wayside shrine. Here they would kneel and say a prayer, then sit, hand in hand, looking down across the plain, always talking of their love and planning for their future.

But soon they would struggle up the mountainside and into the woods again. At last one June day they did not return till evening. They did not return for food or their afternoon “cure.” And when evening brought them, they dragged themselves back, faint and hollow-eyed, white trilliums drooping in their hands.

They were in disgrace. The next day their chairs were moved and they were separated by the bodies of the two priests, who read their breviaries without raising their eyes. Marcel and Élise sat crying, their faces turned from each other.

"It's a damned shame!" Louie exclaimed to Shaw. "Why can't they be allowed to do what they want to?"

"Well, I suppose they've got to conform to the rules of the sanatorium."

"You know what I mean," she returned sulkily.

"They ought to be thinking of getting well," said Shaw. "Love can wait."

"Not for them! My goodness, you're cold-blooded, Shaw! You were always the same. I suppose you're planning to beat me out of this place like you used to plan to beat me at exams."

Shaw smiled imperturbably. "Perhaps I am," he said.

"I guess you think it's fun being so inscrutable," she answered bitterly.

"I think it's safer—with you."

"What *do* you mean?"

"You're an unknown quantity to me."

"Well—I'm glad of one thing . . . that Randolph is impulsive and—healthy."

Shaw flushed slowly but deeply.

"Yes, it's a good thing for you, Louie," he answered, with a faint tremor in his voice.

They turned away from each other and walked in different directions.

The stab of Louie's sneer faded from his mind for he had formidable anxieties that set him apart from trivial hurts. The first of these was that Cristabel's health was not good. She who had always seemed able to bear endless worry and fatigue now wrote to say that she was obliged to give up her position as matron of the boys' school because she no longer had strength for the work. She was going to join a widowed sister-in-law in setting up a dressmaking establishment. Times were good. They ought to be able to make it pay. They would have to work hard but the work would be done sitting down.

At times the fear that the Department would cease to pay him his salary made the sweat of apprehension start out on him. He knew that his post awaited his recovery, but would his salary be continued in the interval? His feverish mind fixed on this as an instrument for its own torture. Each month that the check came he feared it might be the last. He knew what was ahead of him—a year more in the sanatorium—possibly longer. He wrote to Douglas Scott and asked him to sell the furniture the Scotts were keeping for him. He thought it was better to sell it while it was still new and fresh. Douglas agreed and the check he sent was larger than Shaw had expected. He wrote in deep gratitude to Douglas.

That summer was almost fiercely hot. The grass turned grey, then brown. A myriad insects filled the air with their humming. The walls of the frame building were

small protection against the sun. The patients gave themselves up to trance-like acquiescence in the heat of the day, but at night a breeze sprang up and heavy dews revived the air.

Shaw looked about him critically at the other patients, appraising their advance toward or retreat from the goal of health, comparing them with himself. He was advancing, he felt sure of that. He went to the monthly examinations with trepidation, his nerves tense, his heart thudding in apprehension. But the roaming stethoscope and gently tapping fingers of Dr. Sullivan always achieved a final word—“*Meilleur! Bon!* You are improving, but it will take time, *mon enfant.*” Then Shaw could have kissed the doctor’s stumpy hands. As he returned to his room the bugle of hope sounded in his heart.

The priests changed little. Sometimes they seemed better, sometimes worse, but the variations of their health did not affect their daily routine. Each night, though moths and mosquitoes buzzed about the lamp, they sat enthralled by their game of chess. This over, they bowed gravely to each of the patients in turn, Père Beaumont raised his thin hand in blessing, and they departed together.

Madame Dunois, contrary to Shaw’s expectation, appeared stronger and more animated than ever. She still received many books, both French and English, and these she passed on to Shaw and Louie, so avidly eager that they all but quarreled over them. Ian also sent books to Shaw. Cristabel sent him newspapers. Elspeth’s letters were so long, so filled with every detail which she thought might interest Shaw, that Louie said they were books in themselves. It was Marcel and Élise who were definitely worse. After their disgraceful absencing of themselves their frail bodies faded like the spring flowers. But they had no thought of dying. They wanted to get married and were determined to do so after the harvest was in and their relatives free to attend the ceremony. There seemed no reason for denying them this and the wedding was arranged for a day in late September. The weather was superb, blue of sky, golden and fiery scarlet of foliage. Élise’s mother brought her wedding dress and veil and dressed her in the little room in the sanatorium. Louie sent to the nearest town for a wedding bouquet of white lilies and pink roses for her. It was so beautiful that the little bride and groom wept in their gratitude and the women relatives embraced Louie.

The bell rang out joyfully as the party walked slowly to the church. Marcel and Élise, standing before the priest, had the pale radiance of two lighted candles burning all too quickly to the last spark.

Perhaps their disease made them emotional. However it was, the patients in the sanatorium were caught up in the excitement of the wedding. They could talk of

nothing else for days. The wedded pair had come straight back to their places on the verandah and reclined there, proud and satisfied, the centre of the scene. Hortense and her sisters had made special dishes. Everyone was happy. But perhaps it was the strain of the ceremony or that simply Marcel and Élise were now satisfied and content to lose their fragile hold on life. At any rate, they grew rapidly weaker, and before the days of Indian summer were past they had migrated to the bedridden section of the sanatorium.

Their going was almost a relief to the remaining five, who settled down tranquilly to face the long Northern winter. Every movement of the body, every line in the face of each, was now familiar to the other four. They were as familiar to each other as animals in a stable. They had long gone past the possibility of boredom. Their lives fitted together like mosaic in the pattern of the day.

“You’d think we two were married, Shaw,” laughed Louie one day, her breath soaring in a white cloud from her thin red lips.

“Yes,” he agreed, “if you didn’t know us.”

They had reached the wind-blown ridge where the shrine was. Now they perceived that the two priests were kneeling in the snow before the thin figure of the Christ. About them spread the immaculate snow and, beyond, the dark forest. Far below, the hamlet, the church, the sanatorium where Madame Dunois was at this moment having an examination, where Marcel and Élise coughed feebly and sent looks of undying love from one bed to the other.

The four who had climbed to the shrine wore snowshoes. Now, as they retraced their steps, the prints of these lay exquisitely etched on the snow like the shadows of birds.

“I wish I were a Catholic,” said Louie. “I think I’d feel safer.”

“Safer from what?” asked Shaw.

“You tell him, Père Lombard.”

“Possibly from herself, *monsieur*.”

“I think I must get you to instruct me,” said Louie with a daring look.

“I must be sure you are in earnest, *mam’selle!*”

“I’ll let you know later,” she laughed.

She ran lightly down the hillside on her snowshoes, showing off in front of the three men, but when at last they overtook her she was panting sharply and her hand was pressed to her breast.

“If you’d any care over me,” she said bitterly to Shaw, “you’d not let me run like that. It’s enough to bring on a hemorrhage.”

“How on earth am I to stop you?” he asked in astonishment.

“You’re just about as understanding as this snow,” she returned. Tears filled her eyes, froze on her darkened lashes.

They took off her snowshoes and half-carried her into the house. She remained in bed for several days and when she again reappeared she begged Père Lombard to instruct her in the Catholic faith. She spent hours studying the books he gave her.

Now it was Madame Dunois’s turn to go to the other building. She was emaciated and too weak to walk. Dr. Sullivan was almost in tears. “If only,” he complained, “they would send me patients who were curable! I shall be ruined! You are my only hope, M’sieur Manifold.”

“Not the priests?” asked Shaw. “Not Miss Adams?”

“Only you! Only you!” mourned the doctor.

When Madame Dunois died there were few books to read. Shaw remarked one day to Louie:—

“It’s a wonder that Randolph of yours never sends you anything to read.”

The very next week a package of books arrived for Louie. Oddly enough it was composed of those Shaw had expressed a wish to read. He was delighted. A feeling of gratitude and friendship for Randolph swept over him. He buried himself in the books, oblivious of all else. Over and over he took his temperature. He was steadily improving.

Books came again from time to time. Spring came and maple sugar was made in the woods. The spring was early and snow melted so quickly that the land seemed in a ferment of floods and springing sap. Marcel and Élise outlived Madame Dunois by a month. Shaw and Louie followed their funeral procession to the church. They had become so used to death that it scarcely troubled them, so long as they themselves still lived. Père Beaumont had long since gone to the bedridden ward. Père Lombard visited him twice daily. They even had a game of chess sometimes.

Dr. Sullivan might have been deeply depressed but, with the coming of spring, six new patients had arrived and of them five were in the early stages of the disease. He and his sisters moved among the patients with happy faces. At night the prayers of old Madame Sullivan and her daughters rose in thankfulness before the shrine in her bedroom.

There was a second reason for gratitude. A new member was to be taken into the fold. Louie Adams had already been baptized and was to be confirmed when the Bishop next visited the parish.

She came to Shaw one day and laid her hand on the book he was reading.

“That’s the last of them,” she said.

He looked up, petulant of the interruption to his reading.

“What do you mean, the last of them?”

“I mean I’m not going to send for any more of them. It’s acting a lie.”

“Acting a lie?”

“Yes. I sent for the books myself. There isn’t any Randolph. I just made him up to show off. But I’ve got to get him off my chest—now I’m going to be confirmed.”

Shaw sat silent, digesting this.

“Then you weren’t really engaged after all?” he said.

“No. There never was anyone but you, Shaw. I always loved you—from the time we went to school. But it doesn’t matter to me now. I’m done with that sort of thing.”

“I’m sorry,” he said, “that you spent all that money on books for me to read. I can’t do anything in return.”

“It doesn’t matter! There’s a rich old lady in New York who was one of my clients in the beauty parlor. She said I had the nicest touch of any girl who had given her treatments. She’s paid my expenses here. I wrote to her for the books.”

Shaw looked at her in wonder. He was deeply embarrassed. His hand trembled as he turned the page on which he saw nothing but a blur.

Louie looked like the ghost of a bride in her confirmation veil, her eyes feverishly alight, conscious in every nerve that she was the centre of attention. She was like a bride, she thought, and the white-clad children about her, her attendants.

Shaw knelt watching the ceremony with attention. Though he knew the church so well, there was something unreal and dramatic in it at this moment. Was this Louie, this palely radiant creature, the shabby little girl he had known in the country school? He gave her a lace handkerchief for a confirmation present. He had written to Cristabel for this.

Père Lombard was disappointed that he was not able to go to the confirmation. He had joined Père Beaumont in the other building. On a little table between their beds they still set out the chessmen. Often the game was not begun, but it was a comfort to see the knights and castles and pawns standing there!

Louie and Shaw did not make friends with the new arrivals, who were grouped at one end of the verandah. In early summer Ian Blair wrote that he and Elspeth wanted to come and see Shaw. It was nearly three years since they had met. But when Shaw read the letter to Louie she became almost beside herself with fear and anger at the prospect of meeting Elspeth.

“I won’t see that girl! I won’t let her see me!” she stormed. “Imagine her coming here—bursting with health—and seeing me like this!”

“It’s me she’s coming to see—not you,” returned Shaw curtly.

Louie gave a sneering laugh.

“Oh, you don’t look so fine, either, let me tell you! One look at you might be enough for her! If I were in your place I’d not let her come till I looked a little more sound.”

“You have a cruel tongue, Louie,” said Shaw, coloring deeply.

She burst into a storm of weeping. He had made her worse, she said.

Her words about Elspeth gnawed at his mind. He wrote to Ian saying that he did not want to see Elspeth till he was quite well again. He expected to leave the sanatorium that fall. The time would soon pass. At moments he had a sense of fear at the thought of leaving the cloistered seclusion of the sanatorium to face the confusing activities of the world. From the safe harbor of invalidism he looked out on the shouldering waves, wondering what it would feel like to breast them once more.

There was only one tree in the grounds of the sanatorium. It was a fine straight pine and it stood just beyond Shaw’s bedroom window. It had always seemed to him like one of the sentinels of the forest set to watch him, to find out if he in his heart were faithful to his work and if he would return to it.

One morning, in the first intense cold of October, he looked out and saw that Dr. Sullivan and his man Napoléon were preparing to fell the tree. He hastened out and asked the reason, his voice trembling in consternation.

“But the pine has much good wood in him to keep us warm!” cried Napoléon. He spat on his palms and struck the first blow.

“My real reason,” said Dr. Sullivan, “is that it is keeping sunlight from the bedrooms, especially yours.”

“But I shall soon be going!”

“Ah! But there will be others to come after you and they must have the sun.”

With his moccasined feet planted well apart, he swung his axe and drove the wedge deep into the wood. All the frost-stiffened needles vibrated and a squirrel leaped from its boughs and scampered across the shining crust of the snow. Shaw turned away. He felt that the time of his sojourn there had indeed ended. The pine’s work was done. It had sent its last signal to the forest. Powdered snow was blown in a biting squall against his face. His body felt vigorous and strong. He yearned toward the next examination.

That month Père Beaumont died, but Père Lombard lingered on.

“The little *mademoiselle*,” he said to Shaw, “insists that I shall live to give her the last Communion. She has a strong will, that little one, so I think she will have her way.”

Louie did have her way. She was the first of those who died in the sanatorium to

be buried in the graveyard of the hamlet. Shaw had not seen her for a month and he had a sense of unreality as he followed the light coffin to the church. Was it indeed the body of Louie that lay inside? How many strange places she had traversed before she reached this resting place on the chancel steps with the priest chanting above and the incense rising with the prayers for her soul!

Well—this was the end of her, thought Shaw, and turned his thoughts resolutely westward. He would go back to life and to Elspeth. He would forget Louie, who had now become for him the symbol of death, yet in that death possessed of a feverish life. Could those burning little hands have turned cold? Those feverish black-lashed eyes have taken on dullness? He wished she had never come to the sanatorium. She had captivated some part of him,—he could not tell what,—taken it with her.

Suddenly his heart swelled with love for Elspeth. It seemed to him that not till that moment had his love really flowered. He felt sick with longing to see her, to feel the touch of her shoulder against his. He could scarcely bear to wait for his next examination.

When it came Dr. Sullivan beamed at him. He made a dramatic gesture, the stethoscope still in his hand.

“If you remain as you are—after the next examination—you shall go, my friend! Healed! Healed!”

Another month to wait! Shaw watched all the preparations for winter. He saw the great woodpile growing—the pine, the spruce, the red birch. He saw the quarters of pork put into brine, the quarters of venison hanging from the beams in the shed to dry. He watched Napoléon making nets for catching rabbits—Hortense Sullivan knitting a thick muffler for the doctor. He heard the sharp cracking of the walls, like reports of a pistol, as they settled themselves for the bitter cold of the winter. He heard the rise and fall of the blind old mother’s prayers in the room below. He saw stout Père Lombard’s funeral pass like a hooded black worm down the snowy road. But he no longer felt himself a part of the life of the place. He was an impatient spectator, straining to be off.

A month later Dr. Sullivan embraced him.

“You may go, my friend! You are healed.”

Shaw stared at him in sudden embarrassment: for a moment he could not find words. Then he said—“Thank you, doctor.” Tears filled his eyes.

“Out of those first thirteen,” said the doctor, “you are the only survivor. And, let me tell you now, I scarcely hoped to save you. But—” he held up a warning finger—“you have a stiff time in front of you, to hold what you have gained. I want you to

promise me that you will go to bed every night at six o'clock for the next two years. I want you to promise me that, for the next five years, you will spend each day as though the rest of your life depended on that day's caution, abstinence from all excess, and self-discipline!"

He snapped his mouth shut as though his last word were spoken.

"I promise," said Shaw solemnly.

CHAPTER XVII

What was going on, Shaw wondered. Surely there was some special excitement to give the street this air of conscious bustling! It was late afternoon and already the lights were on, the shop windows blazing. They were filled with flowers and brightly bound books and silk lingerie and a thousand toys. In one beamed a figure of Santa Claus. Now Shaw realized what was happening. People were doing their Christmas shopping. The festival was near at hand.

He felt almost dazed by the traffic. After his cloistered life, Ottawa seemed a metropolis. He leant forward in his seat to stare through the window of the taxi that was carrying him to the flat where Cristabel awaited him. He was like a man who had passed through an interminable tunnel and, emerging at long last, found himself in a strange new world which he could not comprehend.

There were soldiers in the streets too, boyish figures with pink cheeks, their necks sticking up out of ill-fitting khaki tunics. He saw the smart figure of an officer. Now the war seemed real. In the Quebec sanatorium it had been too remote to touch his life. He wondered if Ronald Scott would be sent to France. That would be hard on his parents.

The driver of the taxi had to halt because of sleighs and motorcars crossing in the opposite direction. It was all so interesting to Shaw! He felt like a visitor from another planet. It even seemed extraordinary to him that his mother should be waiting for him. It seemed unbelievable.

True to their promise the Department had kept his post free for his return. In truth they knew of no other man to fill it so well as he. He had written to Cristabel:—

Mother, don't refuse me this. Give up your work and come and keep house for me. I need you. It will mean everything to me to have you. So don't refuse, Mother. Please don't refuse!

She had not refused, though her heart had sunk at the thought of burning her bridges. But she must be at hand to care for her boy, to guard him on his return, whatever else might happen. She had preceded him to Ottawa by a fortnight, had taken a flat, had bought enough furniture to set up house-keeping, and now was counting the moments since train time. They would spend their first Christmas together since he was seven.

He saw a florist's window and rapped on the glass behind the driver. The taxi stopped. He told the man to wait while he bought flowers. He thought he would

have flowers on the table for the first meal under their own roof. He was astonished at the price, which had been raised for Christmas. Even half a dozen roses would cost a lot . . . but he would not take her half a dozen. "A dozen," he said, "the deep pink long-stemmed ones." The shop assistant looked approving. Shaw handed out the money, almost the last of what the sale of his furniture had brought. But he did not care. In a few days he was going to work. He felt suddenly happy and full of confidence. The roses in his hands, he stood a moment outside the shop, his face alight with expectancy.

People were jostling each other in an attempt to see someone who was entering a limousine. From his height he had a glimpse of a beautiful profile. The limousine glided away.

"Who is she?" he asked a woman.

She stared. "Why, the princess, of course!"

"What princess?"

"*What* princess! Wherever do you come from? The Princess Patricia, to be sure!"

He got into the taxi abashed.

It was strange to be handling money. Now there was the taxi driver to be paid. He had a nice face. Shaw tipped him well. He said—"Thank you, sir. A Merry Christmas to you!"

"The same to you," said Shaw.

He entered the vestibule of the small apartment house and saw his name on a card among five others. He rang the bell beneath it. He remembered that he should not have paid the man till the trunk was upstairs. But the man had shouldered it. His ruddy face beamed. . . . The second floor . . . Shaw heard the opening of a door. As his head appeared his mother ran forward to meet him.

"Oh, Shaw!" Then she saw the man with the trunk. "Bring it right in here," she said.

The driver lowered it to the floor of the little passage.

"Thank you," said Cristabel, and looked inquiringly at Shaw.

"He's paid," he nodded.

"Merry Christmas," said the man again. He touched his cap and hurried down the stairs.

"What a polite man!" said Cristabel.

She and Shaw stood looking at each other.

Tremulously they drank in each other's looks. It was two years since they had parted. Twice three hundred and sixty-five days and nights, more than two dozen

waxings and wanings of the moon, a world of thought, talk, planning, fear, hope, and death filled that space. Now again they could speak to each other.

“I saw the Princess Patricia,” he said.

“Did you? How nice! I’d love to see her.”

He thought: Why, her rosy cheeks are gone! And her hair is quite grey. She’s bent a little—that’s the sewing. . . . She’s my mother and I’ve come to her from death. . . . It’s like a new birth. . . . but I can’t find anything to say to her.

Cristabel thought: Who is he like? Not me. Not his father. If I didn’t know him and saw him suddenly I’d say, “What a sad face! And stern too!” But he’s just Shaw. . . . I really do know him. . . . Why, he’s my son! How can I help knowing him! Yet I don’t know what to say at this moment.

“I saw a lot of soldiers, too!” he said. “I’d scarcely believed in the war before.”

“Not believed in it! Didn’t you read the newspapers I sent you?”

“Yes . . . but my chief had sent me a new lot of books and pamphlets on forestry. I was completely absorbed by them. Has Ronald Scott been sent?”

“Yes. And Douglas has had an officer’s training course and Ian is coming from the West to join up.”

“Ian!”

“Yes. His parents are anxious, but still they feel he should go.”

“Should go! Yes . . . I suppose so.”

“You’d go if you were able, wouldn’t you? You’d look fine in uniform, with your figure.”

He frowned. “Show me the flat, Mother.”

Now suddenly she could talk. She found so much to say that she scarcely knew what to say first. She took him by the arm and led him into the bedrooms. It was a new building. No one had occupied these rooms before.

“How fresh and clean it is!” he said. “However did you find it?”

“It belongs to Mr. Scott. He’s been wonderful, Shaw. He has lent me the bedroom furniture and he says we’re not to worry about being prompt with the rent for the first months.”

“I shall be prompt with it.”

“But isn’t it kind of him?”

“Yes, yes, Mother . . . it’s terribly kind, but how I hate taking favors!”

She sighed. “This is your bedroom—next mine.”

“Mother . . . I can’t believe it . . . next yours! We can call out to each other!”

“Yes. Now you must mind your *p*’s and *q*’s. . . . This is my room. Look at the clothes cupboard! Big enough for a society lady!”

“It’ll need to be big to hold all the clothes you’ll have, Mother!”

“Shaw, you are silly! Look—here is the bathroom!” She beamed with pride.

“Mother! It’s fit for a millionaire!”

“Well, I do think it’s nice.”

“After those in the sanatorium, it’s unbelievable.”

“Oh, those French don’t understand plumbing!”

“Now let’s see the living room.”

Cristabel’s pale face flushed scarlet. She opened the door of the room with a mysterious air. Inside, Shaw saw the furniture he had bought three years before and had asked Douglas Scott to sell for him. At first he did not recognize it, then the oval walnut table, the four chairs, the china cabinet, detached themselves. He saw them once again in the shop window. He saw himself appraising, hesitating, making up his mind, buying.

“Mother!” he exclaimed. “It’s—why—how did these things come here? Douglas sold them for me. He sent me the check.”

“Douglas wrote and told me what you wanted him to do. I bought the furniture, Shaw. I couldn’t bear to part with it.”

“But where did you get the money?”

She gave a little laugh. “Just where I get all my money.”

“Mother,” he said, “you have a will like iron.”

“But you’re glad, aren’t you?”

“Glad! I’m tickled to death.” But his lips were quivering. “It’s a beautiful room,” he said.

“Well, it will be nice when we get a rug and some pictures.”

“And my books!”

“And your books!”

She led him to the tiny kitchen. “This is my pet spot. Isn’t it clean and pretty? It will be lovely to work in. Oh, I do hope we haven’t been reckless in taking this flat! It frightens me when I let myself think about it.”

He answered almost vehemently—“Don’t think, Mother! We’ll not think. We’ll just live and work and enjoy!”

She turned her back on him and looked out of the window. He saw her press her forehead to the cold pane. “This is the second time,” she said, “that I have made a home. The thought of that other time . . .”

“I know. It’s been hard.”

“I’ve no right to complain to you, Shaw. You must be tired and hungry.”

“Remember, I’ve to go to bed at six.”

“Goodness! I’d forgotten! It will be six before we can turn round! You go and wash, dear, while I lay the table.”

“What are we having?”

“You’ll see! Something you like.”

He stood in the little bathroom washing his hands. He saw his reflection in the mirror. “Is this really me?” he thought. “Really Shaw Manifold—beginning life again! Walking in and out—just like anyone else! Is Mother really out there, in the kitchen, cooking my supper? What will Elspeth say? How will she look?”

He unstrapped his trunk and began to take out his clothes, but they spoke in every fold of the sanatorium. He banged the lid shut—he would unpack to-morrow morning. . . . He had laid the box of roses on a window sill. Now he took out the flowers. In the living room he had seen a tall cut-glass vase, a wedding present of his mother’s, ugly and ornate, which unscathed had accompanied her on all her journeyings. He would fill it with the roses, he thought, unknown to her.

He tiptoed, still wearing his overshoes, to the living room and possessed himself of the vase. Then to the bathroom and filled it at the tap. It was a serious matter, squeezing into it a dozen roses of full habit, but he managed it and stood back proudly to view his work. It was the first time he had arranged flowers in a vase and it pleased him. He tiptoed back to the living room and had just placed the roses in the middle of the table when Cristabel came from the kitchen carrying a covered dish. She almost dropped it in her astonishment.

“Shaw, whatever have you been doing?”

He grinned half sheepishly, half proudly.

“Turning over a new leaf, Mother!”

“You’re an extravagant boy!”

“Mother, they’re for you. Do you like them?”

Between the heat of the stove and her pleasure and pride, Cristabel’s cheeks were as pink as the roses. Why, she looks just like her old self at this moment, thought Shaw. To think that roses could do that to a woman! He repeated:—

“Do you like them?”

“*Like them!*” She set down the covered dish and came to him. “I think they are the loveliest flowers I’ve ever seen.” She put her hands on his shoulders and kissed him.

“Do you like the way they’re arranged?”

“They look simply grand. And you were real clever to discover that vase. Do you know it’s never been used before?”

“Never been used!”

“Well, cut glass cracks easily, they say. Then—I was keeping it for a proper occasion.”

“Surely this is one.”

“Shaw, it’s the happiest day of my life.”

Again she turned her face away.

“What is in the dish?”

“You’ll see.”

They sat down opposite one another.

“Whew, it’s scrambled eggs! Mother, I haven’t tasted your scrambled eggs in years. No one can do them like you. And hot buttered toast! Really hot! And ham! And chili sauce! Great Scott, I can scarcely believe it!”

She heaped his plate. “Taste it! Then you’ll believe it.”

He filled his mouth and stared blissfully about the room. Through the uncurtained window a full moon could be seen above the tower of the Parliament Buildings. It hung there, gleaming like a great gold watch in the purple pocket of the night.

“It will be great fun,” said Shaw, “furnishing this flat. Should you like red chenille curtains with a fringe with little balls?”

“I like cretonne,” said Cristabel. “Cretonne with pink roses, to remind us of to-night.”

“Just the thing! And, Mother, a cream-colored carpet! And built-in bookcases! And a rocking chair for you. . . . I wonder what Elspeth will think of it.”

“She’ll be sure to like it.”

“When can I see her?”

“Ah, that’s a secret!”

“Soon?”

“Yes, very soon.”

“Mother, Elspeth was wonderful about my wanting to break off our engagement, you remember . . . two years ago.”

“Yes, I remember.”

“She wouldn’t hear of it! She’d never marry anyone else, she said.”

“She’s one girl in a thousand, Shaw.”

After a pause he said—“Louie Adams was a strange girl.”

“What made you think of her?”

“I don’t know. She often comes into my mind. It’s strange to think of her buried in that place.”

“Don’t think of sad things to-night, Shaw.”

“No. . . . Mother, is Elspeth coming to Ottawa?”

“Please don’t ask questions. I’ve promised not to tell. Do you like the scrambled eggs?”

“I’ve never tasted anything so delicious in my life.”

“Will you have more?”

“All you’ve got.” He emptied the dish.

Cristabel had to bend over the roses to smell them as she changed the plates. They were so sweet and lovely it seemed they never could fade. Her heart was full of joy, yet afraid too. Dare she be happy? Could it last? But there was Shaw sitting broad-shouldered, almost massive, at the table, a confident smile on his mouth. She could, she would, believe in the certainty of happiness.

The sound of marching feet came from the street and an officer’s voice on the sharp air.

“What’s that?” asked Shaw.

“The soldiers drilling. You can hear them in the street every evening.”

She brought canned raspberries and a coconut cake.

“Mother! Great Scott, you *are* spoiling me!”

“I wanted to have what you like best this first night.”

They had barely time to walk round the flat once more when Shaw had to go to bed. He had dried the dishes for Cristabel and he could hear her putting them away as he undressed. She was humming softly to herself. He propped himself up in bed and settled down to read. Cristabel came in patting a soothing lotion on her hands.

“This water is very hard,” she said.

He looked up from his book, smiling.

“All right, Mother.”

“All right what?”

“Whatever you said.”

“You *are* a bookworm, Shaw! Shall I bother you if I bring my sewing?”

“Not a bit.”

She sat beside the bed stitching. Every now and again she put out her hand, as though unconsciously, and smoothed the bedcoverings.

“Comfortable, Shaw?”

“Yes, Mother.”

“Here comes that battalion again.”

“Does it?”

“My, how well they march!”

“It does sound pretty good.”

The next day Shaw returned to the Government office and his work began again.

Surely no man had ever entered that building with greater eagerness, a greater desire to put out roots, a deeper longing to find himself again in a recognizable place among men. To live, to work, to walk along the pavement in the morning, shoulder to shoulder with other men going to other offices, filled him with a serene joy. Coming home in the wintry twilight he drank deep of the pure air, filled his lungs, his whole being a prayer for their soundness. Cristabel had the hot meal waiting for him, the aired bed, the serenity of her expectation. Three times a week a letter from Elspeth awaited him. He laid it on his dressing table, took his hot bath, and, propped up in bed, read it. He wrote long letters in reply. He gathered, secret though she and Cristabel strove to keep it, that she and Ian were coming to spend Christmas with the Scotts. Mr. and Mrs. Blair had gone South for the winter for the sake of her health.

One night, as he returned from the office, a battalion of soldiers passed him. He saw that the officer in command was Douglas Scott. He looked handsome in his uniform. Shaw tried to catch his eye but it had become a military eye and saw nothing of civilians. Shaw and Cristabel had not yet been to the Scotts but were invited there for Christmas dinner.

Cristabel had given Shaw a new necktie and handkerchief to match. He felt that they made him look less shabby. He had bought new shoes and gloves. What would Elspeth think of him? He remembered Louie's cruel words and his heart beat anxiously as he and Cristabel waited in the Scotts' drawing-room on Christmas Day. She wore the taffeta dress she had got for his graduation from the Agricultural College. She had made it over and to Shaw at least she looked fashionable, even elegant. A holly wreath tied with a large red satin bow hung in each window of the Scotts' drawing-room.

Mr. and Mrs. Scott came in with Elspeth. Perhaps it was easier meeting her so, among other people. Their greeting was conventional. They felt unreal. Mr. Scott somewhat pointedly led Cristabel to the conservatory to see the chrysanthemums. Mrs. Scott was called to the telephone. Shaw and Elspeth faced each other alone.

"You look exactly the same, Elspeth," said Shaw. "No—not exactly the same—you're even prettier."

"Am I? You look well, Shaw. You look strong. Far stronger than I had expected."

"That's good. I was afraid to meet you, you know."

"Afraid! But why?"

"I thought . . . oh, well, a fellow has strange thoughts . . . when he lives the life I have."

“But you’re well again! That’s all that matters, isn’t it?”

“It matters to me terribly—just what you feel about our engagement.”

Her grey eyes looked at him astonished. “You know what I feel! I’ve told you over and over again in my letters.”

“That’s not the same as from your lips. I want to hear you say that you still love me and want to marry me, Elspeth.”

“I love you more and more,” she said, with a little smile as though humoring a child, “and I want more and more to marry you. Is that enough?”

He took her hands in his. “The last time we met,” he said, “I wanted very much to kiss you—but I was afraid. It’s a hard thing, Elspeth, to be afraid to kiss the girl you love because of some sickness in yourself.”

“I’d not have minded!” she exclaimed vehemently. “I’d have let you kiss me a thousand times, Shaw!”

He looked at her sombrely. “You don’t know what you are saying. But I’m sound now. Everything is different.” He took her in his arms and pressed his lips to hers. She clung to him. Before the reality of that embrace the years of waiting faded to mist. They heard voices from the conservatory. They heard the coals sinking in the grate. A youth with a snow shovel over his shoulder passed the window whistling. But they heard these sounds as in a dream. More real to each was the beating of the other’s heart, the inarticulate murmured words of love.

“Elspeth,” he said after a little, “you have never had an engagement ring. I would not give you one because I didn’t want you to wear any tangible sign of our engagement. Not while I was—as I was—I wanted you to feel free to break it off—if—if another fellow—”

She tilted her head so that she could look into his face.

“Shaw, you are so silly! As though a ring could make me feel bound any closer to you than my own love bound me!”

“I often thought,” he said, “how you wore no ring on that finger and I was glad I hadn’t done that to you.”

“Done that to me! Imagine! As though wearing an engagement ring was a disgrace!” She laid her forehead against his shoulder and laughed.

“It would have been a disgrace in this case,” he said sombrely.

“Shaw, I won’t hear you say such things! I’d have loved a ring.”

“You shall have one now—at last.”

“How lovely! But not an expensive one, mind!”

He put her gently from him.

“Here it is! No—don’t look! Shut your eyes!” He took her left hand and she felt

the ring slide along her third finger. "Now look!"

"Oh, Shaw, how lovely!"

She held up her hand, the cluster of small pearls shimmering against the white flesh. She was frightened at the thought that he must have gone into debt for the ring, but that fear lasted only a moment. He was strong. He was daring. What he did was right.

"Oh, darling, I am happy!"

Darling! She had called him darling!

"Elspeth, I'm the happiest man in Canada!"

They heard the others coming. Shaw was embarrassed, but Elspeth darted forward to show the ring. Cristabel kissed her and held her close.

"But," Elspeth whispered to Cristabel, "he shouldn't have bought it . . . not yet, should he?" She looked eagerly into the other's face, seeking the approval her words denied.

"Of course he should," declared Cristabel. "I'd have been ashamed of him if he hadn't."

While the ring was still being admired, Douglas, his wife, and year-old daughter arrived. Douglas looked strikingly handsome in his uniform. His mother could not keep her eyes off him.

"Blood on your brow, brother," said Shaw, touching the young officer's forehead.

His wife cried out angrily—"Don't say such a horrible thing!"

"Rot!" said Douglas. "It's only our old pirate greeting." He proceeded, as he touched Shaw's forehead in return—"Blood on your own brow, brother. There are bloody deeds to be done."

"Our deeds shall indeed be bloody," said Shaw.

"It's splendid to see you," exclaimed Douglas, "*and* looking so fit! You remember my wife?"

Shaw did, but thought the girl looked changed. For some reason she had had her hair cut. It lay in brown waves over her head and curled about her neck. She had a little upturned nose and a square jaw. Douglas could not go near her without playing with her curls, rumpling them, as though she were a child. Their attitude toward each other made Shaw and Elspeth feel prim and old-fashioned.

From the moment his grandchild entered the room, Mr. Scott could see no one else. He carried her about while she snatched at the holly wreaths and at last pricked her finger. There were screams. The child's nurse was sent for. Mr. Scott was rueful. The gong sounded softly for dinner.

What a dinner, thought Cristabel and Shaw. They had never sat down to a Christmas dinner so fine as this—such glass and silver—such flowers and fruit—such sweets and nuts and wine with crackers to follow! Elspeth looked adorable in a pink-and-blue paper sunbonnet; Cristabel frivolous in a pale blue jockey cap. Mr. Scott wore a dunce's cap on his bald head, while toy whistles were blown, paper snakes uncurled, and sham jewelry was pinned to the ladies' breasts.

"All we need," sighed Mrs. Scott, "is to have Ronnie with us. I wonder what he is doing."

"Eating his Christmas dinner out of a tin can in a mudhole in Flanders, I expect," said Douglas.

"Oh, don't say that!" said his mother. "Surely they will see that there is a proper Christmas dinner!"

Ian did not arrive till the dinner was over. He came in looking young and small and shy in his private's uniform. Shaw felt that he had never really believed in the war till that moment when he saw Ian in uniform. He will go over there, he thought, and be killed. He is just the sort who would be killed.

But Ian was gay and full of life. He and Douglas and Shaw chaffed each other. The baby was again brought in. They had named her Patricia, after the princess. There was a Christmas tree in the sitting room. There were presents for everyone.

Cristabel forgot what time it was till Shaw caught her eye. She took the old-fashioned watch her husband had given her from her belt. It was five o'clock. There was no time to be wasted if Shaw was to be in bed by six.

"But you can't do it!" exclaimed Douglas. "It's ridiculous—an old doctor's whim!"

"I've promised," returned Shaw briefly.

"Well, I call it hard luck," said Mr. Scott, "to be obliged to leave your girl at five o'clock on Christmas afternoon!"

"Oh, but he must!" cried Elspeth, blushing.

"When are you two going to get married?" asked Douglas. He gave an odd reminiscent look at Elspeth. The glance was bold and his wife saw it. She tossed back her curls and gave him a slanting glance.

"I wonder what *Elspeth* will think of going to bed at six o'clock," she said.

"I shan't mind," said Elspeth with dignity.

"Good for you!" said Douglas. He and his wife laughed.

Cristabel rose. She thought Douglas's wife was too free altogether in her speech. It was hard on a girl like Elspeth.

Douglas and Ian accompanied them to the door. They hated to part with Shaw.

As they were saying good-bye a boy came running through the snow with a small envelope in his hand.

“Is Scott the name here?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Douglas, and took the envelope. He signed for it in the boy’s book.

“It’s a telegram,” he said.

Cristabel looked at him anxiously. “I suppose your father gets lots of telegrams,” he said.

“Yes, he does. But”—Douglas’s eyes were troubled—“I feel as though I’d better open it.”

Cristabel hesitated while he tore open the envelope. He read, his face a mask. Then suddenly his mouth was contorted. He said:—

“It’s Ronald—he’s been killed!”

The three others looked at him unbelieving. They felt that such words could not be true on such a Christmas night, the stars dancing out, the air brilliant, laughing voices and shouts from people passing with skates in their hands.

“Are you sure there’s no mistake?” asked Shaw.

“No, there’s no mistake. It says—‘Sorry to report Lieutenant Ronald Scott killed in action December twenty-third. . . .’ I’ll have to go in and tell Mother and Father! Isn’t it awful?”

“I’ll tell them for you,” said Ian.

“Shall we come back with you?” asked Cristabel.

“No, we’ll be all right if Ian will tell them,” said Douglas.

“I’ll come and see your mother in the morning,” said Cristabel. She drew down Douglas’s head and kissed him. He put his arm across his eyes. They saw him leaning against the door in that posture as they went down the street.

A group of young men in uniform passed them. They were singing, “It’s a long way to Tipperary.” It was the first time Shaw had heard it.

A passing girl looked him over critically, then thrust a leaflet into his hand. He did not read it till they had reached the flat. Then he saw the words—“Your King and Country need you!”

He took off his coat and vest and sat down on the side of his bed, his chin resting on his hand. Ronald lying dead in France—and he going to bed at six! How much of his life he had spent in bed, thinking, thinking, longing to be up and doing! Ronnie had always been up and doing and now—so young—he was dead! Would Douglas and Ian perhaps die too?

Cristabel came in carrying a glass of hot milk. “Drink this, dear,” she said. He saw that she had been crying.

He took the glass and mechanically raised it to his lips, then he said:—

“I can’t, Mother—I don’t want it!”

“Shaw, you must! Think of your health! Think of your promise to Dr. Sullivan. Do you know what time it is? It’s a quarter to seven!”

Shaw drank the milk.

He thought of Ronnie—remembered him at the little country school—one of “the rich little Scotts” who had always had everything. He thought of Louie—the poor little girl who had had nothing. Both dead, one in Old France, one in New. . . . Oh, if only Ian might be spared! He could not bear to lose Ian!

Cristabel came in to tuck him up.

“Comfortable, Shaw?”

“Yes, Mother.”

“Are you going to read to-night?”

“No, you may put out the light.”

“That’s my sensible boy!”

She bent and kissed him.

CHAPTER XVIII

Shaw was sitting on the verandah of the farmhouse beside his grandfather. He was dressed for his wedding and as he was early he thought he would spend the spare time with the old man. It was a May morning two years and five months after his leaving the sanatorium. And there he sat, dressed in his wedding suit, with a white carnation in his buttonhole and nervous elation in his heart! He sat with clasped hands looking at his grandfather, who, he thought, had changed scarcely at all since he had last seen him.

Roger was not going to the wedding but, just the same, he had demanded that he should wear his Sunday suit that day and, when he had seen the carnation in Shaw's buttonhole, he had asked Jane to pick a bloom from the white geranium that stood on the verandah and place it in his. It peeped out just at the edge of his beard and now and again he bent his Socratean old head to sniff its scent.

How little he had changed, Shaw thought, yet how many changes had come in the last few years! Swiftly the remembrance came to him of the Christmas night when the news of Ronald Scott's death had been brought. It had been less than a year when another telegram came to the Scotts telling of Douglas's death while gallantly fighting. Shaw had been surprised at the resignation of the parents. Mrs. Scott would talk endlessly of the bravery of her two boys, of herself as "one of the mothers who have sacrificed all." She installed chimes in the church she attended, in memory of her sons. When Shaw heard these bells ring out he thought of Ronnie and Douglas and how they were now a few bones.

Mr. Scott had turned dotingly to the little granddaughter who had inherited not one feature from Douglas. But Shaw's heart was full of happiness when he thought of how Ian had been invalided home and was now almost well again but not fit for service at the Front. Ian was to be best man at the wedding.

But Dr. Clemency would not be there. Shaw was sorry for that. He had died suddenly that spring. The worst was that he had been so sure that he would long outlive his wife that he had left her nothing in his will. It had been a terrible blow to her, enough to kill her, everyone said, but it had not killed her. On the contrary, she seemed stronger than she had in his lifetime. The money had been left to two worthless nephews, but the courts had been able to claim just enough for Mrs. Clemency to pay her old servant for her keep in a single room.

Roger Gower was speaking. Shaw leant toward him encouragingly.

"It . . . would be a wonder," Roger got out, "if the . . . old doctor . . . didn't turn

over . . . in his . . . grave.”

“Yes,” agreed Shaw. “It would. But he shouldn’t have been so sure she would die first.”

“You . . . never . . . can be . . . sure.”

“No. He looked good for another ten years at the least.”

Roger pondered on this remark doubtfully.

After a silence he spoke again.

“Merton’s . . . gone.”

“Yes,” said Shaw. “Some years ago, isn’t it?”

“He . . .” The words seemed to come from the nethermost part of Roger’s being. “He . . . suffered . . . I . . . don’t.”

“That’s good, Grandpa,” said Shaw.

A gentle spring breeze came to them across the freshly ploughed fields. An old apple tree in the yard had sent out jaunty white blossoms on every gnarled twig. Roger beamed at it benignly. Slowly he raised his hand and pointed with one stubby finger.

“All dressed up . . .” he said, “for . . . your wedding!”

Shaw laughed. Jane came out of the house carrying a tray with a cup of tea and some currant bread and butter. She was wearing a new silk dress and her expression was one of pleased excitement.

“You’d better have this, Pa,” she said, “before we go. The bread’s just fresh out of the oven.”

Though his features moved not a hair’s breadth, Roger managed to convey an expression of waggishness.

“Wedding . . . breakfast,” he rumbled, and filled his mouth with the warm currant bread.

“It’s a pity you can’t come with us, Grandpa,” said Shaw.

“He’s better where he is,” said Jane. “A lot of people tire him. And he’s seen weddings before now, what with his own and his brother’s and his twelve children’s.”

“And my own . . . golden wedding . . . and my diamond wedding, too . . . I . . . kissed your grandmother on her diamond . . . wedding day, Shaw.”

“And on the golden one too, Roger,” said Jane.

Mark now drove round in the wagonette. He looked a heavy middle-aged man. His wife and Cristabel came out of the house dressed in their best. Shaw was suddenly frightened of the ceremony ahead. He went into the house to give his hair a last brushing and survey himself in the glass.

It was a large wedding, for the families had lived in that place all their lives. The church was full and Mr. Blair, wearing his black gown, performed the ceremony. Ian stood up with Shaw, even more nervous and excited than he. Elspeth was calm, but an inner radiance made her comely little face almost beautiful.

Two days after their marriage Shaw and Elspeth, accompanied by Cristabel, were to go to British Columbia. In Ottawa Shaw had ceased to be "the promising young man" and had become a force in the Department. He had been sent to attend conferences on the subject of forestry. Considering, he thought, how he had steeped himself in the subject year in and year out, it was small credit to him that he had become an authority on it. Yet, when he considered how his heart was in it, how his love for trees had outstripped all his study of them, he thought he merited the confidence his chief had in him. He was going to be head of the Department of Forestry in the West. He was going to devote his life to the protection of the forest, to the planning of new forests. He was the bridegroom, he thought, of the forest just as of Elspeth. He was the son of the woods just as of Cristabel. These three he would honor and work for to the limit of his strength.

To Cristabel the dismantling of the flat in Ottawa had been one of the hard things of her life. She felt that she could not complain openly of it because it was a happiness to Shaw. To tear apart all they had so carefully put together meant to him the spreading of wings and the gaining of power. But she had loved every corner of this home of theirs. She had dusted, polished, and arranged it with untiring pleasure. There she had regained her health, nursed her boy back to the fullness of his man's strength. She would never forget those long happy evenings when she tucked him in his bed at six and sat beside him with her book or knitting.

The distance to British Columbia was so great that they took only the most cherished pieces of their furniture with them. Cristabel almost wept at parting with what was sold. But Shaw gave her the money for these. She was to buy new things to please herself when they reached Vancouver. He was like his father, she thought, generous. But his father had had so little to be generous with! Now, in this new appointment, Shaw's salary was trebled. All the family looked on him with respect. And her sisters on Cristabel with envy. Oh, how glad she was that Shaw's success blazed before the eyes of her family! The little boy—that little boy no one had wanted. . . . She stretched out her hand, where they faced each other in the railway carriage, and laid it on his knee.

There the three sat—wonder of wonders—not in the ordinary carriage but in a private drawing-room compartment. Even though Shaw told Cristabel that as he was sent out by the Government all his expenses were paid, and a drawing-room more

or less signified little, still she poured out her gratitude on some vague personage. Elspeth and she enjoyed the glances of interest they received from passengers who had achieved no such luxury.

Shaw bent over the pile of books which took up far too much room in the compartment, and handled them tenderly. Essays, fiction, travel, biography. They were a pool of delight in which he was impatient to plunge. He turned to Elspeth.

“Have something to read?”

“No, thanks, not yet. I want to look out of the window.”

“Do your reading now and look out of the window when there is real scenery to see.”

“I think this is pretty.”

“This flatness!” He blew out his breath. “Wait till you see the Rockies! Here is a biography of John Knox. That ought to interest you.”

“It doesn’t a bit. I like Mary Stuart far better.”

“Elspeth—if your father could hear you!”

“He has—and agrees.”

Cristabel listened to them, wondering how they would get on together. Elspeth had a will of her own, that was clear. Was Shaw stubborn? Had he any faults? Cristabel wondered. She had never been able to see him clearly, not blinded by her mother love, she was sure of that, but her vision of him dimmed by his loneliness, his privations, and his suffering. But now he was a strong man. She looked at his bent head, his smooth broad brow, his blunt features, his mouth that, in repose, looked severe. She saw Elspeth, the color moving in her cheeks, a smile ready at the corner of her mouth. Her head was thrown back, her lips parted. There was something in the way she was looking at Shaw out of her half-closed eyes. They should be alone together, thought Cristabel. I must never let them be sorry I came with them. She said:—

“I’m going into the observation car. I want to see everything there is to see.”

“All right,” agreed Shaw. “I’ll take you there.”

“I’m quite able to go by myself,” she said firmly.

She spent a good deal of time after that in the observation car. She met other women near her own age and enjoyed talking to them, gently boasting, when the opportunity came, of her son’s achievements. When snow-capped mountains appeared and the train ran along the edge of breath-taking declivities she sat with folded hands, drinking in the grandeur, feeling in some vague way that the credit of it all belonged to Shaw.

In Vancouver the first thing was to secure a house. This was not easy because

houses were scarce and, added to that, the tastes of all three were at variance. Cristabel wanted something new and convenient, as much like the flat in Ottawa as possible. Elspeth did not care what the house was like so long as it had a garden and she could see mountains and sea from its windows. Shaw's ideas were so extravagant that mother and wife joined forces to quell him. But they could not. He ended by taking a house which, he declared, combined the requirements of all three, for it was large and fitted with the most modern equipment, and it had a garden and it fronted the sea.

When it came to furnishing, the women were faced with the same problem. Shaw's reaction to his past caution and economy was almost truculent. He hated economy. He did not mind how much he ran into debt. He was urgent in his desire that Cristabel and Elspeth should have everything of the best.

"But we don't want it," they would exclaim.

"I want it for you," he would return grimly.

They were settled in the new house when Ian, recovered in health and engaged with a surveying party, arrived in Vancouver. He was delighted with everything. To visit his best friend and his only sister in the country he loved best, in so admirable a house, filled him with content. He shattered their somewhat serious atmosphere into nonsense and laughter. He admired everything they had bought, backed up Shaw in his extravagance, teased Elspeth, and went over the garden with Cristabel.

"You were wrong, Ian," Shaw exclaimed, "when you said that that summer of work up the coast was the best we should ever have. This is better still, isn't it?"

Ian's face changed. It was shadowed by regret. "No," he said, "I wasn't wrong. We never could have another summer like that. It was glorious! I wonder where Searle is now."

"I haven't seen him. He went to the war, didn't he?"

"Yes. And was reported missing. I hear his wife gets a pension."

"I guess," said Shaw, "that to be missing was the best thing Searle ever did for his wife."

"Let's look her up!" exclaimed Ian. "I've a sort of feeling of responsibility for her. A sort of pastoral feeling, you know—one of my flock!"

He made inquiries and a day or two later took Shaw to the back street where Mrs. Searle was living. She was glad to see them both. She looked fat and middle-aged. Her first question was:—

"Have you ever heard anything of Jack?"

"He was reported missing, wasn't he?" said Shaw.

"Yes, but I never believed it. He'll come back, I'm sure he will."

“Then your pension will cease, won’t it?”

“I’d rather have him than any pension. Do you remember the night you brought him home and he sat with his poor head resting on my shoulder and his head was bleeding?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“Oh, he was wonderful to me, Jack was! He has his faults but there’s no one to compare to him!” There was a look of exaltation on her face.

“Where is Gloria?” asked Ian.

“Oh, she’s gone to Hollywood! Hadn’t you heard? She says she’ll make our fortune there, and she will! She’s beautiful—just like Jack.”

Contrary to Shaw’s expectation she did not ask them for money. She was satisfied that here were two people who could talk to her of Searle without reviling him.

Two years later Shaw was sailing from San Francisco for a world tour of investigation of the subject of forestry. It was evening and he was sitting on the deck of the ocean liner. It had been a day of calm heat, but now a breeze had arisen and the still gleam of the sea was changed into sparkling ripples reddened by the setting sun. San Francisco lay just visible, its windows glittering, its buildings etherealized. Behind the liner the wake streamed in brilliant froth. Shaw had taken off his cap and the air moved coolly on his forehead. He was tired. Or perhaps resting at regular intervals had become a habit with him, as it had once been a necessity. But he felt a delicious quiet and enjoyment in the moment. He had the deck almost to himself. Though his body felt tired, his mind had never moved more strongly or more at ease. It was restless and moved quickly but strongly, like the sea. Though he had achieved so much, ambition still stirred. He remembered a conversation he had had with a man in San Francisco, a man who wanted a young and energetic partner in the lumber business. The man had money but he wanted a partner who knew the forests, who had a complete knowledge of the forest land of British Columbia, and who knew when and where trees should be cut. They had talked long together.

He had fought and had not been defeated, Shaw thought. He had won. But he wanted more. He wanted to fight again, to achieve more than he could in his present position. But why should he not be satisfied? His mind turned back to his parting with his family. He saw them on the lawn, Elspeth pushing the baby carriage with their year-old son, Ian, in it. She was dressed in white and looked even prettier than when he had married her. And to the prettiness were now added self-possession and a young matronly dignity. Her child was the image of her and already showed

traits of hers. How Cristabel rejoiced in him! She delighted in giving him the things her own child had been denied. She spoilt him, Elspeth said, and he showed more love for her than for either parent. Cristabel looked younger than she had five years ago. The freedom from care, the spectacle of Shaw's success, the open life in the sea air, all had joined to lift the years from her. The wonder of the mountains never left her. When a mist came from the sea and hid them, she watched it with a speculative, knowing eye, calculating how long it would last. When it rolled away and again revealed the dramatic snow-clad peaks against the azure sky, she watched the transformation with the air of a master of pageantry.

The child held out his bare dimpled arms and bounced his plump body toward Cristabel. She hastened to take him up, to lay his tender weight against her shoulder. Again Shaw felt the old pang of jealousy as he saw her attention lavished on others than himself. Try though he did, he could not keep the expression of it from his eyes. Cristabel saw it and gave her little crooked smile. Elspeth saw nothing.

The picture of the three grouped together on the flower-bordered lawn remained with Shaw for a space, obliterating all else. Then it faded and his heavy eyes rested on the sea that was now taking on the purple tones of evening, except where the wake of the ship still spun its dazzling foam.

A deck steward had appeared and was leaning against the rail in an attitude that displayed the peculiar grace of his body and his well-set head on which the steward's cap was placed jauntily. He was looking seaward with an expression reflective and sombre. He was familiar to Shaw. Where had he seen that head outlined against sky and sea? He could not think, yet he had most surely seen it. The man was familiar and not quite pleasantly familiar. Shaw stared and wondered. His gaze attracted the steward, who came briskly to his side.

"Would you like your rug tucked about you, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, I should."

Shaw looked up into his face as the steward deftly tucked in the rug. Their eyes met.

"Why," exclaimed Searle, "if it isn't Mr. Manifold! What a surprise!"

"Yes," said Shaw, "you're the last man I was expecting to see."

"Might I ask," said Searle, "where you're bound for?"

"I'm on a tour of inspection for the Government."

"Didn't I prophesy it?" cried Searle. "Didn't I tell you when you were just a kid you'd make your mark? Didn't I say that one day you'd travel on a luxury liner and a steward would come to wrap your legs in your rug and that steward would be me? Why, I'm a blooming oracle, ain't I, Mr. Manifold?"

“It certainly is queer,” agreed Shaw. “You are supposed to be dead, you know.”

“Don’t you go and tell of me, mister!”

“You need not worry about that. I think your wife is better off without you.”

“She’s got a pension! I know that.”

“Better leave her with it.”

“Do you think she’d like to have me back, Mr. Manifold?” asked Searle unabashed.

“I think she’d love to,” returned Shaw.

Other people came on to the deck. Searle moved to his duty of establishing them in their chairs, bringing them drinks. He moved from Shaw’s mind and it returned to its dalliance with the future. He saw himself as sending ships to the Seven Seas laden with sweet-smelling lumber, lumber not butchered from the forests, leaving a wasted land behind, but chosen with care, with a new growth to follow. He saw himself as a great hirer of ships, with ships sailing to every port, he waiting, watching, controlling, receiving messages of their whereabouts from all over the world.

San Francisco had melted into the night. The sea was dark. Shaw lay stretched in his deck chair, resting and thinking, resting and thinking. He filled his lungs with the pure air.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *Growth of a Man* by Mazo de la Roche]