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FIDELIA

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BY
EDWIN BALMER

Author of "A Wild Goose Chase,"
"The Indian Drum," (with Wm. MacHarg), etc.



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CONTENTS

PART ONE

CHAPTER	PAGE
I NEW FRIENDS AND FOES	3
II DAVID	22
III ALICE	39
IV CLASSES TOGETHER	65
V THE SUN IN THE CLASSROOM	79
VI TROUBLING QUESTIONS	85
VII SOME ENLIGHTENMENTS	89
VIII THE VALLEY OF TITANS	95
IX "MINE, MINE!"	106
X THE RESULT OF A REPLY	115
XI A BONFIRE AND THE FLOE	120
XII "NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER DO"	130
XIII THE THRONE OF SATURN	136
XIV THE RETURN FROM THE THRONE	144
XV FIRST CONSEQUENCES	161
XVI THE BRIDAL CAMP	186
XVII A PARLOR CAR TO ITANACA	197
XVIII "BUT AND IF YE SUFFER"	204

CONTENTS

PART TWO

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIX	RESPONSIBLE TO NONE	218
XX	"PLEASURE IS THE END!"	233
XXI	THE TIE OF THE PAST	249
XXII	THE THREAT OF THE FUTURE	256
XXIII	HOW FATHER HERRICK STRUCK	262
XXIV	SATURN AGAIN IN THE SKY	265
XXV	TWO COMPLETE THEIR PURPOSE	275
XXVI	DAVID STAYS AWAY	293
XXVII	THE SECRET OF LAKOON	302
XXVIII	ILLUSION AND THE TRUTH	317
XXIX	OF USE AGAIN	327
XXX	"IF SHE COMES BACK!"	335
XXXI	AN END TO PRIDE	345
XXXII	HAPPINESS—AND FEAR	350
XXXIII	HER CHILD	361

PART I

FIDELIA

CHAPTER I

NEW FRIENDS AND FOES

FIDELIA NETLEY, at the age of twenty-three, was going again to college as another girl, who was lonely and who had been badly treated, would go home; for as long as Fidelia could remember, a school of one sort or another had been her home.

Up to the year she was fifteen, there had been a house in White Falls, Iowa, which had been her place of residence, in a legal sense; at least, its street number always was recorded as her address on the register of the schools in which she had lived since she was seven. But Fidelia feared that house more than any other spot on earth; for it was the home of aunt Minna.

She was the sister of Fidelia's father and a widow with children of her own, older than Fidelia, and she frankly hated Fidelia for at least two outspoken reasons; one was because her brother had left his money, every penny of it, to his daughter in trust at the Drovers' Bank; the other was Fidelia's mother.

In a vague, emotional way, Fidelia retained some recollections of her father. Of course she had a picture of him and so she maintained an image of his appearance; but she also had memory of having

been clasped in strong arms which held her in a particularly firm and gentle and agreeable way. She had no recollection at all of her mother, who had run off when Fidelia was an infant; and Fidelia never was told more of her mother than that fact; nor was she ever shown a picture of her mother.

"I destroyed them all long ago," aunt Minna announced, as of a good act well performed; but she added, "You are exactly like your mother. Your nose is precisely hers and your skin; and your hair is the identical color."

When she was a child, Fidelia used to look at herself in a glass from every angle in endeavor to learn what was so especially wrong with her nose; but after a time, she came to understand that her trouble was that she was pretty and her nose was particularly tantalizing to some women; and her clear, soft, white and pink skin annoyed them and, more and more as she grew older, they seemed to resent the color and luxuriance of her hair which was red of deep, rich auburn hue.

Since Mr. Jessop, of the Drovers' Bank, allowed no attractive profit for boarding Fidelia, aunt Minna sent her away to school at the earliest age at which Miss Sumpter, in Des Moines, would take a girl. Fidelia found that school a pleasant, friendly place where she got into very little trouble; and she came to love the school so that she intentionally failed in her work, in her last year, for fear of having to return "home." But aunt Minna had no idea of keeping her about merely from affection; so Fidelia went next to Mrs. Drummond's school in St. Paul and was there

when aunt Minna started the law suit to obtain control of Fidelia's money. Aunt Minna lost the suit and with it her guardianship of Fidelia's person; consequently, Mr. Jessop was her guardian from that time and Fidelia began giving his house number as her home address. But Mrs. Jessop was one of those women whom Fidelia's nose and skin and hair offended and she saw to it that, when Fidelia was not in school, she was safely away in a girls' summer camp.

After she became eighteen and had completed the course at Mrs. Drummond's, Mrs. Jessop entered her at the University of Minnesota. She was a glorious flame of a girl brought for the first time into frequent and close association with men; she liked the University immensely and stayed there two years, at the end of which she asked to be transferred to Leland Stanford University.

As that was in California and further away, Mrs. Jessop agreed and supposed she had Fidelia settled there for two years; but at the end of one Fidelia had become of age and no longer needed to ask permission to go where she pleased and to draw her own money; and so without explanation—at least without explanation which reached White Falls—she gave up college until this day of the second of February, in her twenty-third year, when she was passenger on a suburban train from Chicago bound for Evanston, Illinois, to enter Northwestern University. As credentials, she carried certificates for her two years' work at Minnesota and for one at Stanford; and she liked her feeling that she was again to continue the

gaining of "credits." There was something particularly satisfying in "marks," anyway; they furnished one with such definite evidence of one's success or failure.

Fidelia had lived by marks almost all her life and, by her conduct at school, she had been given or denied privileges. As she sat alone in her seat on the train, with her face toward the partly frosted window, she realized that she was returning to discipline; but it was of her own will and she was honestly impatient to return. She was seeking not discipline alone, of course, but also the ready, friendly familiarities and tolerances of college, the pleasant customs and routines; she was eager to join again the rivalries and enthusiasms, to thrill to the ambitions and to share the companionships of the sort which had been hers.

Once she had visited Chicago before this journey but she had never been to Evanston, though when she was at Minnesota she had heard a good deal of the college and town. She knew that the University was at the north end with the campus running along the shore of the lake; the students, men and women, lived in dormitories and fraternity and boarding houses about the campus, south, west and north. The suburban express from Chicago made several stops in Evanston and the third, Davis Street, was the station for the university.

The conductor had told her this, upon her inquiry when he took up her ticket; and when the train neared Davis Street, he returned to her and reminded her that this was her stop, and he gallantly carried her suitcase to the platform. This was quite un-

necessary for she was rather a large girl, not heavy, but obviously strong and vital and excellently developed; but men almost invariably chose her, out of any group, as the object of their attention. She was so accustomed to this that she really thought nothing of it, although she never forgot to express thanks, pleasantly. That perhaps was part of habit, to be pleasant.

"Thank you so much!" she said now, when she took her suitcase on the station platform. No red-cap or porter for hand-baggage met the train at Evanston; and none of the men leaving the cars were of the disposition to press their services upon a strange girl so evidently competent to carry a small suitcase. She thought they were mostly business men, commuters from their offices in Chicago; but she recognized, in a few of the younger ones, the familiar casualness and clannishness of university students. They were of her own age and, seeing her, they eyed her as young men usually did and with the added interest of speculation on the probability of soon meeting her.

"Co-ed?" said one to another.

Fidelia did not hear him but she saw his lips move and she guessed, from her experience in co-educational universities, the term he would use. The boy who was questioned seemed doubtful about her; they all seemed doubtful but decidedly interested and they hung back in a group at the top of the stairs to let her precede them down to the street.

She descended slowly, employing her free hand at gathering closer her coat, which was of soft mink furs; she had on brown gloves and a brown fur toque,

which matched her coat and was of a hue most effective with her hair. She was conscious that she was being rated and that the moment was of great importance to her; and she made no error.

Coming out upon the street where fine flakes of snow were blowing in the wind from the east, she glanced about at the opposite shop and restaurant windows already alight in the early dusk of this gray February afternoon and almost at once she nodded toward the first in a row of cars-for-hire waiting beside the station. When the negro driver brought his car up, she said in a clear, agreeable voice: "Take me, please, to Mrs. Fansler's. Do you know where it is?"

"No'm; but git right in, ma'm. I find out quick. Up by de un'versity, you mean, or down in de town?"

"Up by the university, I think," Fidelia said but did not enter the cab, pending the driver's gaining information which he sought by yelling at the colored boy on the next car: "Zeb, you know whereall Mis' Fansler's?"

"Pete you know the Delta A house," a curt Caucasian voice put in from behind. "Mrs. Fansler's is on the same side of the street two doors beyond."

"Oh, thank you," said Fidelia turning to the student, who had cleared up her difficulty as Pete made it plain that he was quite familiar with the location of Delta A. "Thank you so much!"

She found herself speaking to the shortest of the three young men who were in a row on the walk, evidently having waited to see her away before they proceeded. He was rather a homely boy with a

square, honest look and with a self-confidence of bearing which made Fidelia know that he was a leader of this particular three. "What he starts thinking about me, they'll start thinking and they'll start the other men," Fidelia reckoned; and knowing the amazing values of first impressions, she considered whether she would ask him for more information about the university neighborhood or whether she would do better with complete formality. She decided on the latter and got into the cab.

It took her quickly through a narrow fringe of the one and two story shops and business buildings which flank the railroad on the university side, crossed a street car line and hurried her by a couple of blocks of residences and vacant lots toward a large, tall brick structure with many lighted windows which loomed far back from the streets in the center of a wide, level lawn. Fidelia recognized immediately the familiar marks of a dormitory and of that particularly famous, old-fashioned, high-windowed, austere "hall" which was one of the first in the country to invite women to college with men.

"Hello, old Willard!" she hailed it to herself, and turned to the newer, less obtrusive building opposite. "I suppose that's Pearson Hall and Chapin is over there." She knew the names of the main dormitories for girls.

Her car passed them and hastened north and now, off to the right and beyond the intervening block of houses, lay the campus, she guessed; she did not think much about it. Here she was penetrating the most immediately significant section of the uni-

versity; some of the houses on both sides of this street were, possibly, the homes of families without intimate connection with the college; but most were surely the dwellings of professors and instructors or were fraternity houses and rooming houses for students. There were many large residences alight below and, more characteristically, aglow from the lights in ten or a dozen windows on the second and third floors of each. Here was the place where the students lived, Fidelia recognized—ten or twenty girls together in one house and as many men rooming in the next.

They would prove to have come from everywhere and they would be no ordinary people; for each lighted window here must represent a separate and definite will and ambition of some one—at least of a parent or a brother or sister or friend for each some one up there on the other side of every window blind; each glow suggested a self-denial, a sacrifice and a determination of the various sorts with which Fidelia had become familiar. They would be selected and privileged people sent—or having come of their own will and by their own effort—from farms and little towns and cities in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska and Michigan; from Ohio, Texas and Nevada; from Washington and from New York state and New England; from South America a few, undoubtedly, and from Europe and even from China and Japan.

Her glimpse of their many second and third-floor windows alight stirred Fidelia to a warm and excited impatience; it was more like coming home than she had supposed it could be. Here she was once more

on familiar ground, though she had never seen this street before; here she was re-entering the company of lively, above-average men and girls who would hold certain difficult expectations of her, but of whom she could expect more than of others. She knew the name of not one girl or man here but she felt that she knew them; certainly she knew how they would act in regard to her, if she acted as she had before. She did not mean to do that.

She passed a house with a transom above the front door displaying the triangle and capital A of the Delta Alpha fraternity; and the cab slowed. The second door beyond, which by information was Mrs. Fansler's, was a large frame house painted some dull color which made the lower part appear somber in the failing daylight; but the upper windows, like so many upper windows on this street, were glowing bright.

Fidelia stepped out and paid her driver; she picked up her suitcase and went up the snowy steps to a dark porch where she felt for the bell. While she pressed it, she whispered a chant:

“Fend a friend and kiss a foe,
The first can strike the fouler blow;
Never look the road you go;
Travel on it; you will know.”

She was giving no thought to the meaning of the words; she never really thought about them except as composing a sort of charm for good luck which she had picked up from a fortune teller years ago when she was a child in school at Des Moines. She had been told to repeat it whenever making a change and

especially when starting out with new people in a strange place and, having formed the habit, she kept it up.

When she heard the door opening, she drew herself more erect and gave a tug to her coat collar. She got a glimpse of a long, brown, rather bare hall and she was aware of the odors of meat and vegetables cooking; then she saw a middle-aged, slender, spectacled woman in a plain blue dress.

"This is Mrs. Fansler's?" Fidelia asked in her pleasant way.

"I am Mrs. Fansler," the woman said, in much more neutral tone but giving the impression that she meant to be more neutral than she succeeded in being.

"How do you do? I'm Fidelia Netley from White Falls. Do you remember I wrote you for a room and asked you to telegraph if you could give me one and you were so nice as to do it?"

"Come in, child," invited Mrs. Fansler.

It was the quickest melting of Mrs. Fansler on record, as was unanimously agreed by all four girls in the upper hall who were looking and listening to learn who had arrived in that cab. "Child" was Mrs. Fansler's admission of approval of a girl; and the college record for thawing her to that point was three days, ten hours and some exactly estimated minutes. "Which record was absolutely smashed to practically nothing at all," the witnesses deposed. "And from a flat, standing start!"

Some girls abode under Mrs. Fansler's roof throughout their college course and never achieved "child" at all.

Of course Fidelia did not know this but simply discerned that of the two sorts of women in the world—those whom her nose and skin and hair at once and unforgivably antagonized, and those who, upon sight, arrayed themselves as her defenders and friends—Mrs. Fansler was of the second. Mrs. Fansler talked to her for a few minutes in the parlor and then showed her to a room on the second floor.

Two of the girls in the upper hall had the delicacy to retreat when the stranger ascended; but the other pair took a full, frank scrutiny of Fidelia Netley from White Falls. Fidelia looked at them, and with the same open, pleasant gaze, but she made not the same effect upon both; and she knew it. One was to be a girl for her to fend and the other a girl to kiss, if Fidelia put into practice the advice of her charm; for one girl, like Mrs. Fansler, showed without cause a sudden warm impulse to be her friend, while the other, at the same instant and from the same sight of her, betrayed as plain a sensation of hostility.

So it was all to start again, the hot, violent liking and hating of her, the reckless and unreasonable deeds to be done for her, without her wish, and the amazing, reasonless abuse of her. Why, at sight of her and when she did nothing at all but exist, did some persons want to hate when others liked her?

She stood in the center of her room, slowly turning while Mrs. Fansler bustled about unnecessarily displaying wholly obvious closets, the dresser and the chest of drawers.

“It’s a lovely room,” Fidelia said. “And that window is east, isn’t it? Really, isn’t it east?”

It was not a lovely room but was merely a plainly papered, almost square bed chamber with ordinary oak bed-room set of substantial design; and it was at the rear of the house. Every other girl who had taken it had commented upon this inescapable fact; no one had ever so enthusiastically approved it because its window was east.

“Yes, child,” said Mrs. Fansler. “It’s east. What beautiful hair you have!”

Fidelia was taking off her toque without thinking either of what Mrs. Fansler or of what she, herself, was saying; for almost automatically she could notice such items as the east outlook of a room and comment upon such an advantage, repressing remark upon disadvantages. What she was thinking about was the method of her first move in this new set of men and girls who were bound to take opposite sides over her—who, in fact, already had begun to divide in regard to her.

She laid down her toque and slipped off her fur coat and stood in her brown tailored suit which disclosed the rounded and well-proportioned fullness of her youthful figure. This presented a test of friendship which some women, who approved her nose and skin and hair, failed to pass; but Mrs. Fansler passed it and Fidelia felt on her blouse for a little jeweled clasp pin which was fastened there and she started to remove it.

“Oh, you’re a Tau Gamma!” Mrs. Fansler exclaimed, recognizing the pin as the emblem of a college sorority.

“Yes,” admitted Fidelia. “I was; at Minnesota.”

"Oh, you've come from the University of Minnesota."

Fidelia hesitated a minute and then said: "No. I've come from Leland Stanford." Again she corrected, frankly, "I mean I went to Leland Stanford last. I've not been at college at all for a year and a half. I'm just starting again."

"Oh!" Mrs. Fansler considered. "You began at Minnesota and then went to Stanford." She did not add, aloud, "and now you're coming here." But she might as well have said it. Yet neither her thought nor her quick glance over Fidelia was unfriendly. For Mrs. Fansler instinctively liked this girl; and, having been in charge of a student boarding house for girls throughout more than a generation, Mrs. Fansler rather prided herself upon the veracity of her instinct. She thought: "This girl hasn't gotten along." Then she thought, more definitely: "She's got into trouble."

Mrs Fansler said aloud: "Surely you know Tau Gamma has a chapter here."

"Oh, yes; that's why I'm taking this off before I see any one in college. I don't think it right for a girl, who was initiated by one chapter to force herself on the girls of another college, who mightn't want to take her in. Do you?"

"Why, they'll want you!" Mrs. Fansler exclaimed while she realized that she spoke the truth only in a limited way. For she knew that Tau Gamma—or any other group of girls in college—would want to own this girl in the sense that each sorority would prefer to possess her rather than give her to another. But Mrs. Fansler could not imagine Tau Gamma, or

any other group, unanimously welcoming this vivid, unusual girl. "You'll like your chapter here," Mrs. Fansler went on. "They're the finest girls in college, Alice Sothron and Myra Taine. . . . Myra lived with me her first year; and I know nearly all of them. I'll send word to Myra right away."

"Please don't!" Fidelia begged. She dropped her little sparkling sorority pin into the drawer of the dresser and she clasped Mrs. Fansler's thin wrist in her warm, caressing grasp.

Mrs. Fansler liked it and a flush of color spread under her pale skin. "Why not, child?" she protested. "When you went from Minnesota to Stanford, you went to the Tau Gamma girls there, didn't you?"

"Yes," Fidelia admitted.

"Then why don't you want to go to your girls here now?"

Fidelia did not immediately answer but Mrs. Fansler felt the grasp on her wrist tighten suddenly before Fidelia became conscious of it and took her hand away; and Mrs Fansler's instinct much more definitely said: "She's got into some trouble at Minnesota but nothing serious. What really happened was after she shifted to Stanford, or later." Mrs. Fansler hungered to know; she yearned for the confidence of this vital, beautiful person for the maternal delight of counseling and protecting her.

"This is different," Fidelia replied, vaguely.

"How different, child?" Mrs Fansler urged and she reviewed in her mind the note which had arrived for her the other day and which was the first herald of the coming of this girl to her house. She had thought

of it, at the time, as a sudden, impulsive note, but put no significance to it. The postmark had been Portland, Oregon, but the reply was to be sent to White Falls, Iowa.

"I've been out of college for a while," Fidelia said; and not immediately, but after a few moments, explained. "I thought I'd travel a little so I went up to—Idaho and Oregon and Washington, our northwest. Then I thought I'd finish college and get my degree."

"I see," Mrs. Fansler nodded; for she had become satisfied in her mind for the present. At least, she realized that she had learned a good deal and, if she was to learn more later, she must not press matters now. She thought: "She considered whether to say Idaho and then did it. She tells a part of anything freely. Her trouble was after she left Stanford."

Mrs. Fansler took one of Fidelia's hands and pressed it. "You couldn't have chosen a better place than here; and you couldn't have come to a finer chapter. Of course I'll tell your girls that you're here." She dropped Fidelia's hand almost shyly and started out. "Supper at six thirty," she said, practically.

Fidelia removed the coat of her suit and she lay on her bed with her hands clasped behind her head and with her legs bent over the side of the bed. She was not tired; on the contrary, she was exhilarated, jerking her legs up straight in a series of short kicks and dropping and jerking them straight again in the stimulation of the contest over her which was sure to continue.

“Two out of three!” she reckoned her friends against the one already antagonistic to her. Of course she was counting only Mrs. Fansler and the two girls whom she had seen and who had seen her here. The men, or at least a safe majority of them, would begin in favor of her; she could depend upon them; and as she considered the three who had watched her at the station, she thought of them reaching their fraternity houses and telling other men about her. There was no especial conceit in her thinking this, but only a recognition of fact; she knew that men kept her in mind and talked about her. Now she lay, not thinking but listening, for some one was speaking in the hall and she heard the words positively enunciated: “Take her your fraternity pictures; that’s what she’ll care to see!” A door closed hastily and there was silence during which Fidelia became aware of a low, persistent sound much more steady and unvarying than the blowing of the wind. She arose curiously and went to the window, which she opened and she heard the sound much louder.

“The ocean,” she said to herself and immediately recollected where she was. “It’s the lake, of course,” and she stood with the cold east wind blowing upon her, listening to the roar of the surf.

The violence of it and the cold and storminess of the night appealed to her in her present mood of exhilaration. Already it was too dark for her to get a glimpse of the water, even if the intervening houses and trees and the configuration of the land back of Mrs. Fansler’s permitted a clear view eastward; but

she could see that the lake was near for the vague illumination from houses and streets, which extended indefinitely north and south of her window, ceased abruptly to the east and there was a great void in which she imagined the tossing, roaring water; she had an impulse to go out and feel the full sweep of the wind and to stride along with all other sounds drowned in the roaring fury of the waves. When she felt like this, she exulted in the sensation of physical struggle and the trying of her strength; she liked the ecstasy of physical exhaustion. But she knew that this was no time for her to go out; for when she closed her window and again heard the house sounds, she discerned Mrs. Fansler's voice evidently speaking into the telephone: "Yes, Myra; one of your chapter from Minnesota . . . a remarkably fine appearing girl . . . No, she did not come direct from Minnesota; she's been to Stanford and recently has been out of college for a while . . ."

Fidelia listened more tensely; and what she strained to hear was whether Mrs. Fansler repeated that Fidelia Netley had gone to Idaho. Mrs. Fansler did not and Fidelia felt a certain relief. She wondered if she had made a mistake in saying so much to Mrs. Fansler; but she had to say something about that year and a half. She unpacked her suitcase slowly and looked about while she considered.

Upon a bookshelf near the bed were a few volumes and pamphlets of the sort which accumulate in college rooms and which pass from occupant to occupant—an odd, battered copy of *Cymbeline*, the second volume of Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, a Clark's

Rhetoric without covers, an old college catalogue and a small, new paper-bound directory of Northwestern University.

Fidelía picked this up and observing that it printed both the Evanston and the home addresses of students in course, she scanned the pages, stopping with a sharp jerk when her eyes fell on the word Idaho.

Boise was the word before it and Boise, she knew, was far in the south of the state. She expelled the breath which she had been holding and she turned the next pages. Here was Idaho again; Jane Howe from Pocatello; well, that was far away in the south, too. Now Idaho once more and—Mondora! “Roy T. When, Junior, college of Liberal Arts; Evanston address, Hatfield House. Home, Mondora, Idaho.”

Fidelía dropped the book; there it was on the last page, when the census of students had run down into the Ws. A boy was here from Mondora. “Well,” she thought, “what if he is?”

Not every one from Mondora would know her. If he were from Lakoon, that would be a more risky matter; but Mondora, after all, had been really out of it. There was only a chance, and really rather a small one, that Roy T. When had seen her; she had no knowledge at all of him. Again she looked through the directory to make certain that she had missed no Idaho names; and when she was satisfied that there was no one in college from any place nearer Lakoon than Mondora, she decided to take the chance with Roy T. When.

Indeed, when she thought over the matter, his presence supplied an extra spice to this new adven-

ture which she could not help liking. At any rate, now that she had entered for it, she had no idea of running away; already men and girls were talking about her; already her presence here had roused people to contest over her; and she meant to see this contest out. Behind one of these windows down this street or at some other lighted window which she had not yet seen, was some man yet unknown to her whose fate was bound to become entwined with hers in some new and unforeseeable way; she could count upon that, if she stayed here; and she decided to stay. So she closed the directory and tossed it away and lay on her bed, kicking her legs and wondering what there was to come to her from behind those lighted windows and what sort was he who would ride with her about the next turn of the wheel of her destiny.

CHAPTER II

DAVID

WITH the arrival of the three men who had seen her at the station, report of her had reached the Delta Alpha fraternity house; and, as she reckoned whenever men first spoke of her, this report was favorable.

“Any of you loafers get a squint at the queen who came in a cab to Fansler’s a couple of minutes ago?” Bill Fraser enthusiastically challenged the group lounging before the fire in the living-room.

“No; who was she?” somebody answered for the bunch; and as Bill’s tone suggested that it was worth while—or would have been worth while a couple of minutes ago—some of the fellows got up and looked out the window toward Mrs. Fansler’s.

“She’s just about the greatest looker that I ever saw feeling the need of a college education,” Fraser enthused, his vehemence increasing as he warmed himself before the fire.

“Where’d you meet her?”

“Haven’t had the luck; just saw her step off train and call a cab. She’s up for the new semester, I suppose.”

“Where’s her home town?”

“Don’t know.”

“What do you know about her, then? Whence the huge thrill?”

"I've seen her, boy! Wait, just wait a little! Time will take care of you; after a while you'll see her," Fraser taunted in reply.

Landon Blake, who was the short one of the three who had got the thrill at the station, did not go into the living-room with the others. Something more important was on his mind now. "Dave back in town?" he asked.

"'Bout half an hour ago. He's upstairs," somebody informed and Blake ran up to the front room on the third floor and burst in on his roommate who was working under the light at the flat desk beside the window.

"Dave!" hailed Landon, breathlessly. "How about it? Did you get it?"

Dave, who was a tall, spare young man, turned quickly and looked at Landon; but he nodded in reply only after a moment or two and spoke slowly. "Yes; I got it, Lan," he said, entirely without Landon's excitement; indeed, he replied so soberly that it was almost as if he were giving bad news.

"All of it?" Lan asked. "Or all you needed, anyway?"

"All of it," Dave confirmed.

"The whole ten thousand?"

"The whole ten thousand, Lan. I got it in a check from Mr. Fuller and paid it over down town this afternoon. Snelgrove put up his money. It's a deal, Lan; it's closed; it's all over."

"Good!" Lan congratulated, putting out his short, broad hand. "Great! Dave, put it there!"

Dave grasped Lan with his longer, strong hand.

"Thanks," he said. "How was business here?" he asked, deliberately switching the subject from his concerns during the two days between semesters in which he had been home. "How'd it go with you, Lan?"

"Business was a complete washout," Lan confessed promptly and emphatically. "Or rather, I was. Dave, how in the devil do you put it over all the time?"

"I don't," Dave denied, seriously.

Lan laughed and dug in his pocket for cards concerned with this business to which Dave had transferred attention. "Oh, no; it's too darned bad about you. You don't know anything about the auto game at all! You'll simply step in to-morrow to see those guys that have been giving me the gate and have them eating out of your hand; or maybe you won't bother to call; just phone 'em. Here's your cards."

Lan tossed them on the desk and Dave turned and picked them up, thoughtfully, and bending slightly he opened a long, narrow box half full of such index cards; he put the returned ones in place and glanced over some others.

"No," said Lan, seeing this and stopping him. "No use to give me a crack at any more prospects, old top; I'm absolutely helpless and screaming for mercy when I try your game. If Myra has to wait for me to learn that before we're married, I've a wonderful chance, haven't I?"

Dave closed his box without argument. "Plenty of money made in your game, Lan," he reminded.

"Maybe," admitted Lan. "Four years from now,

if I'm lucky, we'll be married; that'll be about four years after you."

Dave jerked his head quickly in a manner which made Lan reach directly into Dave's affairs from which Dave had turned him. "How'd you find things at home?" he asked.

"Oh, all right; about as usual."

"See your father?"

"Of course."

"Have much more trouble with him, Dave?"

"Yes," said Dave, going rather pale. "Of course. I've sold my soul, you understand that!" he articulated slowly and distinctly and clenching his strong hands. "I've sold my soul to Mr. Fuller for ten thousand dollars. That's the only way father can see it. I was bound to have a fight with him anyway before going into last term here. He's always held onto the idea, no matter what I said, that after college I was going on into Garrett Bib the way he did and be a minister. But he'll never get me into the fix he's in."

Dave stopped suddenly and swallowed with his emotion. "Lan, you know I'm not—undervaluing father. He's the sincerest Christian I know, according to his own convictions. I'm not undervaluing the men who go on into Garrett Biblical to become preachers. They've got more guts than me, maybe; yes, I think they have. Father had more, anyway; but things were different in his day. He was here in the eighties of last century and this college, and the seminary, was in the hands of the Methodists who

brought God into this part of the country and who built up this place by faith and prayer. My hat is off to them; they did big things and believed. This part of the country, and Evanston particularly, was just about the center of faith then. Father used to meet Frances Willard on this street when she had the Woman's Christian Temperance Union headquarters here. Father tells me with tears in his eyes how his professors, old Dr. Marcy and Robert Baird and Bonbright, used to lead in the chapel. There were religious enthusiasts running things then and they made fanatics; nearly half of father's class went into the ministry or foreign missions or some kind of religious work. But our class isn't doing it; we're going into business. That's as normal for me as going into the seminary was for father. I never wanted to be a preacher and I never came to college with that idea."

He was rehearsing, in his outburst of feeling, some of his fight with his father; and Lan realized this and kept still.

"Father keeps on saying that Alice is the reason I'm going into business, that I've given up my ideals for the sake of making money to marry her and now I've gone into debt, borrowing money, so I can marry her sooner. But that's not true. I meant to go into business long before I ever dreamed there was a girl like Alice."

After a few moments he admitted: "Of course I do want to get married."

"You've nothing on me there," Lan said and this time spoke without thinking.

"But you're going on through medical school, Lan!"

Dave said, red color flushing over his pale face. "Father threw that up to me. You've the nerve and character to do it and Myra's the character to want you to and wait for you. You know what I think of you both for it. But it's different with Alice and me. You're made to be a doctor and you want to be one; you've never wanted anything else. But I never was made for a minister. I was made for business; I've proved that, I think; and I'm going into business with ten thousand dollars put up for me by the closest judge of business propositions that I ever knew. And there's no soul-selling to that. But you'd thought—you'd thought," repeated Dave, drawing a deep breath and holding it a moment before he was able to speak, "when I'd taken it and told father, you'd thought I was Judas Iscariot."

His head jerked up stiffer and Lan saw the sinews of his neck stand out with his strain upon himself; his eyes went wet and he winked to clear them.

"Alice is over at Willard for supper with Myra," Lan said; he had to say something.

Dave relaxed. "Yes; I know," he acknowledged and Lan turned away and started to wash. Dave began taking off the old suit which he was wearing and which he had put on when he came to his room less than an hour ago.

That careful habit of sparing his better suit, though no longer necessary to Dave Herrick, had been bred in him too deeply to cast it off merely because recently, if he wanted, he might buy himself with his own earned money as many suits of clothes as anybody in college. Clothes meant to him what they can mean

only to one who has known, too bitterly, what it is to be without a decent suit of one's own. Dave knew; he was the oldest of six children of the Methodist minister of Itanaca, Illinois, and not until he came to Northwestern, when he was eighteen, had he worn a suit which was new and bought for himself.

Of course he had earned money for clothes for himself many times before that year; as long as he could remember he had earned, and sometimes he had been paid; but frequently not, either because his father had forbidden him to take dimes and nickels for services done and errands run "which he ought to be glad to do for friends" or because some neighbors too readily adopted his father's attitude. His father, in the year when Dave first became cognizant of family finances, had a salary of eight hundred dollars. This year David Herrick, besides carrying full class work as a senior in the university, had earned twenty-nine hundred dollars, reckoned from January to January, and was liable for income tax on that amount with deductions legally allowed as head of a family with three children under eighteen.

The family was his father's; but Dave, having added seventeen hundred dollars to his father's twelve, actually furnished their chief support. He earned the money selling motorcars to the customers listed on the cards in that box on his desk. His particular method of operations was his own and, as seemed to be indicated when somebody else like Lan Blake visited the trade, it required Dave, himself, to make it effective.

He had what somebody in a philosophy course

called "a feeling of fundamental necessity" in his efforts which supplied him with a force lacking to Lan Blake, who had an allowance from home and wanted to work only for extra money. Now in his twenty-second year Dave Herrick, tall but rather light for his height, was a developed man, very strong and enduring and of the constitution described as hard physically, which had been formed by much hard, muscular work and by the almost complete absence of self-indulgences. He had clear, good features, nearly regular, with slight, tense lines of strain about his mouth; he had the habit of being under strain and it showed sometimes in his eyes, which were grayish blue and direct and, usually, positive. For that positiveness some people, men mostly, did not like his eyes; they did not understand that it came from his being obliged, when a little boy, to assert and stubbornly stand by the practical against the fanatically spiritual, not only for the sake of himself but of his brothers and sisters and of his mother and father themselves. But almost every one liked his eyes when he smiled for his smile banished those lines of strain and took from any overpositiveness; his was a pleasant, relaxing smile showing the even, perfect teeth of a boy brought up on hard, sparse fare.

Two people—and Lan was one of them—knew him in moods which neither were positively practical nor relaxed, they were sudden, unsummoned times of violent self-reproach and penitence. For what, Lan could not guess at first; then he began to realize the cumulative effect of the unceasing drumming into a thoughtful boy, throughout his childhood and adole-

scence, of the doctrines of the essential sinfulness of all flesh and the need of self-negation and the stifling of natural appetites. Dave once helped Lan to understand by telling how, when he was a baby, he had been so sick that he was given up by the doctor and his parents prayed to God to spare their firstborn, promising God, for his life, that he should serve God as a missionary of his word.

Dave referred to that now, as he and Lan were dressing. "The trouble, down at the bottom, is their pledge for me to God. They say I've got to redeem it."

Lan, having no helpful answer to make, attempted none and left Dave to his struggle with himself for having taken that ten thousand dollars from Mr. Fuller.

He was a merchant, not a church member, who was the rich man of Itanaca; he never had any use for the preacher but much for the preacher's son; and his ten thousand dollars, now taken, was a voluntary loan to start David Herrick as partner in the Chicago agency of the new Hamilton car which would be put on the market in June, after Dave's graduation. Dave already had enough advance orders to insure his success, he believed; his plan, and Alice Sothron's, was to be married late in June.

There was never a chance of Lan saying anything wrong when reminding Dave of Alice so he mentioned her again: "I suppose you're going to see Alice pretty soon."

"Hmhm," said Dave, who was shaving. "I'm driving home with her after supper."

"I can't see Myra this eve; so tell Alice there's a girl that maybe Tau Gamma wants to look over who came to Fansler's to-night. Saw her on the train," Lan explained. "A regular ripper, Dave; red hair and great looks."

"What's her name?" Dave asked, with the mildest of interest.

"Don't know; just saw her and heard her ask for Fansler's."

"All right," said Dave and catalogued the information he was loyally to pass to Tau Gamma. "A great looker, red hair, at Mrs. Fansler's. That all?"

"You'd not say so if you saw her," Lan rejoined. "Till you do, let it go at that."

They descended together when the gong beat the dinner hour. Fourteen members of the chapter lived at the fraternity house and this evening most of them were about the big table where the talk ran as usual when the "frat" was gathering again after the recess between semesters. A few of the fellows, who lived fairly near, had been home and they spoke about that; they talked of the swimming team, indoor "track," who had "flunks" from last term and, of course, they talked about girls.

Some one facetiously elaborated on the manner in which a couple of co-ed juniors had "worked" a certain professor for marks; some one else seriously recommended a brother, who had just learned of a "flunk" in biology, to go to Myra Taine and borrow her notebook: "She's the clever little picker of the salient points, old top. Packs all the essentials of two hours reading in a couple of paragraphs and never strains

the mind." Some one else mildly kidded a sophomore about his evident shift of interest from a classmate to a blond girl from down state who was decidedly the stir of the freshman class. The chatter varied extraordinarily but never once suggested disrespect of any girl. These boys and men were so familiar with many girls that they mentioned them easily and freely and loyally, always. Loyalty to the girls was second only to loyalty to one another and not always second. Everybody at the table knew that Dave was engaged to Alice Sothron and Lan to Myra Taine; everybody knew both girls and liked them and nobody now "joshed" either of the brothers about their engagements. Delta Alpha accepted the fact of them as a basis for a sort of alliance with Tau Gamma; for when a fraternity is "rushing" a man for membership, a sorority often may lend invaluable influence; and so, of course, may a fraternity come to the assistance of a sorority. It was understood throughout the college that Tau Gamma and Delta Alpha worked together; and so, when Delta Alpha mentioned the new girl, whom three of the brothers had seen, they argued whether Tau Gamma would be able to "pledge" her; nobody doubted her entire desirability.

"Dave, you tell Alice," enjoined Bill Fraser (everybody knew that, as Alice was having supper at Willard, Dave was taking her home) "to have Tau Gamma get awful busy and be sure to call on us for help whether they need it or not."

"They sure can count on you, Bill!" said the boy who had asked the source of the big thrill.

"Freshman," said Bill, "we have a few girls at this

institution of high or lower learning, as your tender eyes may possibly have observed and your keen little ears may, on occasion, have heard; they are beyond any doubt the finest girls in any college in this or any other country; far be it from me to nurture a knock at any one of them. However, I may say, with sufficient assurance, that something of an event occurred to-day. Some one in this college, not to say several, will never be the same after to-morrow."

"Men, you mean?" the freshman led him on. "Or girls?"

"Both, freshmen," assured Bill sententiously. "Both."

So Dave heard a good deal more of the red-haired girl; but, as his duty in regard to her was already in his mind, he paid no especial attention. To the usual query at the table: "How was everybody at home, Dave?" he gave the usual answer: "Fine, thanks." But that fight with his father kept bothering him; and his taking and putting up that ten thousand dollars, irrevocably, kept cutting across other thoughts. He went to his room, as soon as dinner was finished, and checked over his figures on his desk. They were estimates, mostly, calculations and expectations of costs and interest and overhead and of sales and transactions yet to be made and commissions and profits yet to be earned; but they reassured him and he whistled confidently when he put on his overcoat to go out.

He could go, now, to Alice; and this new overcoat of his—one he had bought in December and by far the best coat he had ever owned—brought to him one

of his dearest incidents with Alice. It was only a plainly tailored, well-fitted gray ulster but it had been made for him in Evanston and therefore cost more than was necessary for a ready-made coat which might have been as warm; so Dave still had his qualms of selfishness when he picked it up till he remembered how Alice had looked when she first saw him wearing it and how she had cried a little in her shy, gentle way. "Because I'm so glad, Davey!" she explained. "You just must get good things for yourself and not give everything away! My Davey!" she said again and suddenly kissed his hand which clumsily was holding hers. He liked her "Davey"; no one else called him Davey and no one else even knew that she did.

What a right and natural next step for Alice and him to marry! he thought as he buttoned up his collar and went out into the snow. The storm which in the afternoon had started with a few, fine snowflakes in the east wind, had increased to a heavy blow full of flying snow. Dave liked to feel it, he liked the obstacle of the drift under foot and liked the fury of the pelting swirl circling the street lamps and the sting of the wind and flakes on his face. Snow used to help him, supplying him with walks to clean, for which people almost always paid him; he thought about his boyhood's backbreaking labor pleasantly now, it was so surely of his past. He had told Alice about it once; it was another event which had brought them so close together.

He halted before Willard with its windows glowing yellow on the snow. There was Myra Taine's room where Alice must be. Alice's car was parked nearby

him at the curb; it was a coupé of beautiful coachwork and leather upholstery and with an expensive chassis; and the fact that he dealt in motorcars did not prevent him from feeling frequently an accentuation of the difference in worldly position between Alice and himself which her possession of this coupé evidenced.

For Alice always had been one of the rich girls in the university; her home was one of the big, luxurious mansions near the north end of Sheridan Road in Chicago and, as worldly social privileges went, Alice had more of them than any other girl Dave Herrick knew; yet when he first came to college, three and a half years ago, and was struggling to support himself and when he possessed only his one decent suit of clothes, Alice had become his friend and, with her fine, dear disregard for what others thought, she had invited him to dances with her and insisted that he accompany her.

The door of Willard opened and Dave turned about, eager and impatient as he saw two girls coming out. Then he was disappointed; for he discerned that neither of them was Alice. He recognized one, Nell Gould, a Tau Gamma, who likely enough had recently seen Alice; so he advanced toward them, confirming his impression that the girl with Nell was a stranger; and as he came closer, he appreciated that she was a decidedly unusual person.

She was a larger girl than Nell, who was about Alice's size; she was taller and more vigorously built and, though she had on a fur coat, he was aware that she had a fine, graceful figure, of rather full proportions; and she was supplied with a vitality which

expressed itself in no particular but which, at that instant, he could examine and it caused him to see Nell as colorless and somber beside her. She had personality, this stranger; it spoke in the timbre of her low, pleasing voice which now reached him as she replied to some inaudible remark of Nell's. Then he was near enough to see her face as Nell and she came under a light.

She had red hair, he saw; and her eyes were beautiful; she was beautiful.

"Hello, David," Nell was saying. "Miss Netley, this is Mr. Herrick; Dave, Miss Netley, who's just come here."

Dave pulled off his cap. "Oh, don't do that, please!" Miss Netley protested, offering her hand.

He pulled his cap on again; and jerked off his heavy glove and took her hand. She had on a light, smooth kid glove and he felt a firm, strong, agreeable grasp replying to his. Hers was an individual grasp; no one had ever clasped his hand in quite that way. He thought, as he gazed at her, "I'd know you anywhere again, if I just heard your voice. If we'd met in the dark, I'd know you the next time from your hand."

Aloud, he spoke an ordinary commonplace.

She did not. "I've met Miss Sothron; I've just been with her, Mr. Herrick. She's lovely," Miss Netley said, drawing her hand from his.

"Yes," agreed Dave. "Of course I think so."

"Alice'll be out in a couple of minutes, Dave," said Nell Gould. "She stayed to speak with Myra."

"Thanks," said Dave.

Miss Netley nodded to him and he gazed at her

under the good light. "You're at Mrs. Fansler's," he said, making it a statement rather than a question.

"Yes."

She did not ask how he knew; he thought she would; most girls, surprised with information about themselves, wanted to talk about it; instead, she added: "It's two doors beyond the Delta Alpha house; that's how it's known, it appears. I was helpless to find it until I learned that. Good night, Mr. Herrick."

But Dave turned to walk with her; he might as well, since he would be walking up and down anyway; and he wanted to know more about this unusual girl who had so suddenly appeared from nowhere.

"You're entering college, of course, Miss Netley."

"Oh, yes; but I've been to college before; three years, altogether."

"Where was that?"

"Minnesota, first; then Stanford."

Dave was watching her face; for they were approaching another street light and he wanted to see Miss Netley clearly again. She looked beautiful in the half shadow; the glint of the faraway light played on smooth surfaces of her face which gave her features character when Nell's individuality was entirely lost; and as they came close to the street lamp, the pretty details and the coloring of Miss Netley became visible once more.

He was going on beside her when the step at the curb reminded him that he had passed the corner beyond Willard.

"I'm glad you're trying us now," he said, stopping.

She halted also. "Why, what did you mean by that, Mr. Herrick?" she asked him seriously.

"Why," he replied, surprised. "I don't know; I just said it. I'm glad you're here, I mean."

"That's not what you said."

"No," he admitted. "Good night, Miss Netley. I'll see you to-morrow, I hope."

"I hope so, Mr. Herrick." She turned quickly and with Nell went on, leaving him under the light.

As he stood there, watching after her, again he appreciated the extraordinary aliveness and vitality of her which made her seem altogether another sort of person from Nell. He had hurt her, he realized, by that sudden remark about "trying us now." In the reason for her change from Minnesota to Stanford and now to Northwestern, there was something which made her sensitive to his remark; he told himself that he should have guessed that there might be and as he watched her disappear down the street, he wondered what her reason was. "She's certainly unusual," he said aloud to himself. Then he turned to Willard and, thinking of Alice, found himself more stirred and more impatient for her to come out to him.

CHAPTER III

ALICE

A DIFFICULT and embarrassing bit of business, in connection with Fidelia Netley, was what detained Alice with Myra up there in Myra's room in Willard, which Nell Gould and Fidelia had just left. And the girls were unable to get to that business quickly; for after Fidelia closed the door on her departure, Alice and Myra gazed at each other in silence for several moments after Miss Netley's definite, clicking tread had diminished down the hallway. Both girls, for the instant, were holding breath; then Myra parted her lips with an audible gasp and laughed.

"Tell me the exact truth, Alice; how does she make you feel?"

"She's one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen," Alice said in her quiet, considering and utterly honest way.

"Of course she is; but that's not how she makes you feel," Myra rejoined. "A peacock's perfectly stunning."

"She's not like a peacock," Alice put in, too quickly. "There's lots to that girl, I know."

"No, you don't; you just try to feel it because she's a Tau Gamma and practically wished onto us whether we like it or not and you're congenitally cursed with the determination to make the best of anything; then

you try twice as hard because you know you don't like her. You can't help it, Alice."

"What?"

"Not liking her. Now take me, for instance," Myra went on. "I offer little to look at, the Lord knows; I'm short and plain . . ."

"You're not!"

"I adore you, darling, but we will stick to the unflattering fact for the present crisis," Myra retorted. "I am what is perfectly obvious. I'm not in Fidelia Netley's class at all. I couldn't possibly compete with her and come between her and any man she wanted. By the same token, she can't come between me and Lan; for he isn't after looks or he'd never have cared for me. Therefore I can't have anything actually personal against her; but I hate her, Alice!"

"No!" denied Alice, more emphatically for Myra's hot vehemence.

"I hate her; hate her," Myra repeated, amazing herself with her own feeling. "I can't tell you why but I suppose it's because I'm afraid of her. I'm not afraid of her for myself, I just told you; so it can't be personal. I reckon it's generic fear—the sort of fear they talk about in biology. You fear an enemy if it's the sort that has hurt or can hurt your kind whether it can really do anything to you or not. At moments I was almost amused to death, she was so frank and absolutely after just one thing. I never heard anybody quite so open as when she said to me, "My dear, which are the men you know?" I thought I would positively expire. But the men won't!"

"Expire about her, you mean?" asked Alice.

"No, dearest; in droves they'll expire. They'll breathe their last at her word. They won't see anything amusing, I mean. At moments I was seized with the almost ungovernable impulse to borrow a bugle and rush to the roof of stanch old Willard and blow to college and town 'save himself who can'; but no man would thank me. No one would trouble to save himself, if he could. They're demons for that danger." And Myra arose, shaking her small, plain self belligerently.

"She needn't be an enemy," Alice asserted after a moment's silence.

"She? She can't help it."

"Then, we shouldn't hold it against *her*. I don't like her, My," Alice confessed. "But that's mostly because I do feel afraid of her; and that's silly, I suppose."

"Silly?" said Myra, the plain, staring at her dearest friend. "For you, it's raving lunacy!"

Alice flushed hotly and then brought Myra and herself to business. "We're just thinking about our personal feelings, My, and not about her. She's a Tau Gamma; she's here now; she's our 'sister'!"

Myra interrupted. "She's not mine, or she wouldn't be, if I'd had the vote on her. If Minnesota hadn't wished her into Tau Gamma, she'd never have got in here."

"But that makes no difference now; we've got to ask her to join us."

"Not right away," Myra reminded. "We can't,

even if we all wanted to. We've got to write Minnesota and Stanford, first. Why didn't she go back to them, when she decided to return to college? It looks queer to me, I tell you, Alice."

"Of course we'll write the Minnesota chapter, and Stanford," Alice said. She was the head of the local chapter. "But——"

"But we'll not find out anything against her, even if there is something," Myra finished. "I know that. If Nell had trouble here and went to Stanford, would we tell? Of course not. So we're stuck, as I see it; we're going to have her and we might as well pretend to like it. All right, Allie; I'll be good. I'll give in." And Myra went over and kissed Alice.

She held Myra clasped for a moment and then got up. "I'd better be starting along now."

"You'd better stay here; it's a fright of a night."

"David's driving me home," Alice reminded; and Myra made no more objection but helped Alice on with her coat and accompanied her to the front entrance.

David, waiting in the snow and feeling increased impatience to possess Alice, was becoming stirred to an emotional renewal of his rebellion against his father and the ideas to which he had been reared. His revolt no longer turned on his taking Mr. Fuller's ten thousand dollars but dwelt upon his father's denial of David's right to marry Alice how and when Alice and he pleased. He longed to have Alice in his arms and for the contact of his lips on hers and for the warmth of hers on his; he longed for physical possession of her; and he was not ashamed of it; nor, he resolved,

would he let himself again be ashamed of it nor would he fear natural desire because his father would call it sin.

What a dismal, solemn rite his father would have marriage be! First, of course, he—David—should become a minister of God; he should be fired with zeal for doing God's work. If then he found that he needed a wife and she could enter with all her soul into service of the Lord, he might marry. Paul, the great apostle, of course did not marry. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," wrote Paul to the Corinthians. Nevertheless, if a man were not strong enough in the spirit to subdue the flesh, "let every man have his own wife . . . for it is better to marry than to burn."

Dave knew all that scripture by heart; he knew it so well, indeed, that it came to his mind, as it was written, entirely without bidding and when, in fact, he would not have it.

This said that to marry was to indulge a weakness of the flesh which—so Ephraim Herrick taught—might be redeemed if man and wife joined spiritually for God and if, as God blessed them, they bore children and brought them up to live righteously and in fear of the Lord. Thus Ephraim and Sarah Herrick had done. Thus they would have David do, at the right time. But now was not the right time for him to think of marriage and certainly not marriage with Alice Sothron, who was a worldly girl—oh, granted she was a generous, fond, unselfish girl—but she was a worldly girl for she did not know how to be anything else. She would make him a worldly wife; she was

precisely the sort the apostle Paul had in mind when, two thousand years ago, he preached: "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife."

Ephraim Herrick considered this already proved in regard to Alice, who had taught his son to dance in the first year David was away from home, and with that wedge of sensuality had widened the breach between father and son till now the world and the flesh were claiming him; he was selling his soul to borrow money to enter the race for riches, and denying his duty to God.

"Dances! He's still throwing up dances to me!" Dave ejaculated, in his review with himself of his father's bigoted creed. It made no difference to his father that almost all the university danced in these days—and many professors as well as the girl and men students; nor did it alter his father's view that the university, Methodist as it was, gave over its gymnasium for dances where girls went décolleté and boys put their arms about them and danced with them. Dancing now was something David could do without qualms of the right or wrong of it; but three years ago, that was not so. Suppose he had clung to the narrow interdict on dancing which had been drilled into him during his youth; what sort of a man would he be now? And was it not the clutch of other such proscriptions and senseless dreads which controlled him yet?

He squared about to Willard impatiently. "Alice

—why doesn't she come?" Then he saw her in the lighted doorway.

She was the taller of the two who now appeared there; for the other was Myra. Alice made a figure very familiar to him but not quite as he expected. She was less, in some way; he thought, "She's tired." He moved toward the door and she parted from Myra and came out; and as she saw him, she called to him in her eager, gentle way and she hurried to him. He quickened his step to her, feeling his heart leaping and pounding. She was not less to him now.

"Oh, Davey!" she cried to him; and he caught her hands which she gave to him together. He held them tight between his own; that was safe enough there just out of the light; he wanted to kiss her; but that was not safe there. "Alice!" he said. "Oh, this is good!"

"You've missed me, Davey?"

"Never anything like it with me before."

"Nor with me," she confessed.

"Let's get in the car." And he led her to it, releasing one of her hands and holding the other. Then he had to relinquish that. So he got into the car and he took the driving seat and switched on the dashboard light to see the dials and starter; but as soon as he had the engine going, he let it run idle to warm and he switched off the light.

She had merely waited, sitting quiet and close beside him. He had off his gloves and, feeling for her wrists, he found she had unbuttoned her gloves and stripped them off and he drew her slender, soft hands together again and brought them up to his lips, as he bent,

and kissed them and then held her fingers against his cheek.

"Glad to have me back?" he inquired of her.

"Oh, Davey!" she whispered, gasping; and he felt her trembling and liked it. He liked her exclaiming, as she did in a moment, "You're not cold at all but you've been waiting out there for me!"

"That's why I couldn't get cold," he said.

"No; you're so strong. And you got it, Davey! You got it!"

She meant that "it"—that ten thousand dollars of Mr. Fuller's—about which she had known ever since there was the first chance of getting it and about which he had telephoned her at Willard when he came out from town.

"Yes," he said. "I got it. And it's put up with Snelgrove's money. It's a deal, Alice!"

He had been about to take her in his arms. How lovely she was, how slender and gentle and what feeling for him she put in her soft, almost shy touches. He was feeling the loveliness of her hand on his cheek and he had been about to clasp her closer, but something about that ten thousand, which she had mentioned, downed his impulse.

They had made rules for themselves, Alice and David, long ago when they became "engaged"—rules to keep their love fine and pure, free from the cheapening and debasement of many kisses and caresses. They might kiss on meeting, when alone, kiss before parting, of course; and at some other times; they might keep their hands in each other's but other clasps must be feared. So, in spite of that five-

minute-ago defiance of fear of physical possession, Dave satisfied himself now with switching on the light again to see her face—the clear, dear line of her forehead and nose, the soft dark brown of her hair and the blueness of her eyes always open to his. She had lovely eyes and so loyal looking—unswervingly loyal to him, indeed, ever since that day, long ago, when they rested on his in a way he would never forget and she said: “We’re going to be good friends forever, aren’t we, you and I?”

That made one of their marker days about which they liked often to speak and which often came to him when he suddenly looked down at her and found her gazing at him, as she was now, certain of herself being his and wondering, in just this way, how wholly he was hers.

“Hello,” he said to her, and smiled.

“Hello,” she said; and he threw in the gear and sent the car forward.

“Plenty of snow,” he remarked as the wheels slipped. “We’ll not be home in a hurry.”

“I’m not in a hurry now, Davey.”

“Nor I. But you were before?”

“When I knew you would be down here and after I hadn’t seen you for two days! Of course! And you’d come early, I thought; you were here before you said you’d be, weren’t you?”

“Yes; for then I thought you’d come out early.”

“Oh, Davy, I would have, but to-night—” she stopped. She had forgotten Fidelia Netley in her meeting with David. Now that she remembered the new girl, she thought how senseless had been her pang

of fear of Fidelia Netley and how senseless, also, was any fear of losing David to another. It arose—she always said to herself—from the fact that at the start she had David so much to herself; for at first hardly another girl in college had thought about the serious, self-conscious boy, so pitifully strange to amusements and luxuries, who had come to Evanston to attend classes while working. Not only had they left him to himself but some of them had been rather entertained by Alice's "taking him up" and teaching him how to dance and "looking out for him." Now no one in college was so competent to look out for himself and, also, look out for a girl; and now many girls appreciated him; there was not one, who knew him, that did not like to refer to her friendship with David Herrick. Suppose he could come to care for one of them? "I haven't got to suppose that," Alice said to herself; and aloud she told him: "You see, a new Tau Gamma arrived to-night. She was initiated at our Minnesota chapter; we just heard about her and Myra had her in her room meeting some of our girls."

"I saw her," said Dave and the image of that unusual, vital girl, as she first had appeared, rose in his mind.

"You did? Where?"

"In front of Willard. She came out with Nell Gould and Nell introduced me. I suppose she's the one; a great looking girl; red hair. She's staying at Fansler's. But Nell didn't tell me she was a Tau Gamma."

"Nell wouldn't," Alice said. "We haven't asked her

to join our chapter yet. She told you she was staying at Mrs. Fansler's?"

"No; I knew that," Dave replied. "I walked with her to the corner, Alice."

"Where did Nell go?" Alice asked, fluttering at a stab of that fear, that senseless fear which had been growing in these days when every girl now looked at Dave and wanted to know him.

"Oh, she was along," Dave responded and remembered how Nell had seemed lost in the half-light when he could still see Miss Netley's face.

Alice was questioning herself, how had he known that Fidelia Netley was staying at Mrs. Fansler's? She knew it must have been mere chance; yet it frightened her that Fidelia Netley had met him at once. And he thought her "great looking" and had walked with her to the corner forgetting that he had walked also with Nell.

"She was the one?" Dave asked.

"Who?"

"That girl; she's the Tau Gamma?"

"Yes. You—liked her?"

Alice had not meant to add that; she had not meant to talk about Fidelia Netley any more; but the question pressed itself. At first Alice had dismissed it; then she realized, "I'm not asking that because I'm feeling afraid." And she determined, "I won't be afraid; I've no cause to be; I won't."

"Why, I liked her," Dave replied. "I certainly liked her. Unusual and pleasant, too, isn't she?"

This was no disloyalty, to say that he liked a new

sorority sister and to volunteer that she was pleasant.

Alice agreed: "Yes, she was pleasant." Then the demand forced itself out: "How did you know she was staying at Mrs. Fansler's?"

"Oh, some of the fellows saw her at the station and told her how to get there. They were talking about her at the house. Good she's a Tau Gamma already or you'd have a fight for her on your hands, if you wanted her. Lan saw her and told me to tip you off to her; of course he didn't know you had her already."

"We haven't her really yet," Alice corrected. "We have to write the chapter that initiated her, of course; then we have to vote to invite her to join us. Minnesota initiated her."

Alice nearly added: "Then she went to Stanford." But Alice did not; it would have been too near to suggesting something disagreeable to tell how Fidelia Netley had shifted about from college to college. Yet Alice could not help wanting Dave to know that perhaps everything was not so fair about this unusual girl whom he had found great looking and so pleasant. The next minute she was very glad she had not told him, for he said:

"Yes; she mentioned she started at Minnesota and then went to Stanford. Her family move to California?"

"No, she has no family—only an aunt who hates her and who kept her living in schools. The court took her from her aunt eight years ago and since then she's been brought up by a bank. Tau Gamma has been the nearest thing to a family she's ever known,"

Alice told quietly. That was only fair to Fidelia Netley to tell, though it visibly increased David's interest when Alice wanted so hard to stop it.

"That's hard luck. Then you're taking her in, of course."

"Yes; I think so."

"What class'll she be in? Ours?"

"Partly in ours. She was junior at Leland Stanford."

"Where's her home? I mean where's the bank that's bringing her up?"

"White Falls, Iowa."

"How'd she happen to shift here?"

"Why, she was out of school for a while; and she got so lonely she thought she'd come back. She thought she'd try it here for she wanted some of our music work along with college."

"Netley; is that her name?"

"Yes; Fidelia Netley."

"What?"

"Fidelia," Alice repeated the Christian name.

"New one on me; altogether she's a new one on me," Dave repeated, giving his conscious attention again to the drifts. He felt more disturbed over hurting Fidelia Netley by his quick, thoughtless remark. A girl brought up by an aunt who hated her and kept her living at schools, and then handed over to the guardianship of a bank, surely faced difficulties. He recalled how she had gazed at him under the light, how beautiful her face was and how well-developed was her figure.

The keeping in mind of the beauty of a girl's body

was what his father would call lust; and Dave, thinking of this, forgot Fidelity Netley as recollection of his struggle with his father claimed his feelings. At the same moment, Alice mentioned his father with the purpose of taking their talk finally from Fidelity Netley.

“How did you find your father, Davey?”

“Alice, we had the worst time ever!”

“Over the ten thousand dollars?”

“Over everything! The ten thousand dollars simply touched off the other troubles; everything went, money and my plan to go into business and—” he stopped.

“And to marry me,” Alice finished.

“Yes; he tried again to break that up. Great chance he had.”

“Davey, he feels worse about that—about me—than about your going into business; isn’t that true?”

“No; yes; what if he does?” Defiantly Dave thrust an arm about Alice and pressed her close to him as he drove. Gone from her, also, was any fear, or any thought, of Fidelity Netley. She was happy. Not wholly happy; she never could be completely happy until David and she owned each other without right of any one to forbid them love. As it was, his father had a certain right, to forbid them; or perhaps it was not that. Perhaps, without having the right, he possessed rather a power to part them. So, though she no longer thought of Fidelity Netley, Alice quivered in her happiness as David held her and proclaimed:

“I’m going to make money, Alice! I want to!

There's nothing wrong about making money. But, by George, to hear father talk you'd say I was out for murder. It's been all right for me to go out for money to put myself through Northwestern and to help at home; that's been right because he's kept on supposing that in the end I'd step into the ministry. But the ten thousand I took from Mr. Fuller has settled that, anyway. So much is over."

He snatched his arm from about her to pull at the wheel as the draw of the drift caused the wheel to oppose him. When he had the drift beaten:

"We're going to make money, Alice! I'm going to have the agency for Hamilton cars—mighty good cars, with square, decent value in them and a fair profit on every job we sell. We're going to pay back Mr. Fuller with interest and then bank some of our money so we'll always have something back of us and earning a little for us, too. There's nothing wrong in that; not even father could say so. We're going to spend some on ourselves in living; and we're going to live fairly well, I hope. We're going to give away some more money. I couldn't mention that to father; he'd think I was throwing it up to him and he wouldn't take anything more from me—or let mother take it. But I'll have the money for them and for ourselves. Not having money is—is—you've never known and you'll never know, if I can help it, how horrible it is! But it's horrible, horrible!" he said again, not meaning to but because he had to.

"Davey!" was all Alice said; and he felt the firm, gentle clasp of her fingers on his forearm. He could

not look about to her and keep the wheels in the ruts of the snow but he understood she was making her gentle protest.

“What is it?” he asked.

“It brought you to me, Davey.”

“What did?”

“Your not having money. Oh, I know it’s been horrible; I don’t like to think of it having been horrible for you. But Davey—Davey, how can I feel so about it when it brought me you?”

“It wasn’t that, Alice,” he denied, almost impatiently. “We’d have got together anyway.”

“Yes; we must have; we must have. But—” she squeezed his strong, tense forearm with all the power of her slender fingers and let him go.

He swung the car about a corner and headed it east directly into the wind. They had come to the southern limit of Evanston where the road, which they had been following, turns to the very shore of the lake and clings to the edge of the water for the dark distance south past Calvary Cemetery to the beginning of the great north shore residence blocks of Chicago.

It was a wild, lonely stretch of road that night with no other car in sight, with the roaring violence of the lake beyond the black void on the left and on the right, the dark, silent cemetery, snow-covered and storm-swept, and with gray, still monuments suddenly appearing on the side as the headlights of the motorcar diffused a glow in the sweep of the whistling snow.

“What does your father say about me?” Alice asked.

Dave jerked his head but made no reply.

"He blames me for your taking the money from Mr. Fuller?"

"No!" Dave denied but halted the car.

"Davey, I know!"

"You don't; you don't understand at all. He doesn't say anything against you as *you*, dear, he couldn't; not possibly. He likes you—for one of your sort," David added honestly. "He's said you're as lovely a worldly girl as could be. Oh, Alice!"

"Go on! I knew of course he considers me just worldly."

"I want you to be! Why not? See here; to show how far father is from us, I'll tell you one thing he said to me. He told me in plain words that my trouble was that I wanted to work for money to make you comfortable and to please you. That's wrong, in his mind—for a man to work for things to please his wife. He ought to be pleasing God all the time; or I ought to. I won't. I want to please you."

He went silent and Alice stayed very still. Then she said: "Doesn't he work to please your mother, Davey?"

"No; I never thought about that till yesterday; but it's true. He's consistent. That's how he's put his life over with mother and with himself; that's how he's had six children on a salary averaging a thousand dollars a year. He doesn't think of pleasing her; she's his partner in his game of forever pleasing God."

Again he stopped abruptly and then, at the sight of the monuments in the district of the dead beside him, he stirred almost savagely.

"Eternity makes me tired. I've seen my father

lay up his treasures in Heaven until he's blue in the face; and what good will they ever do him? I'm going to have a few of mine here."

He turned to Alice and took her in his arms, hugging her to him and kissing and kissing her.

She yielded at first; then she resisted; not knowingly, perhaps, and only a very little. He overcame that slight resistance and she offered no more but clung to him, holding to him, and her lips kissed his and his cheek. He kissed her lips, her forehead, her temples, her cheeks and her lips again; when his fury at last was going, he kissed her hands. Then he released her and she sat back, disheveled and gasping and he sat back on his side, staring at her.

"Shall we drive on now?" he challenged her.

"No."

"We—we can't do that again."

"No."

"I never saw your eyes so bright. You're not sorry, Alice?"

She caught a deep breath and repeated again her monosyllable, "No."

Now he would have more. "No, what?"

"No, Davey."

"You hate me for that, Alice?"

"Hate you!" she closed her eyes. "We never had anything like that before, dear."

"No."

"Not even at first, Davey, before we made our rules."

"No," he said, almost resentfully now. "Why

didn't we? Because we were afraid—or I was afraid and made you afraid! Afraid; afraid of everything right and natural and warm and alive because forever I was told to think of that!" he gestured with defiance to the still, gray stones of the graveyard. "What a crazy idea to believe you ought to be brought up for death instead of for life! Let's get away from here."

Being in the driver's seat, of course he was the one to do the getting away; and he put a foot on the clutch and a hand to the gear. "Kiss me," he commanded her, leaning toward her before he started the car; she kissed him again and he drove away from the dark resting-ground of the dead to the avenue of lighted homes aglow through the snow.

"The lust of the flesh," the words of Paul so often repeated by his father ran in Dave's brain and iterated themselves more emphatically the more he would smother them. "Ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit."

This amazing moment, which he had just taken, stirred what was called the lust of the flesh. "What of it?" David Herrick defied himself. He looked about to Alice who was sitting in her corner gazing at him and not saying a word. "Happy?" he demanded of her.

She waited a moment and then said, steadily: "More than I ever was in all my life, I think."

"You don't know?"

"Yes, I know—about me, Davey; but about you, I don't."

“Why not?”

“Davey!” She clasped his wrist tight. “Can you—are you sure—can you?”

“What?”

“Marry me?”

“I’ll show them!”

“Them? Who?”

“Father, I mean,” he corrected; but he meant Paul, too, and all the apostles of Eternity. Of course he did not tell her; yet she suspected at least a part.

“But can you be happy, Davey? Oh, you know what I’m thinking of—your conscience, Davey, and all the duties you make yourself do! Can we, Davey? Can we?”

“Listen! Will you marry me, definitely—we’ll set the day right here and now—on the twenty-second of June? Is that all right with you?”

“The twenty-second of June will be all right with me, Davey.”

“Just ‘all right’?”

“Oh, my boy! my boy!”

He swung the car to the curb and again stopped.

After he once more grasped the wheel and gear-shift, he felt no relapse to guilt for his stirred sensation; he did not even try to down it; he gloried in it, thrusting his arm about Alice, gathering her against him and, when he drove into another drift, snatching at the wheel and struggling violently with the snow. So he brought her to her home.

Only after he had left her and was on the elevated train for Evanston did his new defiance of his father and of Paul, the apostle, and the company of saints

living with the Lord, begin to break with him. While he was in the lighted, warm car of the train and surrounded by the ordinary, worldly, somewhat sleepy people on their way to the suburbs from the city, he maintained most of his defiance; but when he left the train, he happened to be alone, and alone made his way through the snow down dark, quiet streets.

He passed a row of small houses which lay between the tracks and the university neighborhood and he noticed one alight. While he approached it, the glare of motorcar headlights confronted him and an automobile labored through the snow to the little house where a man with a small satchel hurriedly got out.

"A doctor," Dave said to himself; and he saw a man waiting in the open doorway of the house and holding to the door nervously and anxiously. Dave got a glimpse of a woman gazing out an upper window and from her posture of awe and dread, he imagined that a child in that house had been taken seriously ill. He stopped and stared up at the house and there came to him an image from a Sunday-school card, which he had been given when a little boy and which illustrated the text from Exodus: "I will pass through the land and will smite the firstborn."

It pictured the Angel of Death hovering over a house; and Dave, standing there in the dark and the snow, imagined the Angel above this house and waiting, whether to pass on or to strike, not upon anything the hurried little man with the satchel might do, but waiting upon something far more fundamental than that. And suddenly Dave seemed to himself to be standing, not before this house, but be-

fore the cottage in which he was born and above which, when he was a baby, the Angel of Death had hovered, with the doctor helpless to send the angel away until the father and mother had prayed to God, promising God that their firstborn, if spared, would do his work.

“Silly!” said Dave to himself, to get himself out of this; and he turned and went on; but as he walked alone down the silent, deserted street, fright seized him for his defiance of Eternity.

He tried to shake it off by thinking of Alice and summoning to himself the sensation of her in his arms; but he could not. He failed to regain the sensation and, instead, he remembered that she, too, had been afraid not for herself but for him; and after he had declared to her his defiance of fear, she had doubted him.

He had left the train at a station which was slightly north of the Delta Alpha house; and so, as he turned south, he came first to Mrs Fansler’s.

“There’s where that girl lives,” he said to himself. “Fidelia Netley,” he repeated her name; and he looked up at the big house which was all dark now except for a night-light aglow in the halls. He wondered where, in the house, she was; and he wondered this without becoming aware of any real significance in his wondering, although that was a strange thing for David Herick. For he knew many of the girls living in that house but never before had wondered in which portion any of them roomed.

Likewise he failed to realize that it was when he

neared Mrs. Fansler's and his thoughts went to Fidelia Netley that his fears, stirred by the lighted cottage beside the tracks, had quieted.

"Everybody's asleep," Dave said to himself; but he was not thinking about everybody in that house.

As a matter of fact, Fidelia was not asleep but since her lighted window was at the rear, Dave did not notice it. She stayed up to all hours of the night, did Fidelia Netley, and without suffering either in energy or appearance for she possessed a marvelous fund of vitality which her sound sleep completely restored.

She liked to half undress and thrust her bare feet into soft slippers and to let down her hair and, with her door locked on everybody, she would "do" her diary.

She was doing that now; and her diary was no brief "line a day" but was a full and remarkably frank record of her important doings and, even more, of her important sensations of each day.

Since this had proved an unusually critical and momentous day, she had filled two pages with her handwriting before she got into the chronicle of her arrival at Mrs. Fansler's. She wrote:

"I told Mrs. Fansler about Idaho; at least, I mentioned that I went there from Stanford. I don't know why I told it. It seemed to slip out; but it did no harm. Any one can go to Idaho for any of a thousand reasons; and there's no one here who would know anything about my visit there. A man from Mondora is in college, Roy Wheen. I never heard his name. But Mondora, how I can see it! The stores with their funny, second story false fronts and all needing paint; the white dust and the sun on the streets!

"I was riding to the right, I remember. We bought bread there and cartridges. I was happy; or I thought I was. Then we went on to Lakoon!

"Probably this Roy When was not even in Mondora when I was there; he would never know me. No one that I've seen has mentioned him at all. Hatfield house, where he lives, is not in fraternity circles.

"Tau Gamma girls invited me to Willard after supper. Tau Gamma is certainly *the* sorority here, as I'd heard it was. Alice Sothron runs the chapter because she has the most money and can do entertaining and other things for the girls. She's rich and generous and sweet; but that's about all. She doesn't, but I can make her, like me. She wants to be fair and she's the one that will write to Minnesota and Stanford about me. Well, Minnesota will come through for me; Stanford, too. They'll O. K. me and Alice Sothron will tell this chapter to take me in.

"*The* man in college is David Herrick—everybody calls him Dave. He's the sort of man I've sense enough now to appreciate. They say he was nobody at all when he came here four years ago but now everybody drags him into the conversation in some way. He was waiting for Alice Sothron when I came out of Willard. I liked his looks and the way he stood; I saw there was no mere boy but a man. We were introduced and he said, after I told him I'd been at Minnesota and Stanford, 'now you're trying us.' Then he was sorry; and nice. I'm going to like him; hasn't been about the world much but he has will and character. He's innocent and strong. I like him now; I keep thinking about him. He's certainly a contrast to S."

Fidelia wrote the initial but not the name and she stopped writing. She glanced over the page but her mind was not on it; for the last line she had written had turned her thought emotionally into the past.

It went back beyond the date of the beginning of

this volume of her diary; for she closed this book and stepped to her trunk, which had been brought to her room after supper. Unlocking the trunk, she uncovered a set of twelve diary volumes which contained her self-record from the time she was ten years old. She touched the covers of several of the books but took out only one which was easily distinguished from the others by its scorched leather.

The sight and feel of this charred binding increased Fidelia's excitement, reminding her of two occasions when she had thrown it into a fire and then rescued it. She fingered the blackened edges for a moment before turning to the pages dated, in that period after she left Stanford University.

"Lakoon, Idaho," she read at the top of an entry; then she forgot everything as she read, breathing deeply, her own record of her own doings and passions at that time and place, preserved for herself as she would remember it.

Every time she took this book in her hands, she knew she ought to finish burning it; but every time she opened it, she knew why she had not destroyed it and why she never would. Nothing she could read elsewhere could compare with this; and when she said to herself that, if she destroyed the book, she would remember all, she found this was not so. How amazingly vivid the image and sensations restored by the written word!

So she always kept the book near her, trusting to the excellent lock of her trunk. She was quivering when, at last, she ceased to read; quivering when she

packed it down in place in her trunk, covered it and securely locked it in. Quivering she turned and stared away and, in her need to muster some new sensation to obliterate that of the past, she brought to her feelings the personality of the man whom to-night she had met and liked and who had interested her.

“Dave Herrick!” she said his name aloud; and, repeating it, she put her hand to her hair and began preparing for sleep to be ready for the meetings of tomorrow.

CHAPTER IV

CLASSES TOGETHER

TO the tinkling of her alarm clock which she had set to ring twenty minutes earlier than the other girls in the house were to be roused, Fidelia awoke and almost instantly arose and went to bathe. Upon hearing her in the hall, Mrs. Fansler looked out and gazed with admiration at the clear freshness of Fidelia's face in the haggard glow of electric light at daybreak.

"You're early, child," said Mrs. Fansler, pleased. She had supposed that Fidelia would be one to dally in bed and to rush down to breakfast at the last moment. Mrs. Fansler had been prepared to indulge her somewhat.

Fidelia would have liked often to lie abed in the morning but boarding-school had trained her, when she was little, to the advisability of always rising promptly and making as little trouble as possible; so now she was bathed and again in her room and was dressing when the other alarm clocks began sounding.

Each ring stirred a slight, agreeable excitement; she liked the feeling of "I'm back to it again" which the sounds quickened; she liked the familiar smell of second-grade coffee boiling and of eggs and bacon being fried in quantities for the boarding-house breakfast. She listened for the sleepy and the crisp hellos and good mornings in the hall; for the generous offer,

“You go ahead; I’m in no hurry” and the grateful acceptance, “Oh, you dear, honestly, aren’t you? I’ve got to make an eight o’clock” and the rest of the chatter of the girls going to and from the bath.

One tapped gently at her door. “Breakfast in ten minutes,” she called with friendly warning.

“Oh, thank you!” Fidelia replied. “I’m nearly ready.”

She was dressing slowly and carefully, giving particular attention to her hair. She liked to dress for a definite purpose and as she gazed into the glass she thought of how David Herrick had viewed her under the light of the glaring street lamp last night. “He liked me,” she thought. As she brushed her glorious hair, she thought of him seeing its color by daylight and she thought of Alice Sothron arranging her soft, dark hair to please the same man.

When the gong sounded, Fidelia descended to breakfast, neither the first nor the last of the fifteen girls in the dining-room. She had met them all at dinner last evening and she was aware that they had talked her over since that occasion; each girl knew whether or not she liked Fidelia Netley and probably most of them had verbally declared themselves. Fidelia felt conscious of friends here, foes there, as she replied to the girls’ good mornings. There were two tables in the dining-room and Fidelia’s place was at the larger, which was set for eight. Her neighbor on her left was the same as at dinner last night; but a girl named Edith Lacey, who had been next her on the right at dinner, now was two places away and a thin, intense, nervous girl, who wore glasses and whose

name was Dorothy Hess, had moved into Miss Lacey's chair.

"I asked Edith to change with me," Dorothy whispered. "You and I will be in the same classes, you see." And Dorothy took from the bowl of fruit the finest orange and laid it upon Fidelia's plate.

Fidelia warmed and she thanked Dorothy and cut the orange; she wanted to give it back but she realized she must accept it. Dorothy was the girl who had rapped at her door and Fidelia guessed that last night, in the discussion at this house over Fidelia Netley, this thin, intense, unattractive girl had come forward as her especial protector; and, probably, Edith Lacey had sided against her. Fidelia never knew why a girl like Dorothy Hess would suddenly, and without any reason, become fanatically her friend; but she knew that a girl like Dorothy always would. At every school which Fidelia had attended, this had been so.

Dorothy was trembling a little with excitement and Fidelia wanted to clasp her thin, quivering hand; but instead she said:

"Are you a senior? Why, you must be the youngest senior in college!"

She brought a flush of pleasure to Dorothy's pale cheek..

"No, there's a boy in our class who's only eighteen," Dorothy told modestly. "I'm nineteen this spring."

"She's going through in three years; and she's just about at the top of every course she takes," a girl opposite put in.

"Why!" said Fidelia.

"She's got Phi Beta Kappa so cinched that it's practically lying in her lap," the other girl continued with a sharpness of emphasis just on the edge of a taunt.

Fidelia did not feel this meant for her; and, indeed, the girl opposite glanced at Edith Lacey as she spoke. Fidelia discreetly kept silent; the others at the table were still for the moment for they were conscious of a delicate situation; and Fidelia could guess what it was.

Miss Lacey, who evidently did not like Fidelia Netley, was a sorority girl; Dorothy Hess and the girl opposite were not. In this house of fourteen girls, besides Fidelia, there were eight who wore on their blouses the pin of one or another of the college sororities; six girls wore no emblem at all. The fourteen had been coming to these same tables three times a day, they had been rooming side by side and exchanging a dozen times a day the little courtesies which Fidelia had overheard that morning; yet if ever a house was set against itself, in secret bitterness and hidden soreness of soul, this house of fifteen girls was so divided. For here were eight marked by the gold and jeweled symbols of approval by their collegemates; here were eight who bore on their blouses the proof that others had welcomed them at the university, had found them delightful and desirable and so had initiated them into the elect band who called each other "sister." And here were six who, willingly or without their will, but by the mere fact of their presence in college, had offered themselves for this same approval and election, but who, having been seen

by the select and having been met and talked with, had been passed by as not wanted.

Naturally it was easy for a delicate situation to arise between these groups; naturally the girls, who had been ignored, became sensitive before the girls who had been preferred. Some of the more sensitive left college, Fidelia knew; some simply endured; but others, and often the frailest and most sensitive, "fought back." And Fidelia understood that this was what Dorothy Hess was doing when she was overworking herself to stand at the top of every class. Disregarded by the sorority girls, she determined to prove herself as good or better than they; and, if she could not make them give her a sorority pin, she would win from them the prize of scholarship—the key of Phi Beta Kappa—with which the faculty decorated the honor students of the class.

Fidelia appreciated that Miss Lacey coveted Phi Beta Kappa but probably would not get it, while Dorothy Hess was sure to; reference to that fact gave the opposite girl a certain satisfaction; yet it seemed to give Dorothy none.

Fidelia felt impulsively for Dorothy and she clasped one of Dorothy's thin, tense hands under the table.

"What's your major?" Fidelia asked, taking up the vernacular for discussing classwork which she had dropped the year and a half ago.

"History; I love it."

"So do I," said Fidelia. "Music and history are what I'm here for."

A sorority girl at the other end of the table smiled at nothing at all unless it was at this protestation of

Fidelia's serious purpose at college; Miss Lacey also seemed to find something amusing; and Fidelia felt Dorothy's fingers clasping her own more tightly. She began to realize that the girls, who most obviously did not like her, were all wearers of society pins and that her friends were among the other girls.

She knew that they all had learned now that she was a Tau Gamma from Minnesota and also that last night the local Tau Gamma girls, who lived at Willard Hall, had had her "over." She wondered how much more Edith Lacey, for instance, might know which Fidelia herself did not. Miss Lacey, though a member of a different sorority, appeared to be an intimate friend of several Tau Gammas.

"I hear you met Myra Taine last night," Miss Lacey commented. "She and I roomed together freshman year. I dropped into her room half an hour after you'd gone."

Fidelia took this remark as almost threatening. Of course she had seen that Myra Taine disliked her and she wondered if, after she had left Myra's room, Tau Gamma had decided to turn thumbs down upon her and Myra Taine had hinted at this.

Fidelia knew that the local Tau Gamma girls could refrain from inviting her to join them; but it was not at all probable; for it would put too great a stigma upon a girl. It would amount to saying, publicly, "Tau Gamma has met you and written about you to the other chapters which you joined; we've found something the matter and so refuse to take you in."

No, Fidelia thought; they would not do that; but

they could. They could put her in a position more humiliating than Dorothy Hess's; they could make her one who was not merely ignored, but who was outcast.

She gazed out the window and saw several men on the snowy walks going to classes, undoubtedly; she forgot her apprehensions and finished breakfast cheerfully.

Many men were on the walks when she left Mrs. Fansler's door in company with Dorothy; and others were appearing from houses up and down the block, hailing one another and calling to girls through the fine, flickering snow which was in the air this morning.

The wind of yesterday and of the night had ceased and the day was calm and mild under light gray clouds which sifted down this pleasant snow and which now and then let sudden, gleaming shafts of the sun slip through.

Fidelia came out in her brown mink coat and toque with Dorothy beside her in a plain, blue cloth coat; and everybody who glanced their way, looked again.

"They're asking who you are," Dorothy whispered in her excitement at appearing as companion to this beautiful person and she flushed as they came down to the walk. Fidelia did not flush at all; she was used to being stared at and could gaze back easily and impersonally.

She did so now, into the eyes of boys, mostly. Some of these on the way to classes really were men, she saw; but no one here was like David Herrick.

She had an extravagant idea, after meeting him so

quickly upon coming to this place, that perhaps it abounded in such men of unusual attractiveness; but here were boys and men of only the ordinary sorts.

On the sidewalk, where the snow had been plowed away in a path hardly wide enough for two to walk together and for another person to pass, Dorothy lost her flush of importance; for the men, who were overtaking Fidelia and herself, began pushing by in single file, each peering at Fidelia. No one gave so much as a look at Dorothy Hess and no one spoke to her.

Then the door of the Delta Alpha house opened and Fidelia, glancing up, saw on the porch the short man who had directed her at the station and who, as she now knew, was Myra Taine's friend, Landon Blake. Two boys, probably freshmen, were with him and behind was the tall figure of David Herrick.

Fidelia looked away immediately but not before she observed that David Herrick had seen her and had started forward impulsively and then stopped.

Going on, with eyes ahead, she said to herself: "He wants to catch up with me but thinks he shouldn't; but he wants to."

Fidelia's pulses pricked with her instinct for flight; she wanted to hurry on to make him pursue, if he was to speak with her, but Dorothy detained her. Dorothy, who was ignored by so many men, knew the prominent man of the college and she was determined to show it; so she held Fidelia by her fur sleeve.

"There's a friend of mine I want you to know," and she faced Fidelia about to David Herrick.

He approached, feeling self-conscious at immedi-

ately finding Fidelia Netley this morning; for he had been thinking about her more than he liked. Of course he had been thinking much about Alice; he had been impatient, as never before, to have the hour for classes come because it would bring him Alice. But also he had been looking forward to seeing Fidelia Netley.

He called this mere curiosity because she interested everybody so unusually. He said naturally he wanted to know why and he wanted to know more about her "as a person." That was the way he phrased it to himself; he did not say, "as a girl" but "as a person."

The Delta Alphas had talked about her again at breakfast that morning. "That red-haired queen from Fansler's sure stirred up a flurry at the Hall." Dave had kept out of the conversation; he did not even mention that he had met her. The talk was wholly unobjectionable yet he did not like it.

After he finished breakfast, he delayed in the front of the house and several times glanced out the window toward Mrs. Fansler's; yet he denied to himself that he started from the house when he did because he had seen Fidelia Netley come out. Naturally he would be starting then; everybody was going to classes. But he could not deny the sensation which seized him when she looked up at him.

She did not nod; some girls make it a rule never to speak to men on a fraternity house porch. Probably that was her reason, he thought. He liked that in Fidelia Netley, though Alice always spoke to him wherever she saw him. He did not mean to overtake

Miss Netley but Dorothy Hess forced it. Dorothy let Lan pass, though he spoke to her, and she let the two freshmen pass; then she hailed David by name and he took off his cap and advanced and shook hands with Dorothy in awkward formality. He was feeling that he was making something of a show of himself when Fidelia Netley spoke to him and explained to Dorothy how she had met him last night. "But it was hardly for a moment," she added.

Her way of saying this, which put far more importance on this meeting which Dorothy had arranged, pleased the plain, nervous girl who sidled to the outside of the path, leaving Dave to walk next to Fidelia; and it banished Dave's feeling that he had made a show of himself. He caught step with Fidelia Netley.

"We're giving you better weather this morning," he started, tritely.

She nodded. "Just right. I'm going to love this place. You do, particularly, of course."

"Why particularly?" Dave asked.

"You've done so wonderfully well here; and your father was here before you. You must feel it especially your college."

She said it with such warmth that Dave glowed with the feeling which she was so sure was in him. "Yes," he admitted.

"You probably never thought of leaving here after you started; but I—well, I seem to have been looking around, don't I?"

"What have you been looking for?" Dave asked quickly; and it was like last night when he said abruptly, without thinking, "You're trying us now."

He did not intentionally put such a personal question as that but, when he was with this girl, an impulse for the personal seemed to surprise him. He realized it; and told himself he must watch out for it.

"What does any one look for, Mr. Herrick?" she returned.

"Why, what she hasn't got," Dave replied practically. "What didn't you have, Miss Netley?"

There he had done it again with her; and more baldly.

"What you evidently found here," Fidelia answered, "since you've stayed. But that answer doesn't tell anything to you; for you've found so much—fame and riches and Miss Sothron."

Dave colored slightly, not because of her mention of Alice but because till that mention he had completely forgotten Alice. He looked away from Fidelia Netley to the corner ahead where frequently he met Alice and where he expected to find her this morning; he did not see her and he gazed at Fidelia, catching her eyes for a brief, friendly glance.

"I never heard so little called fame and fortune before, Miss Netley," he objected, smiling; and she smiled and they agreed, in that glance, to let the argument go.

"Miss Netley," he called her; but to himself he thought: "Fidelia Netley."

He had not liked her name when Alice told it to him, but it had interested him; now he liked it. It seemed a particularly exuberant sort of name fitting to this most unusual girl. When she spoke, or when he did, she always looked at him but when she gazed

ahead or spoke to Dorothy, he took his chance to observe the warm hue of her hair and the clear, agreeable glow of her smooth skin. He liked to watch the line of her profile with her pretty nose, not quite straight but with a slight, impulsive, attractive tilt; it was a nose which shortened, fascinatingly, when she laughed. He kept watching it and her lips which were full and soft and warm-looking and ever changing in expression. "She must have any amount of feeling," Dave said to himself and liked her for it; and he let himself appreciate the vigor of her body and her beauty of form.

He could not help contrasting her, physically, with Dorothy Hess; every one else on the street was contrasting them when they stared at Fidelia Netley and never glanced at Dorothy twice. He was different from being beside Miss Netley; he felt keener from a stimulation which was so definitely from her that he could not deny it.

Also, he was feeling actively free this morning. Of course Fidelia Netley had nothing to do with that. He had brought it to himself by his final break with his father when he took his loan of ten thousand dollars from Mr. Fuller.

Alice had a great deal to do with that. Again he looked for her as he approached the corner of University Place; for she would probably come to college on the electric car this morning, when the streets were so heavy with snow. He saw that a car must have just let out some passengers for several people were hurrying from the direction of the car line toward the

University. One girl walked alone more slowly and was purposely delaying.

"That's Alice!" Dave recognized her; then he denied, "No; that can't be Alice." But he saw that she was, and at this sight of her, with this disconcerting return of his sensation that she was somehow less, he remembered that it had seized him last night after he had been with Fidelity Netley.

He did not like it; he would not have it. In a moment, he did not have it for as he came close to the corner where she was standing and frankly waiting for him, his feeling for her flowed over.

"Hello," he hailed her.

She nodded to him; she did not speak to him because, at that instant, she could not; she was caught too tightly in the grip of her fear, that baseless fear of losing him sometime, which had become so much more definite since his meeting with Fidelity Netley. Here he was with Fidelity Netley again this morning. "It's perfectly natural," Alice argued with herself. "She came from two doors beyond Delta Alpha; they just happened to meet and so of course came on. There's Dorothy Hess with them, too."

Fidelity spoke to her and she replied; then she spoke to Dorothy and last to David. "Good morning, David," she said, looking up directly into his eyes where she found nothing but his feeling for her which had filled him again. It made her strong and confident.

The plowed path on the walk was no wider there than up the street so if four were to walk together,

somebody must drop back. Dave was about to do this when Dorothy eliminated herself by suddenly calling after a girl in another group and hurrying ahead. "She's some history notes I positively have to see," Dorothy explained.

Fidelia and Alice both started to the inside of the walk, each leaving to the other the place next to Dave. Alice went so far that she stepped into the deep snow and Fidelia helped her brush her skirt when she stepped back. They went on with Alice where Dorothy had been and Fidelia next to Dave.

Many men and girls called to them as they came to the campus; for almost everybody in college knew either Alice or Dave. Everybody, without exception, looked at Fidelia Netley; and, when they looked, they contrasted her with Alice beside her.

Dave felt that they were doing somewhat as they did when Dorothy was with Miss Netley; it was not that, but enough like it to make him angry. Speaking to Fidelia Netley, he looked from her to Alice. She was paler, less strong surely, less—alive. No; he would not say that. Alice was not less alive. Less something but not that!

So, feeling dissatisfied and irritated over it, he went with the girls to class.

CHAPTER V

THE SUN IN THE CLASS-ROOM

FIDELIA left Alice and Dave in the hallway of the big, tall, spired building known as "old University"; for she had business with the registrar before she could start classes. Alice and Dave went together into the lecture-room where Dave's attention was soon turned to practical affairs; for this first lecture was on economics and the mention of money in large sums set him to thinking about that ten thousand dollars which he had borrowed to start himself in the automobile agency business.

The lecture-room was large and pleasant, lighted by several tall windows; it had seats for about forty students and Dave had a chair in a position he usually chose, which was about half way back and near, but not on the edge of, the aisle separating the male and female members of the class.

They might sit mixed together; occasionally they did for there was no rule enforcing the ethics of a Quaker meeting; there was merely a custom of separation. So Alice was on the opposite side of the aisle from Dave and her place was a couple of rows behind him; for she liked a position from which she could see him and she had a way of keeping him in sight without even her seatmates suspecting how frequently she gazed at him.

A class with him always made a delightful hour for Alice—a quiet, unhurried hour during which she would consider him with deep, dreaming satisfaction. Here he was near her but making no demand upon her. She liked to have him make demands; how would she ever live without his needing her? But how she liked these hours of nearness to him during which he would completely forget her in his absorption in the work of the class.

She did not mind that he forgot her, though she seldom completely lost her awareness of him; loving him, she loved his way of wholly absorbing himself with an idea. She realized that he ought to take the idea of economics seriously. She had no interest in it for itself; she learned, almost verbatim, important paragraphs of the text-book and so she was sure to “pass” creditably; but this was a course which she had entered because David was in it.

This morning she watched him lose himself in speculation and she guessed that he was visualizing the progress of his ten thousand dollars through the hands of Mr. Snelgrove into the channels of manufacturing and selling effort to which the professor was referring. Ordinarily she would have sat back, half listening, meditative, thoroughly content; but the usual peace and sense of security was gone from her.

Gazing at David, she thought about Fidelia Netley and wondered if she was having any difficulty with the registrar. That was possible if, as Myra believed, Miss Netley had been in trouble elsewhere. How simple for her if Fidelia Netley would not be allowed in college! Then she felt how false and cowardly

was such a hope. She would not be afraid of Fidelia Netley! Yet she was more afraid since her walk to college with Miss Netley this morning when everybody had compared them and when David, looking at her past Fidelia Netley, had been disappointed in her. He had not wanted to be but he was! Oh, she had felt that!

How strange that he could forget it and absorb himself in what a lecturer was saying about the law of joint cost. But there David was, listening, making notes, buried in economics as though nothing had happened, while she was waiting for the end of the hour to know whether her world was, after all, to go on as before or whether everything would be changed for her now.

The bell, and the ending of the lecture, brought David back from costs and factors of production. He slipped his note-book into his pocket and stood up, glancing toward the girls and waiting, as the men usually did, for the girls to go first from the class. The opened door let in the chatter and bustle of the hall.

Ten minutes were allowed for changing classes, and for going from building to building; so the students whose next lecture was under the same roof, had liberal time to visit in the hall. On the first floor of "old University," there was much passing to and fro and there the most popular girls—and sometimes the men after a football victory or a class election—held impromptu levee.

A girl was the center of the group now near the bulletin board and Alice knew that girl, without

having to look over the heads of others. The college was meeting Fidelity Netley.

Some one, seizing David, was trying to work him into the crowd. "Oh, I know Miss Netley," he said; and he called to her, over the heads, "Fixed up your registration all right?"

"Oh, finely, thanks," Fidelity Netley's voice replied. So that was settled.

Alice went off to another building for her nine o'clock lecture, which was in a course Dave did not take. Her ten o'clock class also was different from his, but eleven, the hour of the last class of the morning, was a time of their meeting again.

As she returned to old University for this class, she was sure that she would find Fidelity Netley in it, and there she was when Alice and Dave entered the class-room together.

The windows in this room were to the south and, as the clouds which had been rift all morning, now had cleared away, the sun was shining in, yellow and warm. The bright shafts of light gave a comfortable and cozy air to the room, which was not large; and only ten girls and a few more men entered for this class.

Fidelity was sitting by herself in a seat just on the edge of a shaft of the sun. It touched her shoulder when she leaned to her left and suddenly set her hair gloriously aglow under her small toque of mink. Alice almost gasped when she saw her.

Alice wanted to say to herself that Fidelity had placed herself there with forethought and purpose; but Alice honestly could not feel that. What she felt

was something far more dismaying to her; it was the sense of natural instinct which this girl had for the sun and which drew her there to the edge of the light as a flower would have been turned or a young, wild animal enticed by the warmth and the light.

Alice looked up at David who was gazing at Fidelia Netley. Of course he was! Alice did not speak; she did not want him to look from Fidelia to her; she could not bear to see the change which would come in his face.

She slipped away and realized that, if she went to her usual seat, she would be beside that girl on the edge of the sun. Alice started elsewhere; then, flushing, she went to her own seat.

"This is fine," Fidelia welcomed her and gave a warm, firm hand. She had taken off her coat and the jacket of her suit was unbuttoned; for it was hot in the room.

Myra came in and sat down beside Alice, while Lan took a seat near Dave. At the start of the lecture, Fidelia opened a new note-book, pulled a silver pencil on a ribbon from her bosom and bent slightly, her hair sometimes in the shadow, sometimes in the sun. Myra began taking notes, also. Alice did not but watched Fidelia's and Myra's hands while they wrote. Myra had a small, practical-looking hand which wrote in clear, plain characters; Fidelia's hands were longer, slender and strong, with beautifully shaped nails. Alice could find no blemish on those hands. Physically, this girl was as nearly perfect as any one Alice had ever seen; and with her beauty went her exuberance of life, her instinct for the sun.

The lecture was not like any other. How could it be? The lecturer was human and had to glance again and again toward that glory on the edge of the sunlight which was a girl slightly bent over while she wrote his words. The boys on the other side of the room looked toward the sunlight often. Lan did and so did David. And to Alice, at least, there was a difference in their glance. When Lan looked at Fidelia Netley, Myra was not disturbed at all; he used often to look over at the girls. But when David looked, Alice went weak; usually in this class, as in the other, Dave never gazed toward the girls.

CHAPTER VI

TROUBLING QUESTIONS

“GOING to chapel to-day?” David asked Alice, when they came out.

“No, thanks. I think I’ll go right home.”

He walked to the car line with her alone, except that other couples were a few steps ahead of them and still others were behind. They talked to each other as usual but each was conscious of an effort to do so. They waited, silently, for a car and when it stopped Dave held Alice back after others got aboard.

“Wait for the next car,” he begged.

“Why?” she asked but she stepped away with him.

“Alice, you’re feeling bad about something.”

“I’m not . . . I mean, if I am, so are you.”

“I’m not,” he denied.

The car had gone on, having taken everybody else from the corner.

“We’re stupid standing here, David,” she said; then, “Davey.” Her eyes blurred.

He seized her arm. “Let’s walk. After last night, we shouldn’t ever have trouble.”

“No, we shouldn’t.”

“What have I done, Alice?”

She did not answer.

“What have I done?” he repeated; then he appealed: “I wish I could *talk* to you. I wish we could

be like last night again, Alice. But I've got to go down town. I've got to see Snelgrove about our business, dear."

He clasped her arm tight. "There's nothing the matter between you and me, Alice," he denied. "There can't be."

She looked up at him, her eyes ablur. "No; there can't be, Davey," she cried. "There can't be. . . . Here's another car."

He stopped it and helped her on to it, and he watched it away with a pang of his usual feeling. But when he was walking alone to the railroad station to take a train to Chicago, he wondered where Fidelia Netley was.

Fidelia just then was at chapel. She liked chapel for the verve of many people meeting and for the singing. She was accustomed to going to church and chapel for, besides being agreeable, it helped her with people. She knew scores of hymns by heart and she sang with a clear, vibrant soprano, and without having to look at the book which she held:

"He leadeth me, He leadeth me;
By his own hand, He leadeth me.
His faithful follower I would be;
For by his hand, He leadeth me."

She repeated the Lord's prayer aloud and with perfect rhythm in her words. She liked the formal prayers, for their beauty of rhythm, almost as much as she liked the hymns.

On her way out from chapel, she met several more

girls and men; and several others hovered on the edges of the group without coming close.

She began to notice a boy of about twenty who first was on her right and then was on her left and now had moved again as though circling to have a look at her from every side. He was a serious person, wearing steel-rimmed spectacles; his ready-made gray suit and coat were of good enough material but they had not been pressed recently.

Evidently he was a careless, or at least an absent-minded boy, untidy in his studiousness.

Fidelia grew uneasy under his peculiarly persistent observation; she saw him once speak to Dorothy Hess and ask a question and then peer at her again. When he vanished, she had the feeling that he was watching her from behind.

She walked home with Dorothy and another girl from Mrs. Fansler's; and she waited until Dorothy and she were alone in the upper hall at the boarding-house before she asked Dorothy:

"Who was that man with steel-rimmed glasses who spoke to you after chapel?"

"Why, that was Roy When!" Dorothy said with evident surprise that Fidelia found any interest in him.

"Why?"

Fidelia stiffened and waited a moment to be able to reply casually: "I wondered if I ought to know him."

"Why," said Dorothy, "he asked me your name and where you came from."

"What did you tell him?"

"Why, your name and that you were from Stanford."

“Yes,” said Fidelia and quickly changed the subject, getting Dorothy to think of something else before she went into her room.

Fidelia closed her own door and held to the knob. “He was in Mondora then,” she whispered to herself. “He saw me. But he’s not sure of me.”

CHAPTER VII

SOME ENLIGHTENMENTS

DAVE went to Chicago and spent an enlightening afternoon, as an afternoon following the forming of a first partnership is likely to be; for now he had his money up with Snelgrove; there was no getting it back; and his partner acquainted him cheerily and familiarly with certain little difficulties which had not been mentioned before.

Mr. Snelgrove was an optimistic gentleman and profound from personal experience in the automobile "game," as he always called it. He had been in the game "practically since the first whistle blew," or since nineteen three, when he gave up a bicycle agency and repair shop on the south side "to put out the crack car of the day."

He liked to relate both his triumphs and disasters impartially.

"Just snatched small change at first. If a man sold a dozen two thousand dollar 'jobs,' they put his picture in the paper those days. Then the public began riding and the big money began to run. I got my big sales-room down on Michigan Avenue, one of the first on the row, and in nineteen nine wired my factory the biggest order the Western Union ever took out of Chicago for cars in our price class. In nineteen ten I just exactly doubled that order, sent my check with the order to pay deposit on the shipment

which was to come altogether in a trainload lot from Detroit. Put the picture of that order and the check and picture of the train pullin' out of Detroit, all in the papers. That was new, then; and good! Boy, we got 'em talking. Well, the trainload got under way; I'd sent for it, you understand; ordered it, paid a deposit. It was billed to me; all mine.

"And I never suspected anything."

At this point in his narrative, Mr. Snelgrove invariably paused dramatically.

"I can't say we never got warning, though," he admitted with a sense of fairness. "The morning that trainload arrived and was laying in the freight yard, the wind was from the southwest and several people commented what a queer odor there was in the air. But o' course, the stock yards are down in that direction; Chicago's used to feelin' charitable toward a southwest wind. It did seem that the yards was going extra strong that morning but nobody thought much about it. Then we went down and began unloading. Boy, it was my trainload of cars! Rotten was no word to describe that model.

"Seems the factory had got a new engineer who'd given 'em an accumulation of economical second thoughts, at the last moment of manufacturing, which they'd wished onto the model without taking the trouble to whisper anything about it to the agents. The factory thought they was fine. But, boy, when you tried 'em! Well, there they stood; take 'em or leave 'em. Like a fool, out of loyalty to the factory, I took 'em. Well, I practically had to; I had nearly

half of 'em sold with the buyers phoning in every day bawling for deliveries. And so they went out."

At this point again, Mr. Snelgrove paused, feelingly.

"Each one with my personal guarantee. I used to tie a special calling card around the radiator cap reading, 'Consider my name embossed below the manufacturer's on this car. I personally stand back of it. Irving Eugene Snelgrove.' Gosh, how personal I used to be. And how free with printed matter. I remember when I was scheming up those words, I called to my cashier: 'Say, Jim, what'll those cards cost?' 'Oh, 'bout 'leven dollars,' he yelled back. Fifty thousand and eleven would be closer to it when, 'bout two months later, the factory went broke with half the cars on my hands and the rest coming back to me as fast as they could get tows to pull 'em in.

"I changed my middle name from Eugene to Experience that summer. Well, boy, that's all right; all over now; nothing but the benefit of it left. Nothing like going broke—good and absolutely broke once—to make a sound business man. We'll get dividends on that experience to my dying day."

Snelgrove looked about forty-five but probably was older. He was a wiry, energetic philosopher with jet black hair which he dyed wherever it showed a streak of gray. Apparently—Snelgrove never was definite about his youth—he had started to shift for himself at an early date and in a most mixed company; for middle-aged, down and out ex-prize fighters, retired and obese jockeys, base-ball players who were great in

their day and now had been dropped even from "the bushes," called on Irving E. regularly, made a more or less overt "touch" and always got something, ungrudgingly and also unvirtuously given.

Dave liked Snelgrove for his optimism, for the way he had come up by his own energy and for his loyalty to his old friends. Also, Snelgrove's given word was inviolate. Dave had doubted this, at first.

He had met Mr. Snelgrove in a "used car" sale in which Snelgrove had a secondhand Rolls Royce and Dave had a cash buyer. Snelgrove had a chance to misrepresent a value and Dave thought he had done so and Dave was consequently impressed when he found Snelgrove was right.

Dave knew nothing about his domestic arrangements, not even for certain whether he was married. Women telephoned often. He lived in a hotel on the south side but slept, about half the nights, at a Turkish bath, having a passion for cleanliness and personal service. He indulged in daily shaves and facial massages and frequent manicures; but he was strict with himself at the table. He ate sparingly, keeping himself hard and lean and either smoked or chewed at a cigar incessantly.

He always started a talk of any importance by rolling a good cigar across his desk to Dave; he never remembered that Dave did not smoke.

"Boy, Hamilton and me had another talk to-day on the long distance," he said casually to Dave this afternoon, after rolling the cigar across. "He's decided our price is wrong. We got to give quality, all kinds of quality, the way the demand is going now. We got

to raise our price two hundred dollars on the touring; the rest proportional."

"But we've announced the price," Dave objected. "We've taken some orders already. We can't hold people to a new price."

"Sure," agreed Snelgrove readily. "But we're slipping every buyer two hundred dollars more of quality. They can't expect to get that free. Just see'em and get'em to come up two hundred. You can do it. It'll pay you for the time; we get eighty dollars extra per car."

"Then," said David, "we're giving them a hundred and twenty dollars more value at most and trying to get two hundred."

"Sure," Snelgrove agreed. "That's all right. Nobody'll suppose you're going around to sell him for your health, will he?"

But David stood his ground. "This firm will fill the orders I've taken, and we've accepted, at the old price or not at all."

"It'll kill half your commission," Snelgrove warned.

"All right," said David and went out on his round of calls on new prospects. To them, he had to quote the new price, of course, and he found it hard to arouse interest in the new model. He telephoned to Alice at six o'clock, as he always did when he was in town, and he took a good deal of satisfaction in talking with her. He did not think of Fidelia Netley until he started to call Alice and remembered that she and he had had trouble in the morning.

Returning to the fraternity house at nine o'clock, he studied until nearly midnight when, after Lan had

gone to bed and the rest of the house was quiet, he leaned back in his chair, no longer able to concentrate his thoughts on his reading.

At such moments, his mind usually went to Alice; he would close his eyes and see her. To-night he tried to direct his thoughts to her but they would not go.

What he kept seeing was a shaft of the sun with a girl glorious upon the edge of it; what he felt was the lilt of her step beside him. Clearly he saw the line of her profile with her pretty, provoking nose which shortened so fascinatingly when she smiled.

He got up and suddenly realized he was not so tired; it was as if, in those moments, he had rested a long time.

The clock in old University tower boomed the twelve of midnight. Unconsciously he reckoned, "In eight hours I'll see her again." Then he came to himself.

"What's the matter with me? That was the trouble between Alice and me. I know it. She did."

CHAPTER VIII

THE VALLEY OF TITANS

DAVE decided, two days later, to see no more of Fidelia Netley. Of course it was impossible for him literally to carry out this decision; for as long as he stayed in college, and she did, he was certain to meet her, not only daily, but probably several times a day.

What he meant was that he would not seek her but would avoid her as much as possible; and he would put her out of his mind.

He succeeded in this to the extent that he refrained from meeting her on the walks, when she was bound in the same direction as himself, but he spoke to her in the college halls and every morning he spent the hour from eleven to twelve in her splendid presence.

She did not always sit in the shaft of the sun; and frequently the sun did not shine, but she always gave him a sensation of splendor of color and of strength.

He forbade himself to glance often at her but it did no good to forbid himself to think about her; he could not help it. Although he kept up his habit of taking notes on the lecture, he did it only mechanically and seldom knew what he was writing. He could not keep his mind on Danton, Robespierre or even Marie Antoinette with Fidelia Netley nearly at his side.

He tried the alternative of thinking about Alice, who was nearer than Fidelia, but this was only more dis-

quieting. He thought: "Alice feels what I'm doing. She knows it's not the same. And it's not!"

It cast him into shame for himself and he realized that it ought to make him miserable. He wondered how it did not for, instead of being wretched, he felt an amazing recklessness which gave him pangs of exaltation surprising and strange to him. Also they frightened him; he warned himself, "If I give in to this, I don't know what I may do." He had never before understood impulses of utter irresponsibility.

The nearest he had come to them had been that night with Alice and he tried to believe, as she did, that everything was as before with them. Neither of them spoke of Fidelity Netley; and there was, in this, a certain confession of their fear of her; for everybody in the college was talking about her and it was queer not to mention her at all.

Then occurred his astonishing conduct of Friday morning.

He awoke early that morning, about five o'clock, he guessed; for the stars were clear and sharp above his window and the air which came in was dry, keen night air. It was very cold. The thermometer had shown zero when he went to bed; and now it seemed even colder.

Down in the basement, the freshman who took care of the furnace was shoveling coal. Dave could hear the scrape of the steel scoop plainly; probably he had been awakened by the shaking of the grate, but he might have stirred anyway from long habit of rising early in winter. He had tended furnaces to support himself when he first came to Northwestern; so these

sounds set him to thinking of his freshman days here when he was becoming the friend of Alice.

He turned over, uncomfortably, and tried to go back to sleep but failed. He got to thinking about Fidelia Netley, then drove his mind to figuring on business and considering Mr. Snelgrove. It came back to Fidelia Netley and Alice; to Fidelia again.

Dave got up and taking his clothes into the bathroom, so as not to waken Lan, he dressed, shaved and went down stairs. It was barely six, then, and still dark. No one else was about, not even the cook. The freshman, who had started up the furnace fire, had gone back to bed.

Dave went down and poked at the furnace; he took a bottle of milk from the ice-box, poured a glass and seized some crackers and went into the living-room to study. When dawn brightened, he raised the window shades and gazed out at the empty street.

He was still idle and restless when he heard the cook enter by the kitchen door and heard upstairs the slamming down of windows and talk and whistling.

It was seven o'clock and some one passed the house. Dave did not see her until she was by. He jumped up from the chair in which he had been lounging. The girl was Fidelia Netley.

He did not see her face; but her figure and her brown fur coat and her hair and her toque and, most especially, her vigor, were unmistakable. She seemed to him to be hurrying and he thought: "Something's happened!"

He pressed to the window and watched her till she was out of sight beyond the next houses. When he

stepped back, he stood staring down, quivering and arguing with himself; then he took his cap and heavy overcoat from the closet. The coat called Alice to his feeling and he hesitated but opened the front door quietly.

Upon the porch, he stood and gazed down the street. Fidelia Netley had turned from the street; no one was in sight. He wondered whether anybody upstairs had happened to see her pass and now would see him follow her. He noticed that a light fluff of snow had fallen during the night and so late that it had not been tracked by people returning home in the evening; it lay like a heavy frost on the cleared sidewalk between the high, white ridges of the old snow.

He easily traced Fidelia's footprints and saw that she had turned the corner to the east and then made south on the avenue which ran along the edge of the campus which she followed on its turn east again. Evidently she was going to the lake. He hurried and soon came in sight of her.

She and he were the only people out on the lake shore at this clear, cold moment before sunrise. To the left lay the white campus of the university with nobody astir on its paths; to the right was a white stretch of park with stark, black trees; behind were the avenues of houses where people were only beginning to get up; directly before him, lay the white, winter hills and hummocks of the lake.

For the first cold weather of this winter had come with wind; gales had beaten waves upon the piers and over the sands of the shore, blowing up spray which froze and rolled with other drops and needles

of ice and which laid the foundation of hummocks and hills which the later winds and waves built up and built up, little by little, storm by storm, until now they had made miniature mountains of spray and snow and ice all along the shore and out over the water in white, gleaming peninsulas and capes of frozen headlands and ice-cliffs.

Beyond, lay smooth, floating ice—the witness of cold weather with calm; still further out was water, the witness of wind again, when the further ice-field broke off and blew out.

There the floe was in sight with a white edge of cast-up, congealed spray. Beyond it was water once more; then ice; ice to the edge of the horizon, to the edge of the world, to the edge of creation, nothing but ice and sky. But in a moment there would be, also, the sun.

Fidelia was leaving the shore and was among the white, gleaming, miniature mountains. She was following the irregular way of their valleys. Sometimes a hill completely hid her; for a few moments, while she followed the path of some deeper cañon, she kept out of his sight; but when she was a hundred yards off shore, she began climbing the ice slopes, appearing high above the distant, flat horizon, descending and climbing again.

Dave entered the dwarf valley in which her footprint, and his, became Titanic. If he did not look back but gazed only ahead at her and at the sky, he could lose all scale; they were the Titans, she and he, among the mountains with the sky and the sun.

She stood at the edge on the last high cliff where

the waves had beaten and built before lulling down in their calm. The water was quiet now; for sound, there was the merest, softest surge under the ice. This miniature world was still below its silent sky; and to the man in the glittering, crystal valley, the girl on the edge of the tiny height before him became a glorious Goddess of the sun.

Perhaps simply by chance, perhaps by his own design, but without his being aware that he did it, he put himself in such position that she divided the sun as it rose. It made her, and the shining height on which she stood, gigantic; it shot the spray crystals at her feet with pink and purple and crimson and haloed her head with red gold of her own. While she stood there with the red sky before her and yet while the yellow rim of the sun pushed up, it kept her a Goddess. Then day was come; the spell of dawn and sunrise was broken.

Fidelia Netley turned about and saw that some one had followed her; she saw who he was and she spoke to him.

"Why, you've come here too! Isn't it wonderful?"

He knew then that she had not suspected he had followed; for her thought, even after she turned, did not wholly go to him.

"It is wonderful," he said, and she exclaimed: "I wanted to see the sun come out of the lake on a morning like this. I couldn't get anybody at the house to get up with me. I'm glad you did."

"I'm glad I did," Dave agreed and then realized that this hardly explained him. "I saw you pass our

house," he started. He felt the need of adding, "I thought something was the matter," but he felt how silly it would sound now to suggest that, when she turned toward the lake, he had had an idea that she might be intending a plunge into these waters; besides, he had never actually supposed it. So he said aloud, and rather weakly, "I wondered where you were going. I happened to be up. I'm often up early."

"So am I but not so often out, though I love it."

"So do I," said Dave. "Or at least I think I'm going to."

"Why don't you know now?"

"Oh, outdoors has meant mostly work for me; but now it's going to mean—well, just outdoors to me, too."

She nodded, her eyes softening. "I've heard about how you've worked," she said. "Outdoors and indoors, everywhere was a place for terribly hard work for you, wasn't it?"

She started walking and he went close beside her. She did not seem to choose any direction but naturally to follow the winding of the little valley of ice and snow which, though it wavered to right and left, held generally to the north.

She was on his right, between him and the sun.

"You seem to stand up to hard work!" she considered, not sympathizing now but admiring.

"You certainly stand up to the cold!"

She laughed as her foot almost at that instant slid on the icy side of a hummock; she caught herself as she went down on one knee with her hand to the ice and she recovered so quickly that, though he thrust

his hands under her arms to pull her up, he gave hardly any assistance. He merely felt the rhythm of her body and the swell of her breast as she caught breath and stood up.

"Sometimes I seem to slip," she said; and thanked him. "When will this freeze for skating?" she asked, glancing away toward the open water.

"It's doing it now," Dave assured. "See it steaming!"

The water was beginning to give off mist. The water was warmer, of course, much warmer than the air; and now with the rising of the sun, one of those capricious currents came which made mist through the sweep of colder over warmer.

Fidelia watched it but Dave did not; he watched her. Glowing color was in her cheeks and in her clear, steady eyes; her lips were red and her breath blew in white little clouds from between them as she spoke.

"When will it freeze over, do you suppose?"

"By to-morrow, if it stays calm. But don't you go far out on it, if it does!"

"Why not?"

He pointed to the distant floe. "That was shore ice a week or so ago. The wind or a current got it and it's been visiting Michigan since, I suppose. Maybe it'll be back here to-night; maybe it'll decide it wants to see Mackinac."

"Decide!" she repeated his word, turning to him, pleased. "I like to think of ice and wind and the water deciding things, too. It's so much more exciting when—"

"When what?" asked Dave.

"When they're doing things to you and you have to beat them to live."

"You speak as though you often had to do that."

She was looking away again; and he persisted, "Have you?"

"Well, once anyway," she admitted.

"Where?" Dave persisted.

She stared off as though she hadn't heard. "What birds are those? Gulls?"

"Yes," said Dave and again demanded: "Where was that?"

"Oh—out west."

"At Stanford?"

"No. Please don't ask me!" she begged, frankly.

Dave started with shame. "I don't know what's got into me," he apologized. "I never was so rude as that in all my life."

She said nothing but she did something better to make him feel forgiven. They had come to an ice grotto where the waves of the early winter had half completed one of the miniature mountains; they had built up half a hollow hill and then subsided, and merely had floored the half they had created. It left a wide, domed cavern with the solid side to the shore, the opening to the sun; and there was a flat ice shelf like a bench within it.

Fidelia went in and sat down and with her gloved hand, patted the seat beside her. "Isn't this wonderful!" she said. "We might be on the north coast of Iceland or in this cave fifty thousand years ago!"

"Yes," said Dave. "There's no change in ice and water and the sun!"

They proceeded after a few moments and soon explored another grotto and were finding others when the beat of a bell sounded over the shore; and the clock in the tower of old University counted the hour to eight.

“Eight!” said Dave and realized what it meant.

Alice had come to class; she had looked for him on the walk and, later, in the halls. Now she was in the class-room and, not seeing him, was wondering why. Never, except for a most urgent reason, did he miss or was he late at a class. Eight o’clock! It couldn’t be! He pulled out his watch. It was so!

Fidelia’s and his north coast of Iceland, and their caves of fifty thousand years ago, were just off shore along the campus in full view of a hundred windows and of the walk along the edge of the bluff over the beach.

“Why,” said Fidelia as she realized the time. “We’ve got to run.”

She started and, as they ran over the ice, he caught her hand to help her and thus they came to the beach below the campus.

Her eight o’clock was in a different building from his; so he went on alone to old University and to Alice. He wanted to “cut” the class entirely; he wanted to meet nobody, least of all, Alice. How could he face her?

He opened the door of the class-room and, not glancing toward Alice more than to know that she was in her usual place, he avoided his usual seat beside Lan and dropped into the nearest chair. Having no note-book, he could not even pretend to take notes

so he sat gazing at the lecturer while he thought what to say to Alice! What to say!

He must tell her immediately after class or some one else would. For some one must have seen him leave the house to follow Fidelia Netley; some one must have seen him with her on the ice. But what had David Herrick to tell? What was it which had happened this morning? Exactly what, in its entire truth, was that which he had done?

When the lecture was over, he was the first out of the room and he waited near the door to speak to Alice when she came out. But she looked up at him and then down and away from him and, seeing her, he dared not speak to her. He shrank back, dumb. She went out, staring straight ahead and not speaking to any one. Myra was with her but Alice did not speak even to her.

They left the building and Dave followed and saw Alice and Myra go from the campus to the street where Alice had parked her car.

He hurried to catch up; but Alice got into her car and he saw her push Myra away when she wished to enter. Alice shut the door and drove off.

“Alice!” Dave called. “Alice!”

She must have heard him but she only drove more rapidly away.

Myra heard him, of course; and she turned back and met him.

“Dave!” she assailed him. “Have you the slightest idea what you’ve done?”

CHAPTER IX

“MINE, MINE!”

FIDELIA attended her classes as usual that morning; Dave did not even return to the campus but went to the Delta Alpha house where he shut himself in his room for an hour. Then he went down town and surprised Mr. Snelgrove by appearing for work before noon.

He didn't do much; he could not concentrate on the important business of selling cars. He kept feeling his sensation of the cold sunrise alone with Fidelia Netley and the surprising delight of his play with her that they were in ice caves of fifty thousand years ago. She and he seemed to have separated themselves from other people by their walk together, as Titans, in their magic valley of ice and snow.

“She had a good time too!” he said to himself. “She had no more idea than I how long we were there.”

Intermittently, he went aghast at himself: “What was I thinking of? What was the matter with me? Alice!”

Several times he started to go to her; several times he went into a telephone booth with a plan of calling her; but he waited until the hour, late in the afternoon, when he usually telephoned her. Then he did not ask for her but only gave the maid a message saying that he would be at the house at eight o'clock.

He did not understand himself that day. He was

sorry and ashamed more than he had been before but also he experienced, more than before, the strange, defiant pangs of exaltation which had followed his first meeting with Fidelia Netley. He did not will them; they came.

They came with the night cold off the lake and with the sight of the stars above the ice when he approached Alice's home. They went with sight of the lighted windows of the big, stone mansion between the boulevard and the shore.

It still surprised Dave Herrick to realize that this was a house of friends of his, that he not only could enter it but that he was a privileged person within. He had been brought up in suspicion of the rich.

There was no one in Itanaca who really was rich; and there was no house either in Itanaca or in any of the larger towns of the county which could be compared with this mansion in which Alice lived. Obviously her father was a rich man; and that had meant to Dave Herrick that he was, therefore, almost certainly a Godless man. He might be a hypocrite, making a show of prayer and right-doing; but if he was rich, something must be wrong with him.

Dave had been taught Christ's own word to prove that: “Verily I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

“Woe unto you that are rich!” the Lord had cried out; and his apostle warned: “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.”

Dave was eighteen years old, and he had been only

a few months away from Itanaca when Alice first took him to her home for dinner; and in coming to dine at this large, luxurious house Dave felt that he was, in some way, condoning unrighteousness.

He did not know what unrighteousness; for his father had never been definite in describing the ways in which the rich offended; and Dave discovered little that night.

Of course he encountered strong contrasts to the manners of Itanaca where few families kept "help" and where those who did always had the help sit at the table and naturally treated them as equals. The Sothrons had several servants and Dave had learned enough not to expect Alice's family to eat with their maids; but he had not known enough not to be surprised, and disturbed, at the way the Sothrons ignored the feelings of their help. Dave would not treat others so and, having the courage of his convictions, he pointedly thanked the maids when they served him at the table, looking up at them when he spoke.

Now he was not ashamed of having done that; but he had ceased it long ago. To-night, when the door was opened for him, he spoke to the maid personally in much the same way that the Sothrons themselves did. He was nervous when he asked for "Miss Alice."

"Mr. Sothron is in the library," the maid said.

Dave entered the library where he found Alice's father alone with a newspaper in his hand. "Good evening, Dave," Mr. Sothron greeted him as usual and without rising.

"Good evening, Mr. Sothron," said Dave, standing.

“Sit down, boy,” Alice’s father invited, pleasantly.
 “Alice won’t be here right away.”

“She’s out?”

“Oh, no; she’s in her room. You’ve been having a little difficulty between you, I take it.”

“Yes, sir,” Dave admitted.

“Sit down,” Mr. Sothron repeated; and this time Dave obeyed.

His nervousness increased but he was used to feeling nervous in this house and he had had ways of combating it. At first he had done it by summoning to himself a feeling of scorn for the trappings of wealth which made him uncomfortable. But he could not continue feeling this; for the more familiar he became with these people, the more ridiculous became his previous teachings in regard to the rich. If woe was to come to Mr. Sothron, because he had left his father’s farm in New York state, put himself through Cornell, and then invented and manufactured electrical appliances which everybody wanted, Dave would like to know the justice of it. He thought Mr. Sothron about as good and useful a citizen as one could find; and the idea of Mr. Sothron having to howl and weep, was simply absurd. He wouldn’t do it. So Dave’s defense of his early ideas soon left him. He became merely a poor young man in the embarrassing position of a suitor in a house of wealth. Every one here always had been kind to him; they were well-bred people and besides they made him feel that they honestly liked him, but not as a husband for Alice.

For the first time, Dave felt in Alice’s father an absence of that opposition to-night.

"I've no idea what your difficulty is, Dave," Mr. Sothron continued. "I know only that Alice came home early this morning and has shut herself in her room ever since. She seems to think it is serious. But of course," he said, pleasantly and confidently and yet putting a question into his tone, "it's not."

"No, sir," Dave protested. "It's not."

"That's good."

"Yes, sir." Dave stirred, gripping his hands. That's good, Mr. Sothron had said. So opposition to him was really gone. It loosed something in Dave which sent a flood of warmth over him. "Can I see Alice now, sir? Won't you tell her that I'm here?"

Mr. Sothron gazed at him. "Not yet." But for a few moments, Mr. Sothron would not tell why; he sat there, slight-looking in his big chair, with his clear gray eyes studying Dave; and after a moment, Dave ceased to meet them. Dave's eyes lifted to Mr. Sothron's smoothly brushed, grayish hair, then glanced to his knees over which his trousers turned trimly, and Dave noticed, as he often had before, the smallness and slenderness of Mr. Sothron's feet. Alice's were unusually small; and so were her hands, like her father's. And, with this thought, Dave's mind jumped to Fidelia and he wondered who she was like, who gave her her glorious red hair and her strong, beautiful body.

"What was the trouble?" Mr. Sothron questioned directly.

"What?" said Dave. "It was a girl who came to college this term whom—whom Alice imagines I've—I've—" he stopped.

“I see,” said Mr. Sothron. “I suppose so.”

“Mr. Sothron, there’s nothing in it! The other night, Alice and I agreed on the date we want to be married. It’s the twenty-second of June. I was going to see you about it this week. I’ve made my arrangements to go into business; I’m going to have an agency for—”

Mr. Sothron stopped him. “Alice told me of that. Why didn’t you see me this week?”

Dave stared and at last said: “I am now, sir.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Sothron and looked away. “Well, there is no feeling against you here, Dave. It is useless to say there never was. You came to us distinctly as a surprise. We did not expect you; we did not expect any one from Northwestern for—Alice.

“You know we did not expect her to stay there. She was so young, when she was ready for college, we thought we would send her to the university and keep her at home for a year; then we meant to send her to Wellesley; but she would not go. Of course you know you were the chief reason. But perhaps you do not appreciate something else.”

“What?” asked Dave, warm and uncomfortable.

“The peculiar advantage you were able to take of her because of the undeveloped state in which you came to college. In a woman’s affection—in a girl’s love,” Mr. Sothron substituted frankly, “there is as much of the maternal as anything else; in some girls’ love, at any rate. Alice saw you and liked you and set herself to the business of bringing you out; she began at something which became the greatest thing in the world to her—almost the only thing in her

world, after a while; that was the development of you. She is perfectly willing to give the rest of her life to it, as she has given most of the last four years."

He got up and Dave saw that he was quivering. Dave saw, too, that his eyes glistened.

"I did not think that a third person—especially a girl who had just come to college—could come between you two. I'm glad it's not so." He gave Dave his hand. "I'll ask Alice to come down."

Dave was left with no illusion in regard to Mr. Sothron's whole acceptance of him now; it was because Alice's father had seen how Dave could hurt Alice. Never—not once—had he hurt her before Fidelia Netley appeared.

He went into the hall when he heard Alice on the stairs and as he saw her slowly coming down to him, he started up to her. He had never thought of his taking an advantage of her; she was so small and sweet!

He reached her several steps from the bottom and he took her in his arms.

"Your father says it's all right, Alice!"

"What did you tell him about this morning?"

"This morning!"

He held her soft, slight body; this morning he had held Fidelia Netley's when his hands were under her arms as she was rising from the ice.

"David, why did you go down to the lake with her? You must have got up on purpose!"

"I didn't."

"David!" She was holding to him, almost hysterically, with her head down so he could not see her

face. Not Davey, she called him; never once did she call him Davey.

“Alice, I happened to be up. You’ll believe that when I tell you. I happened to see her go by; I thought something was the matter. I followed her; then she went down to the lake.”

“What for?”

“She wanted to see the sun rise.”

“It was before sunrise!”

He admitted, “Yes.”

Alice pushed back from him and stared at him now. “I saw the sun rise this morning! I was in bed. You were with her then!”

David had nothing to say.

“All the time I was getting up, and having breakfast, and riding to college, you were with her! Where?”

He replied, almost brusquely. “Down there, Alice. Down on the ice.”

“But it was zero this morning; zero!”

He thought: Zero! Yes, it was; but he had not cared. Fidelia Netley had not felt it; nor he. Alice could not imagine that. It set Fidelia with him apart from every one else again; there they were together for their hour, in their world which they had discovered, not feeling the cold nor thinking of time.

He said none of this; but Alice, whom he held, became sensitive to it through his touch; for she shrank from him; and he caught her tighter and cried:

“I didn’t mean to do anything. I didn’t mean to!” And he thought, as he clasped her, that he made her calm again.

But what stilled her was a return of that sense of her helplessness before Fidelia Netley which had struck her, upon that first morning, when she came into the history class-room and saw Fidelia sitting in the sun.

And Alice, standing quiet with David's arms about her, believed him, that he hadn't meant to do anything. She could believe even that Fidelia, in going to the lake that morning, had not meant or planned anything against her. What Alice was feeling against her, and that which paralysed her to this quiet, was not intentions and plans but impulses, wholly unplanned and ten times as terrible to her, therefore.

She felt that she could not fight them and she had to fight; for if she did not, it meant giving him up—him whom she had taken when he was a queer and awkward boy four years ago and whom she had brought to this.

Strength—her soft, passionate strength—came back to her fingers and she clung to him. "You're mine!" she whispered to him. "Mine! Mine! Mine!"

And he, holding her, told her: "Of course I'm yours, of course."

CHAPTER X

THE RESULT OF A REPLY

SO, in the morning, they met before class as usual, Dave coming from the Delta Alpha house and Alice coming from home. The college, seeing, understood that he had explained, whatever he had had to explain, and that she was satisfied.

Of course many persons talked; and it was particularly easy to spread talk in regard to Fidelia Netley. The college knew that at Minnesota, and at Stanford, she had been a Tau Gamma; and, knowing that Alice Sothron controlled Tau Gamma here, the college said: "Now Alice will never let Fidelia Netley in."

Alice, who had written both to Minnesota and Stanford in the usual form, had a reply from Minneapolis which confirmed Fidelia's statement that the chapter had initiated her five years before; the letter contained the usual pleasant compliments. A letter from the Stanford chapter arrived at the end of the next week:

"In reply to your inquiry about Fidelia Netley, who was initiated by the chapter at the University of Minnesota, and who has told you that she was a member of this chapter for one year, we assure you this is the fact.

"She creditably passed in all her courses here and her leaving the university, at the end of the year, was not due

to any difficulty with the university. We know nothing about what Sister Fidelia Netley may have done recently."

Alice took this to Myra in her room at Willard and, after she read it, Myra whistled: "What a slapper! I told you there was much queer; but I never expected Stanford to admit it."

"They haven't," Alice objected.

"Oh, what would they have to say to just slightly suggest it to you? Ship on the legal proof?"

"Of what?"

"Darling, I haven't second sight; I'm sorry; but I can faintly discern the outlines of a pikestaff when it's poked before my face in broad daylight. She's done something. We don't know what and maybe it's true that Stanford doesn't actually know, if she did it after she left; but I bet they've a beautiful idea."

Alice turned from Myra and walked to the window; her hands were clenched and her lips were trembling when she turned back. "My, I've got to have her in!"

"No, you don't!"

"Oh, yes I do. I know!"

"What?" demanded Myra.

"He'll think I kept her out."

"I'll tell Dave I did! I don't care."

"I don't want her out!" Alice cried. "I don't want one thing more unusual or talkable about her. He's on her side, as it is. I've got to be on her side, too. Oh, My, don't you see?"

Myra clasped her, kissed her and was conquered;

and the next day, Fidelia Netley was formally affiliated with the local chapter of Tau Gamma.

Naturally, she mentioned so important an event in her diary that night.

"Today Tau Gamma took me in; and it happened at a wonderful time for me. Day before yesterday, you know" [Fidelia often wrote as though she were conversing] "Roy Wheen came right up to me and said, 'Are you related to anybody named Bolton?'"

"I kept my head when I heard that name; I don't believe I showed a thing. 'Where of?' I said. He said, 'I don't know. They just came through Mondora. The name was Bolton.'"

"'Mondora where?' I said. He said 'Idaho. I made a mistake, I guess.'"

"But I don't think he thinks he made a mistake. He was trying me out. He's a queer boy, shy. He wouldn't want to do harm. He'd rather make friends, if he had a chance.

"I was figuring what I could do for him; he's so out of things. He's not in any fraternity and hardly knows a sorority girl to speak to. Now I can send him a card to the Tau Gamma dance. There are bigger affairs at Northwestern but the Tau Gamma formal is *the* hop of the year."

She sent the card the next day; and Roy Wheen, receiving it, thanked her and asked no more questions. He boasted a little that Fidelia Netley had invited him; but he did not grow bold enough to ask to take her to the dance. Bill Fraser was going to take her, as Bill boasted more than a little.

Of course Dave was taking Alice. They were to "lead"; and for months Alice had been dreaming about it; now she shunned thinking about it at all

Fidelia would be there; she would be with bare neck and bare arms in a beautiful dress close about her body; and her hair would be arranged with an ornament and her skin would be so white and pink.

It would be warm, with shaded, colored lights and with music; and David would clasp Fidelia in the dance; and after that night—Alice was sure—David would never be hers again. And she was so sure of this that, conversely, she was sure that until then she would hold him.

She was giving a skating party, a week before the dance; a dozen Tau Gamma girls had come down to her home for the afternoon bringing as many men. The lake had frozen smooth and there was fine skating. By jumping little ridges, you could go as far out as you wanted, mile after mile; but every one was warned not to leave the shore stretch. For a strong wind was working around to the west; and there was always a current under the ice.

Toward dusk, Lan Blake blew a horn to call everybody in for hot coffee and tea. He hurried it a little for several were skating far out and he got nervous about the ice which was cracking loudly.

Some came at once; some stayed out; then everybody but one was in. "It's Fidelia, Alice," said Myra.

Alice had known she was not there. The ice was definitely going out then.

Dave, who had on his skates, spun about and rushed to the break in the ice and jumped it. Alice, who had taken off her skates, ran after him and tried to jump the break but went into the water and was

pulled out, ignominiously, and hurried into the house. As they brought her in, she saw Dave jump again and go on. The floating field itself was breaking.

Far out in the dusk, skating, was Fidelia.

The girls made Alice go to her room and, by force, they changed her clothes. When she got outdoors again, everybody but Dave and Fidelia was on the shore edge of the ice. Before them was water as far as the dark let them see; beyond was silence and coldness and night.

CHAPTER XI

A BONFIRE AND THE FLOE

DAVE was skating about with quick, ecstatic strength. Quickness came naturally to him and so did strength, in any emergency; but this ecstasy was something new. "I'm away," he said to himself. "Away . . . away!" It was a sensation which thrilled through him. "Away!"

"Away with her!" it was; he would be away with Fidelia Netley.

Away from Alice. This sensation of "away" included that; but as he rushed from the shore, he did not feel himself fleeing from Alice, personally; she became only a part of all that which he was escaping—duty and his father's ideas, his own fears and prohibitions.

Strange that, only a few weeks ago, Alice and his betrothal to her represented his revolt from those duties and ideas of which she now had become a part. That had been before Fidelia Netley came, or before he knew her. Now what did it mean that his plan to marry Alice, which had been in defiance to duty, itself had become a duty?

This did not become a conscious question; it was merely an impulse in his sensation as he skated swiftly, feeling the thrust of the wind at his back. He said to himself: "We'll never get in."

By never, he meant never that night. With Fidelia

Netley, he would be away from all the rest, away from all the world, together with her and there would be no help for it. He would meet her out here in their realm of sky and stars; no one else would be about; no one would watch them; no clock could call them at the end of an hour.

He was gloriously, recklessly exultant. He felt no fear at all. He was strong and young; she was, too. They had not thought of the cold that morning; they would not now, when it was not nearly so cold though it was night.

There was little danger from the lake; for the floe was firm and thick. It might break up somewhat; probably it would, but great fields, acres in extent, would hold together. There was too much ice upon the water to allow the wind to whip up a sea; and that smooth ice offered such small edge to the wind that it would drift out but slowly.

Dave saw Fidelia vaguely in the dusk. He was skating straight toward her. There she was! He had known she was in this direction before he could see her; throughout the afternoon he had kept himself aware of her presence on this side or on that, though he had never skated with her. So he had been sure, just now, that she was in the dusk toward the north.

She had seen him and was coming to meet him. She was skating rapidly but without panic. "She's not afraid!" he said. She seemed so little alarmed, indeed, that he wondered whether she knew the ice was drifting. He called to her: "Hello!"

"Why!" she exclaimed. "Why!"

He reached her and, with one of those swoops which

a skater makes in turning, he put himself beside her and caught her hand.

"Ice's going out!" he told her.

"You came to get me," she said; and still he wondered whether previously she had known. He asked: "Didn't you know it?"

"I wasn't thinking," she replied. "I'm sorry."

"Nothing to be sorry 'bout," he said, breathlessly. She was not breathless; and he felt her hand steady in his. It drew within his, not quiveringly, but with regular pulsation as the rhythm of her effort pulled the muscles of her arm.

"She's all in it!" he realized as he felt this effort of her body. "How she puts all of herself into a thing!"

It was not like skating with any other girl. Others moved, in comparison with Fidelia, by detached efforts. "How different she is!" he thought. Different from Alice and from any one else.

He said to her: "No hurry."

"Why not?"

"No use. We won't get in."

"Then why did you come out?"

"To get you."

"Can't you get in?"

"No. Water's spreading too fast. You'll see."

They arrived at water and stopped.

"You came out here?" she asked.

"About here. I jumped it. Not a chance to jump it now."

"No," she agreed and turned, letting go his hand,

and she skated south along the edge of the widening lead of open water.

He followed her, glancing toward the shore. No one else had come; no one else was near. She reached open water leading eastward and she turned and skated back past their original point beside the water until she came to the third edge of the floe on the north.

"It's no use," he said again.

She agreed, "No." And she made no feminine suggestion of impossible proceedings such as to attempt to swim to the other edge of the water, scramble upon the ice and make a dash for shore. "I'm sorry," she said again, simply and sincerely.

"I'm not. A few hours on the ice won't hurt anybody."

"Where's it deciding to take us, do you suppose?" she asked and thrilled him with her word which had been his word upon that morning they saw the sunrise together and watched the floe from the shore. It gave him the feeling that she and he were upon that same floe which they had seen drifting on the horizon and that this evening was a direct continuation of that morning.

"We're headed for Michigan, if the wind holds," he replied gayly. "You have anything against Michigan?"

"Oh, I like Michigan."

"But I suppose," he qualified, "somebody will go to work and pick us up before we're half way there."

"It's a lovely, clear night," Fidelia said, comfortably.

She was comfortable, Dave believed. Now she lifted a foot and, bending quickly, she loosened a skate and kicked it off; that was sensible, not to tire herself by standing on skates. She cleared her other boot of the second skate while he was stooping to help her. He removed his skates and he stood beside her, gazing at the lights on the shore.

There was the double line of lights, which were the street lamps of Sheridan Road; in many places the line was broken, and uneven patterns of yellow windows showed where houses stood between the boulevard and the shore; along other reaches of the road, the irregular patches of lighted windows glowed beyond the street lamps; and before them bright gleams waved back and forth, as motorcars sped by.

"That's what the ice comes in to see," Fidelia said and her feeling caught him; for the moment, the ice, upon which they stood, became the barque of some elemental God steering shoreward for a while to look at the lights of man and then casting adrift to return to his dwelling in the dark of the stars.

Dave drew closer to her; he wanted to share more of the exuberance of her feelings.

On the shore, far away, a red flame wavered up and broadened and then blew flat and long, beaten down by the wind.

"Bonfire," Fidelia said. "Alice has a bonfire for us."

Dave did not want to think of Alice. He did not know that she had fallen into the water in her attempt to follow him; he did not know that she had tried to go with him. From the instant when he leaped the

first break in the ice, he had shut his thought to every one behind. "I'm away; away!"

Now he almost resented that fire. It could be of no use; and under no circumstances could it have been of any service. There were thousands of lights marking the shore; and the bonfire could satisfy no purpose of warmth. If Fidelia and he reached the shore, and especially if they had fallen into water and were freezing, they would not stop at the fire but would go into the house. No; the fire, which surely was Alice's, had been built for another reason. Alice had lit it to keep him in mind of her. So he looked away from it.

Before it flamed up, he had had a moment of exuberance and, before that, a sensation of gayety strange to the serious, earnest person who was David Herrick. Fidelia Netley had brought both to him. Always, from their first meeting, she had the pleasant power to take him out of that distraint person who had been himself. She had begun it by setting him to saying surprising, perverse things to her and then startling him into the amazement of following her to the shore at sunrise and putting him to play with her in the caves of the cliffs of ice.

Not one of these things had she intended; she could not have imagined them, in advance, more than could he. And he knew that she had never intended this, more than he; but here he was with her, "away"—away from every one else and all the world once more.

He looked back at Alice's fire—the faint, red flicker on the shore. It had become so futile now that he ceased to resent it. His thought went from Alice by the road of wondering who might be, at this

moment, in Fidelia's mind as Alice was in his. Once before—at least once, she had told him—Fidelia had been in danger when she had thought of Water and the Wind as personal forces opposing her. Who had been with her on the side against the Water and the Wind as he was with her now? It struck him as strange that, although he had wondered about that danger frequently, he had always imagined her alone in it until now.

“You were alone that other time?” he asked her, suddenly.

“When?” she said; but he knew that she recognized what time he meant, and without his explaining, she told him, “No.”

“Who was with you?”

She didn't reply.

His heart was thumping. “Hers is,” he thought. He put his hand on her and clasped her forearm. He felt a pulse pounding but, if it was hers, it was beating simultaneously with the throb in his fingers.

He thought: “Why is she here with me? Everywhere men must have been crazy for her. That's why she's been a changer, of course.”

He altered his question aloud, since she had not answered the other. “You both got out?” he said.

“Yes.”

“Where's he?”

She waited again and her throbbing quickened with his. He thought she was not to reply but she did: “He's dead.”

“Oh!” said Dave. “Oh!” Yet he had to ask more. “But not as a result of that?”

She replied quickly. "No. What killed him was something he did alone. He was that sort, you see, always getting into things."

"I see," said Dave and released her. He was satisfied. The man, who evidently was the one who had meant most to her, was dead; nothing could be more final than that.

"We'll get out of this," he said confidently. "Somebody's carried out almost every winter that there's skating on the lake."

He expected her to ask what happened to the skaters and how long they drifted before being rescued; but she did not, so he told her. "If it's daylight, they're picked up right away, of course. If it's night, half the time the ice drifts back to shore by morning or a tug comes out from Chicago and finds you."

He realized that she was not hearing him; her thought was back in the past where he had sent it.

"I should have come in," she said, after a minute. "That's the way with me. I guess I like to get into things, too," she admitted. "You told me about the ice the other morning. Why I could see it floating out there—out here," she corrected exhilaratingly and stamped a heel on their hard floor. "But I wanted to get far out; I thought I'd dare the wind. 'You can't hurt me!' I said. I thought if the ice goes out, I'll go with it but I bet I'll be all right. I almost wanted to take a chance. I get that way sometimes. But I should have thought about you."

"Me?" said Dave. "Why? What's there to this? We walk around on the ice all night; that's all."

"I shouldn't have done it," Fidelia said and Dave

knew she was not regarding dangers of water or of cold. She was gazing again toward the flicker of Alice's useless fire; and she was thinking—Dave was sure—of her own self and of Alice and him. She knew how she drew him; denial of it would be silly; he was here because he wanted to be; and she knew that. She knew, she must know, that he wished to be with her rather than with Alice.

On the shore, beside Alice's fire, appeared an oblong of light. "They've opened a boat house," said Dave. "They're trying to get out to us with a boat."

"That's good," Fidelia replied; and he knew that, whatever were her feelings the minute before, now she wanted the boat to come. But he did not; not yet. Away, he wanted to stay away with Fidelia Netley; and there was impulse in this desire greater than before. It strengthened from what she had told him. "He's dead," she had said; the man, who had meant most to her, was dead.

Dave had known nothing whatever about him; even now Dave did not know so much as his name. It made no difference; he was dead. There was a feeling of freedom for Dave in that knowledge which surprised him. He had not been conscious of a sensation of restraint with Fidelia Netley because of a man for whom she cared; he became aware that he had had it only now when it was lifted from him. He said to himself: "There was some one for her; of course I knew there had been some one for her. But he's dead."

It cleared away barriers between Fidelia and him, on her side.

He caught himself about and saw, before the boat-

house lights, gleaming spots which he took for electric torches in the hands of people who must be pulling a boat out over the shore hummocks of ice and snow. "They won't reach us," he said; and his voice surprised himself with its triumph.

CHAPTER XII

“NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER DO”

ALICE was leading Lan Blake and Bill Fraser and the others who were helping with the boat. It was a row-boat, as that was the heaviest craft which they could drag over the hummocks. Alice carried a torch and she guided them in the little valleys of ice and snow which were like those in which Fidelia and Dave had played after watching the sunrise.

Myra was with Alice, holding her hand. Sometimes when Lan and his crew rested, Myra spoke to them. Alice said nothing to them; she merely showed them the way with her light when they were ready to go on.

She was weak and shaking. “You ought to go back and go to bed,” Myra pleaded with her.

Alice said: “I’m all right. How long is it?”

Myra knew what she meant; how long was the time during which Fidelia and Dave had been together. Myra shortened it as much as she dared and said: “Half an hour.” Myra bared her hand and felt up Alice’s sleeve, making sure that Alice’s body was warm and that the shock of her plunge into the water had passed.

“Maybe he hasn’t found her,” Myra said.

“No,” Alice denied. “He has.”

In her soul, she was sure of it; David and Fidelia were together and it was all over with herself.

She assailed herself with: “I shouldn’t care. If he wants her and doesn’t want me, it’s better for me to know it now.” But dismay seized her and she felt hollow with a sensation as if, physically, some one had scooped out her soul. “What’ll I do? What’ll I do?”

She heard Myra speaking to Lan and she heard him reply and heard, too, Bill Fraser saying: “Come on; all together again!”

Myra was pretending for her, and all the rest of them were pretending that they must hurry on account of the cold; but they all knew that Fidelia and Dave would be suffering no more than they, themselves, on the shore ice.

Some one with a torch swung the beam of light, as if by accident, upon Alice’s face. She did not care what they saw; she could not consider their opinions; she felt her life dependent upon this hour. He was her life, he who had leaped away from her, never looking back, when he had the call to go to Fidelia Netley. It was not that he went, it was the way he went which appalled her. He had made, at that moment, nothing of their three and a half years of companionship, nothing of their betrothal. She had seen him last when she was in the water and he was skating away, away. She did not believe that he knew she had fallen into the water; she would almost have liked to believe it. No; she knew that from the instant he decided to go he had shut his mind to her. To her, struggling there in the water, had come realization of his ecstasy at going from her to be again with Fidelia Netley.

“She stayed out on purpose,” Myra accused.

Alice would not have that, even in her despair.

“No, she didn’t!” Alice thought: “How easy for me if she planned these things; how easy, if she meant to do them!” But she believed that Fidelia had planned this as little as she had planned the shaft of sunlight across her hair when she sat in the class-room, as little as she could have planned, when she went to the lake to see the sunrise, to draw David after her.

Alice heard the voice of her father. He had just come from the city and had learned what had happened, but he did not understand it. He put his arm about Alice.

“Go back to the house, baby,” he said. “I’ll see to this.”

“You can’t! . . . Papa, papa, don’t make me go in!”

He asked her; “What’s the matter?”

She told him: “He went to her! When the ice blew out, he went to her!”

Her father argued: “Of course he went! It’s what you’d want him to do!”

“Not that way, papa! You didn’t see!” And she freed herself from his arm.

Something about this, her evading his clasp, affected him more. “I won’t do,” he realized. It made him feel how she wanted David’s clasp when she would not bear his; and he thought: “No one else will ever do.”

He stayed a few paces from her, watching her. He reckoned: “She’s twenty-two. That’s the age her mother married.” And his feeling summoned memory of his wife, when she was twenty-two and he became her husband. He recollected what he had learned of the love within his wife’s heart which she had never let

herself betray till she and he lived in the closeness of marriage; and he stared at his daughter and realized: “She has those feelings for him. She has more even than she’s shown him. She’s—like that!” And he could not bear to think any longer. He went and helped the boys with the boat.

When they reached the water, and launched the boat, he prevented his daughter from stepping aboard. “No; you stay here.” So Lan and Bill Fraser went alone.

Alice climbed to the top of a hummock and slowly moved her torch back and forth before her.

It became almost unbearable to Sothron to watch his girl standing there, stretched upon tiptoe to reach as high as possible with her light and then bringing it low to the snow and next drawing it from right to left before her breast. Sothron had come to understand: “She’s trying to make him think of her.”

At moments, hatred of Dave Herrick seized Sothron and he defied David’s power over his girl. “Let him go to whoever he likes.” Then Sothron would pray: “He has to come back to her! He has to come back to my girl!”

Alice had no idea how long she remained out upon the ice. The night divided itself into a period while the row-boat searched and she watched the movement of its light as it worked this way and that between the floes and another period after the boat had come in and her father had sent for a tug from Chicago.

At some time before midnight, they were all back in the house—all but Fidelia and David. They were all having coffee and hot supper; the odor reached Alice

in her room. Myra brought her a cup of coffee but she didn't drink it. She set it on the sill of her window where she watched in the dark.

Soon the house was quiet; they were all gone, except Myra who for a time sat in the dark beside her and then lay down on the bed. Myra went to sleep. Alice did not.

Sometimes she imagined Fidelia and David both lost; sometimes she supposed Fidelia lost and David safe; and sometimes Fidelia safe and David had been drowned. But she believed none of this; she believed them both safe and together; and consequently, while she waited, she tried to recast her life; but she could not.

How she depended upon David! Every plan, every purpose, every hope, every dream was hers only with him. When she thought: "Before I knew him, I was happy enough. I can go back to that," and when she tried to go back, in her mind, it seemed to her she had had nothing then. No; nothing seemed to her as of any account before that day she saw him, serious and awkward in their first class-room together; when some one tittered at a reply he made, her feelings flew to his defense. She waited in the class-room and spoke to the earnest, fine-looking, self-conscious boy who did not know how to fit in with a lot of light-minded classmates.

It seemed to Alice now that, at that moment, she became happy; she began to care greatly; she found something real for her to do. And now it was her life! While she sat at the window, waiting, sometimes she longed for his arms, his voice, his lips; sometimes

she cried to herself: “If I haven’t him, what will I do?” How would she fill her days? For what would she rise in the morning? For whom would she go out? For whose call on the telephone, or for whose ring at the door, would she listen? For whom would she plan and hope and dream?

At times, since that morning he went to the shore with Fidelia and during the days between in which she had become aware of “holding” him, she had thought she could tell him, if he wanted to go to Fidelia Netley, to go. But this night warned her that she could not; and she decided, sitting there, that no word or act of hers ever would free him; she would hold what she had till he made an end between them.

CHAPTER XIII

THE THRONE OF SATURN

“SATURN!” said Dave to Fidelia; they were pointing out stars.

“Which one?”

He showed her.

“How does that go?” said Fidelia.

“About in the same path as the moon, if the moon was up.”

“I remember,” Fidelia continued. She had not been thinking about the movement of the planet.

“‘Up from Earth’s center, through the Seventh Gate,’” she repeated,

“‘I rose and on the throne of Saturn sate.’”

She asked: “Do you mind saying it ‘sate’ to rhyme with ‘gate’?”

“No,” said Dave. “Go on.”

“‘And many a knot unravel’d by the Road,
But not the master-knot of human Fate.

“‘There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the veil through which I could not see.
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There was—and then no more of Thee and Me.’”

She asked: “That’s beautiful, isn’t it?” She loved the run of the words; she liked the fatalistic thought. It excited her pleasantly.

“You know some more?” Dave asked. He liked it, too—with her. It was pagan philosophy and the verse of a voluptuary; Dave had heard his father call anathema upon the poem which extolled pleasure as the greatest good in life.

“A lot of it,” Fidelia said. “I love it. I’ve the book with the Vedder drawings. He has a wonderful page opposite those verses—some one seated on Saturn with the rings below him and all the worlds whirling about.

“‘And that inverted Bowl they call the sky,’ ” she quoted,

“ ‘Whereunder crawling coop’d we live and die,
Lift not your hands to It—for It
As impotently rolls as you and I.’ ”

Dave asked her: “Do you think that?”

“Why, I don’t feel cooped at all. Do you?”

“No,” said Dave and smiled in the starlight. She never bothered about the big idea of her verses, or of any other matter, he noticed. She liked them for the sensation they supplied. And he liked that in her.

He was light-minded and happy. He thought that his shore self would hardly know this Dave Herrick who walked the floe with Fidelia Netley. The boy, who had played with her in the ice caves, would know him; this David Herrick was that boy who now knew Fidelia much better. They had talked together a thousand things; and with each, Fidelia had more delighted him.

She said nothing profound; that was it! She never even tried to; the idea of being profound could not occur to her. She thought and said wholly natural, agreeable things, not like any one else. "She's just natural," he said to himself and soon he felt the corollary to it: "No one else I ever knew was natural."

Not even Alice; no. He thought how he had tried to throw off the constraint of his father's ideas when he had seized Alice that night he halted her car by the graveyard and how she, though she submitted to him, had been more afraid than he for himself and how she had doubted him.

He thought: "Suppose I'd had her in my arms!" This "her" was the girl now beside him. The idea tremendously stirred him. He tried to forbid it, therefore, but it returned and returned. He thought: "Fidelial, she would have made me sure!"

He was amazingly untired though now, as the height of the sword of Orion showed, it was midnight. In the north, the Dipper tipped in its turn about the Pole star. All the heavens were sparkling clear and still with the silences of space. Calm had come upon the lake when the west wind had dropped to a varying breeze made mild from its journey over open water.

Hours ago Fidelial and Dave had lost the land sounds and now they drifted so far that separate lights upon the shore no longer could be identified. There was the aura of Chicago to the south; there was the streak of Sheridan Road. Somewhere on that strip of beach were the Sothrons' windows but they had become so distant that they bothered Dave no longer. Alice's useless bonfire had burnt out.

Gone also, was the light of the searching row-boat. It always was so far away that, when at last it gave up and went in, Fidelia and Dave felt more relief than anything else. They were glad that they no longer were causing others danger and discomfort.

Dave himself felt little discomfort, being warmly dressed in a heavy suit with a sweater under his coat. He was sure that Fidelia was less warm.

"With this on?" she exclaimed when he argued with her.

"This" was a shaggy sport skirt and jacket with woolen vest. She had knitted gloves, almost as heavy as his; and she wore a white tam. She explained that she wore these at Minneapolis "when it got really cold, not just barely freezing like to-night."

She added "Imagine me cold!"

Dave couldn't imagine it; her splendid body must always be warm.

It was for Fidelia a night when she felt like going to the point of exhaustion, when she gloried in giving herself to the sensation of spending her strength and feeling how much more she had to spend. She enjoyed this sensation particularly in company; and in David Herrick she found endurance equal to her own.

Her impulse of self-reproach at bringing him here, had passed; he was with her because he wanted to be, instead of being with Alice Sothron in that warm house now lost amid the lights of the distant shore. Fidelia did not feel herself to blame more than she had been to blame for his following her to the shore for the sunrise.

Since people blamed her for that, likely they would

blame her for this; but now she forgot them. There was no use of thinking about them until morning; here she was adrift under the stars with the man she most liked of all she had met since—since—

Her mind went back to that man who had been with her in that other event, something like this—to that friend who, so she had told David Herrick, was dead; and her feeling did not except him. She did not yet know David Herrick nearly so well; but what she knew, she liked better. And she had thought she had loved that other man.

“‘He’s certainly a contrast to S,’” she quoted to herself. They were her own words she was quoting, those which she wrote in her diary the night she met David Herrick. “‘He has will and character. He’s innocent and strong.’”

“Character,” she reflected with herself. It seemed to her that she had come to Northwestern with a determination to make her expedition with character this time. The innocence of this strong man beside her appealed to her, also. For plainly he was innocent, not only of personal impurity, but even of the smaller self-indulgences; she felt that, on the other morning beside their caves of ice, she had set him really to play for the first time in his life. Undoubtedly he had taken part in games many times; but that morning for the first time she had freed his feeling to the spirit of play.

She felt: “That’s what he wants more than anything else in the world; and he didn’t know it. Alice Sothron didn’t know it; or, if she did, she couldn’t give it to him. I can.”

That, to Fidelia, was merely a fact. "I can." She could; and Alice could not. Another fact was: "He wants me." The corollary of that fact was that he had ceased to want Alice.

Fidelia felt these facts. What she was to do about them—or if she was to do anything about them—was a matter for the future which had a way, so Fidelia had learned, of taking care of itself. One did things, in the future, which one could not possibly imagine to-day. She thought of what she herself had done.

In a way, she had come here to clear herself of that. "Character," she said to herself. "That's what I want this time."

Dave Herrick walked beside her. He did not clasp her; he did not touch her, unnecessarily; nor did he contrive the excuses for close contact with her which another man—which any other man in Fidelia's experience—would have arranged. He did not know that his constraint upon himself—his being there and yet keeping himself from her—stirred her far more than could any common clasp.

She sang:

"Oh what so rare, dear,
As a day of sunshine;
The sky is clear at last
The rain and storm are past."

The English verse of the warm "Sole Mio." He sang: he had learned that night not merely the verse but how to sing—sing! He had learned it from her there on the floe in the dark and cold.

Like the warm sun, her "Sole Mio," Fidelia kept

aglow by the slow expending of her strength; she was happy. All other considerations she had put off until morning—all but one.

This was the star which David had pointed out to her in the east—Saturn, the star of her beautiful verse, yet the baleful star, the wandering planet of misfortune.

“That’s Saturn?” she asked him, when their song was done.

“Yes.”

“You’re sure?”

“I know it. Why?”

She did not tell him. It might mean nothing; of course it was nothing; sensible people laughed at such ideas; yet she wished that Saturn was not the star ascendant to-night.

Dave left her side and walked alone. Sometimes, when he did this, he became drowsy while he walked and half dreamed. It seemed to him that Alice was crying and he was trying to comfort her. She seemed to be in his arms and she was shaken with sobs because some one had hurt her. He tried to comfort her; then he would realize that he could not because he was the one who hurt her.

When this roused him, he thought of his father and of Paul, the Apostle, and of the lust after the flesh of which he was accused for his desire for Alice. Now he desired, not Alice, but Fidelia and this must be lust after the flesh, if any passion was.

For in comparison with his desire for Fidelia, his love for Alice had been sober and responsible; its inception was serious and timid and it had grown, not so

much in intensity, as by spread of their interests together till now it held idea of children and of a home as well as of work in which their hearts would be together.

With Fidelia he felt nothing of this. He wanted to take her away; he wanted her all to himself where no one could come. He pictured a warm, pleasant, indolent place where she and he would live in love.

Love? Love? Not in the love of which his father always talked; not in the love of God. He wanted to live with this wonderful girl in the love of the flesh—in what his father would call low, sensual sin. He wanted to marry her, of course; but marriage only made more mockery of such sin as he desired. It could not change the essence; David, son of Ephraim Herrick, knew that.

But that night there in the dark under the stars he planned how he might take Fidelia to his place of love.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RETURN FROM THE THRONE

THE tug from Chicago picked them up at dawn. The captain had coffee heated and had his cabin, with fresh blankets, ready to be turned over to the lady.

Fidelia drank a big cup of coffee and ate two large sandwiches. She lay down in the blankets and slept soundly through the two hours the tug spent in buffet-ing its way back to the harbor. The captain, who was an Irishman named Maloney with a wife and five children—a fact which he frequently mentioned as proof of his knowledge of what was best for the lady (“Saints presarve us, but isn’t she the grand beauty?”)—forbade any one to make a noise and he prepared to stand guard personally, after the tug docked, so that “the young thing” could have her sleep out. But Fidelia was awake and she emerged from the blankets pink and lovely. She delighted Maloney and all the crew, and made them get into the picture the newspaper men took of her.

Mrs. Fansler took charge of Fidelia when Maloney had let “the darlint” go. She had sat up, or had dozed beside her telephone all night, had Mrs. Fansler; and when she got news that the tug was returning to Chicago, she had hastened to the city.

“Child,” said Mrs. Fansler, kissing and clasping her.

"My child, what would the world be without you?"

"You stayed up all night—for me?" Fidelia said, after Mrs. Fansler told her.

Mrs. Fansler did not blame Fidelia at all; having to blame some one, she found fault with Dave whereupon Fidelia praised him and yet managed not to offend Mrs. Fansler.

Dave wondered how she did it; and he decided it was not so much by words, or by tact, as by just being herself and being again in Mrs. Fansler's clasp. For any one who once had had her, the world would surely be drab without her, Dave thought.

He walked slowly up the plank to the dock in a manner which caused the city press reporter to comment that David Herrick was visibly weakened by the night's experience.

Dave was weakened. He had slept upon the tug but not soundly, as Fidelia had; and he had gone through an experience far more tremendous than the exhaustion from exposure. The throb of the engines, the warmth of the bunk in which he had lain, the smell of lubricating oil and coffee and the gray daylight had begun the business of returning him from under that inverted bowl of stars and the throne of Saturn, where one might dream and plan and suppose, and had brought him back to the realities of black river docks, with grimy warehouses wherein were telephones. He must use one of these to call the Sothron's number and speak to Alice. What, what in the world was he to say to her?

"It's over," he felt, as he stepped ashore; it was the end of his ecstatic sensation of "I'm away" with which

he had left the shore. He was responsible to others once more.

The day being Sunday, the docks were quiet; the bridges over the river bore an unhurried, discreet traffic and less than the weekday haze of smoke hung in the sunny air. Dave always had resented the enforced dullness of the self-conscious goodness of Sunday. He did not want to feel particularly "good" according to a calendar. The smugness of Sunday seemed never so obnoxious as now. Even yet he had no idea how to speak to Alice.

When at last he had her at the telephone, he found his task considerably lessened by the fact that Alice had learned that he was safe and Fidelia also was safe and that they had been picked up together. The tug had imparted this information to the watch at the lighthouse on the government pier who had telephoned it ashore before the tug turned into the harbor.

Alice asked him: "You found Fidelia right away?"

"Right away," he told her and added: "Then we saw your fire."

He told her: "Mrs. Fansler is here."

"Down there?" said Alice.

Dave explained. "She heard from the coast station that the tug was headed in; she came right down."

He felt cheap after he had told Alice this. He related it because he was uncomfortable. He had the right to let her know that Mrs. Fansler was now with Fidelia but he had no right to suggest that Mrs. Fansler had done something which Alice also might have done. So he said hastily: "You sent the tug, Alice! We'd be half way to Michigan, if it wasn't for you!"

Alice was silent; and he thought: "What's the matter with what I said?" Then he realized how he had said "we" for Fidelia and himself.

Alice said: "I tried to go out with you, Davey. I tried to jump across the water after you. I fell in."

He asked: "What? I didn't know that. How're you now? Why you had it worse than we." There was that "we" again, that suddenly intimate "we" for Fidelia and himself.

Alice defied it. "I'm all right. I just changed my clothes and came out again. I was on the ice a lot of the night!"

"Yes," said David and suddenly he cried: "Alice!"

She made no response but he heard her sobbing. Then she shut the sound from him by muffling the transmitter. He cried: "Alice! Alice! I'm coming there!"

She replied: "No; you've her to take home!"

"Mrs. Fansler's doing that."

Alice cried: "I'm all right. You have to sleep, I have to. Davey, to-morrow—to-morrow!" and she hung up.

Dave did not go to her; while Mrs. Fansler took Fidelia in a cab to Evanston, Dave went alone on the elevated. It satisfied him as a sort of compromise between going with Fidelia and going to Alice. To-morrow! What would to-morrow mean to Alice and to him?

To-morrow, which was Monday morning, he met her on the edge of the campus ten minutes before class time. It was his best recourse for the day, to meet her

for the first time in public and as though nothing had happened.

Alice drove up that morning and, at noon, she drove home so David and she did not have a walk together to the car line. They were together only on the campus and in classes, where outwardly everything was the same. That eleven o'clock class, with Fidelia in the room with David and Alice, was especially the same—outwardly. There was Fidelia, warm and glorious with color in the edge of the sunlight; there was David, serious and busy with his note-book. Alice sat quiet, as usual, vaguely hearing the words of the lecture while she watched David.

Her peace and dreaming satisfaction had departed from this hour ever since Fidelia Netley had come; to-day it was become for Alice an hour of ordeal requiring her to sit still when she wanted to leap up and run from the room, when she wanted to scream, to do—anything

Every day that week, until Saturday, she subjected herself to that ordeal and went through it outwardly quiet and calm, whatever her nerves were. On Saturday was the dance, the Tau Gamma "formal," which she was to lead with David and where Fidelia would be.

Alice had a new dress for the dance and a new bracelet, a narrow band of gold with sapphires of the blue of her eyes. She had new, silver slippers with new buckles which her father, himself, selected. He had her meet him in town on Saturday morning for a shopping excursion; and she knew perfectly well what he was doing. He was trying, by money, to help her fight Fidelia.

"I've had a little luck this week," he told her, to explain his purpose otherwise. "Have anything you want." But she did no buying herself.

In the afternoon, she took all her new things in a suitcase to Willard where she was to have supper with Myra and afterwards dress in Myra's room. Lan and Dave would call for them with a cab to take them to the dance; such was their arrangement ever since Alice had taught David to dance in freshman year and the four of them began going together.

Myra was out when Alice arrived and Myra's roommate, who was doubling with another girl that night in order to lend Alice her bed, already had departed. Alice lay down, glad to be quiet and alone; it was going to be hard for her to talk to Myra but that would be better than to have to deal with the concern of her mother and father for her while she made ready for the dance. What was happening to her, was her own affair; no one, no one could help her, however well they meant, however hard it was for them to have to stand by and watch it happen. Whatever any one said or did, only made it worse for her.

Myra's room was in the modern, pleasant wing of Willard with windows to the south through which slanted yellow streaks of late afternoon sunshine. Sunshine! How often Alice thought of sunshine as an ally of Fidelia, as something which shone on Fidelia's hair. A window was partly open, for the day was warm for March; there had been a thaw all week so that the snow was gone from the walks and the lawns, leaving damp spots here and there.

To-day the college had come outdoors. Groups

were in front of every house; and on the lawns, or in the street, boys were throwing baseballs; motorcars were loafing by with windows down or with side curtains off; and girls and boys were idling along the walks.

Alice could see "twos" strolling, some toward the lake, some up Orrington Avenue toward the campus, some toward the town—toward the booths and tables of "Theo's," where the doors would be standing open to-day and where every chair would be filled and there would be the clatter of students, four at a table, treating and being treated to sodas and sundaes.

The thought of "Theo's" brought to Alice an especial association with Dave; it was where he first had "treated" her back in timid, freshman days. But oh, every place about the college held especial association for David and her.

She heard the quick, cheery cadenza of the Tau Gamma whistle which announced that a boy on the street was hailing a Tau Gamma and probably wanted her to walk with him. Alice sat up and saw Myra's small, alert figure hurrying toward Willard; and the Tau Gamma whistle sounded again with more of a demand in its invitation. Alice saw Myra wait; then she saw Lan.

Alice lay down. David used to hail her like that; but he had not this week. He used to herald his coming to her house by the Tau Gamma whistle, which she had taught him long ago. This week, he had become so quiet and formal and he had avoided being alone with her.

A maid knocked and brought in a florist's box which

proved to contain red roses, with a card for Alice: "From David."

She used to gasp and feel happy, and half guilty, when he sent her long-stemmed, extravagant flowers like these; now she thought: "He wanted to send them to Fidelia."

Myra entered and sat on the bed beside her saying: "Alice, I've found something out."

She seemed to be suppressing some triumph, was Myra; and Alice looked at her with dull wonder.

"About Fidelia," Myra particularized. "I've been talking to Roy Wheen."

"Who?" said Alice.

"She asked him for to-night," Myra replied, knowing that Alice had heard the name but was puzzled over Roy Wheen's significance. "Why, do you suppose?"

When Alice hazarded nothing, Myra pronounced: "He knows about her."

"What?" said Alice sitting up.

"You know I told you that night she showed up here," Myra proceeded, "that something had happened to her. Well, it had. It happened in Idaho."

"How do you know?"

"Roy Wheen told me."

"What—what happened?"

"He wouldn't tell me that. Listen. He's a sort of pathetic soul, you know. He's hardly spoken to a sorority girl, that I ever saw. I doubt if he's been to a dance since he's come here."

Try as she could, Alice did not succeed in keeping her thought upon Roy Wheen; it flew to the time when

David Herrick was a sort of "pathetic soul," daring hardly to speak to a sorority girl and when he had never been to a dance.

Alice heard: "Fidelia certainly picks up with the strangest souls . . . but it seemed to me she must have some special reason for Roy Wheen . . . so I went over to the library . . . he was there and I came out when he did.

"He spoke to me and we walked . . . I mentioned Fidelia and he got fussed red. He's crazy about her, of course. I said, 'Didn't you know her before she came here?'

"He said: 'Yes. That is—'

"'What?' I said.

"Alice, he got fussed redder and redder. He hadn't exactly met her, it seemed; but she came to his home town. That's in Idaho—Mondora; it's hardly on the map. I had to let up on him as soon as he suspected I was after something. He wouldn't say a thing. Closed like a clam! She's got him; he's protecting her! That's his big thrill! Alice, it happened summer before last after she left Stanford. I ran him down on the time—"

Alice stirred with shame at herself. For the minute she had become avid, hopeful to hear something base about Fidelia, something which would destroy Fidelia Netley. But now she cried: "Myra, suppose something did happen! Isn't she trying to live it down!"

Myra was harder. "How? By sneaking Dave away—"

"She doesn't. He does it, Myra! Oh, you wouldn't

have gone to Roy Wheen for yourself, My! You wouldn't have thought of it. But for me!"

Myra denied. "I didn't do it for you, Allie. I did it against her. I'd stoop lower, gladly, to show her up to Dave!"

Alice seized Myra's hands. "You're not going to tell that to Dave?" she said, aghast.

"Not yet," said Myra; and Alice had to be satisfied with that.

They dressed, helping each other; and they refrained from talking much about the dance. Neither referred directly to Fidelia again until they were both ready and waiting for the moment when David and Lan would come for them.

Alice had on all her new things; and plain little Myra, with her square, solid-looking shoulders, compared herself and adored Alice for her soft, slight gracefulness.

"You're lovely; and your skin's like satin to-night. That's just the way to do your hair." She kissed Alice. "You've never had a dress like that—"

"No; nor slippers and buckles and bracelet," Alice said. "Father got them for me to-day," she explained. "He bought them to make me beat Fidelia to-night. But I'll not; and she won't have even a new dress."

Fidelia did not. She wore that evening a dancing dress, not old, not new. It was pale green, of such shade that it seemed like silver when the light was low and when the lights were bright its sheen came in contrast to the clear, pale pink of Fidelia's shoulders, the deeper pink of her cheeks and the rich hues of her hair.

She flushed slightly when she danced; she loved to dance; she loved the warmth of it with the movement and the rhythm. Dave, dancing with her, clasped her hand with palm pleasantly moist against his palm; his arm which surrounded her felt the rhythmic draw and relax of her body, as she danced and her bosom rose with her full, even breathing.

He had anticipated much in a dance with her; he remembered how he had felt when she skated with him, how she put all her body into it in a way unlike other girls; but he had not been able to anticipate this pleasure from her feeling for rhythm, for motion slow or swifter but always positive yet effortless, powerful but never pulling upon him. She never tried to "lead"; he never thought of her as possibly trying. She followed him perfectly; always the initiative, the direction, the choice of step was his. Sometimes she warned him of couples threatening to collide in approach from a direction in which he could not see. She did this by sudden, pleasant pressure of her fingers about his; and as soon as she had warned him, she gave herself to his guiding again.

"Don't you ever lead?" he asked her.

"Not dancing with a man," she replied; and after she had thought a minute, "nor with girls either, I guess."

"Why not?"

"I don't like it. Do you?"

"For you?" said Dave. "No." And he clasped her closer as he gave himself to the joy of the dance with her; and he felt new delight in her at his realization of the docility which underlay her nature. She

was strong and possessed of endurance beyond any other girl he knew; and she would of herself undertake risks and adventures; she liked to submit herself to hazard; yet she was a most manageable person, too.

Imagining himself married to her, he felt his way would always be pleasant; his way would be hers.

He felt the flattery of others' attention. Every one had to look at her; she was glorious to see and far more satisfactory to have in one's arms. He thought how he had pretended that she was a Goddess when he was following her in the little ice valleys of the shore at sunrise; now she was too close, she was too warm, too much within his arms for him to consider her like that.

The exultation of "A Woman Waits for Me!" ran in his veins. He felt Fidelity "contains all, nothing is lacking . . . warm blooded and sufficient for me."

Sufficient for him! He had never suspected what sufficiency might be until he had found Fidelity. Here she was, warm and lovely and strong and docile.

No; he had never felt sufficiency like this; not with Alice. But he did not let himself think definitely of Alice . . . not until the music had ceased.

He sat with Fidelity, with others about them, during the interval before the next dance; when the music began again, he sought Alice who had been left by her last partner at a further corner of the floor. He felt relaxed and he tried to freshen himself for Alice; but he realized, "She knows"; and even as he crossed the floor, his mind was on his next dance with Fidelity. For he would have two.

It had been a matter of much dispute with himself how many dances with her he could take; in fact, he had argued whether he should engage Fidelia for any dances; but his wish had conquered and he had reënforced it by the argument that it would look "queer" to the college.

When he reached Alice, she was sitting alone with deserted chairs on both sides. "Ours" he said and tried to make it sound in the old way when "ours" told a thrilling thing and his pulses pricked with his impatience for her.

She sat looking up at him and his eyes went from hers to her white, slender shoulders. Her new dress was blue, almost the color of the sapphires in the new bracelet on her slender arm. The slightness, the whiteness of her, which this blue accentuated, used to stir him, and her sweetness with that look of love which would fill her eyes.

It was not there now, that look; in its place, fear. She tried to smile. He thought with alarm: "She's going to cry."

But Alice didn't; she stood up and gave her right hand to his left and he put his arm about her.

How small she seemed; how cool; how dully she danced. He gripped her tighter to rouse her and she responded at the instant but after a second, it was the same as before. Her right hand, clasping his left hand and extended, pulled at him to go this way, now that way, in response to her instinct to guide him. It offended him out of all proportion to its gentle impulse. Naturally she did this; she had taught him to dance;

and this unconscious reminder of their first days together used to stir tenderness. Now he thought of Fidelia, warm, all alive but following, docile to him.

Alice tried to talk. She said: "Don't you like the music?" He replied: "It's great."

They might be strangers, he and she who had shared three and a half years so closely, who had come to believe they were meant for each other and so had been preparing to marry on the twenty-second of June.

She felt him trying to rouse her; and, responding, she tried to satisfy him; then she ceased to try. She realized: "It's no use; I can't be Fidelia."

She dragged in the dance which become more and more unendurable. They danced near Fidelia who now had Roy When for a partner. He was not a good dancer but Fidelia was doing well with him; he was flushed and excited. "He's happy," Alice thought; and this sight of them seemed to deny Myra's story that Roy When "knew" something about Fidelia and that she was afraid of him and that was why he was here. Nothing in Fidelia's manner suggested the forced or perfunctory with Roy When or hinted at fear. Fidelia seemed to be having a good time, too.

Alice thought: "But you can't tell anything about her." And feeling that Dave ceased to try to rouse her and that he did not care, Alice suddenly had a wild, insane impulse to make a scene; for the instant it shook her; it seemed that it must conquer her and she must drop David's hand and thrust his arm from about her and she must step to Roy When and stop Fidelia and him from dancing, stop everybody from

dancing and hush the music and in the silence make Roy Wheen tell what he knew.

Dave felt her shaking. "What is it?" he said.

"David, I'm sick."

At his exclamation, she declared: "I'm sick, sick. That's all."

"You want me to take you home?"

"No! No! I'll lie down in the dressing room. Don't bother about me."

"Alice!" he protested.

They had come to the edge of the ball-room and she slipped away into the dressing room where she remained until midnight when, as the clock turned to morning and Sunday, the Tau Gamma formal was over.

Dave had had his other regular dance with Fidelia; then he had claimed an "extra"—the unnumbered dance, not on the program, which the orchestra leader suddenly announced, "The Tau Gamma extra."

For this dance, each man asked a partner from the floor without pre-arrangement; but for three years Dave and Alice had danced it together. To-night he had Fidelia.

It was a feature dance, always a waltz with emotional music; and at the first encore, the ball-room lights went out except for one cluster of colored bulbs at the center of the room which formed the Tau Gamma shield; so everybody danced slowly and silently in the dim glow of the colored lights.

Following that dance, Dave cast off discretion. He "cut in" on Fidelia's partners and obtained three "encores." He knew that everybody was watching

him; he knew that somebody was sure to bring word to Alice in the dressing room.

Alice and Dave with Myra and Lan drove together back to Williard Hall. Alice was "all right now." She had become calm, in danger neither of crying nor of giving way to insane impulse. She leaned forward as they drove, not to be nearer to Dave, who faced her on an opposite seat, but to feel the cool of the air through the open window of the door.

Nobody talked. There was not a word since Dave's inquiry about Alice, when she had come out to the cab; and that, Myra had answered.

Dave and Lan got out first when the cab halted at the south door of Willard where the watchman checked the return of the girls who had had permission away for the evening. Myra stepped down but Alice stayed in her seat; and Dave leaned in and asked: "You want to go home?"

She shook her head. Myra whispered to Lan and, when Dave stepped back, Lan offered: "I'll take you home, Alice."

She replied: "Ask him to go on a little." And Lan understood that she meant the driver and, also, that she did not want Myra and himself. So the cab proceeded a few feet to clear the entrance: Myra went into the building and Lan departed to the walk by the street. Dave followed the cab and got in and sat beside Alice. Behind them, other cabs halted, let out girls who called happy good nights and the cabs disappeared.

Alice's voice came to David from the dark. "You want to kiss me?"

It was an honest, serious, deadly serious question, impossible for him to answer falsely or lightly or to evade.

“Oh, I want to want to,” he said.

“You want—” she took another word—“you would like to hold me as you—” again she changed her word—“as we did that night Fidelia came?”

“Not now.”

“You want,” said Alice’s voice and each syllable was deliberate and distinct. She had thought out each word while she lay her hours in the dressing room and now, with each word of this doom, she thought out each again before speaking it, “to be free of me?”

He did not answer and she struck him. Her little clenched fist came down upon his knee. Otherwise they had no contact at all.

“You say it! You’ve got to say it! You’ve got to! I never will! Never! Never!”

“Yes,” said Dave.

She opened the door beside her; it was the door away from the Hall. She whispered: “You are! You hear me? You hear me?”

“Yes,” said Dave.

She was on the ground and, running about the rear of the cab, she disappeared into the Hall.

CHAPTER XV

FIRST CONSEQUENCES

SNELGROVE said to Dave toward the end of the next week: "Boy, somebody has sure made you one bear of a salesman! You slipped off form for a spell after your little trip out on the ice; but now! Zowie!" Snelgrove sorted over the sheaf of orders, with checks for deposits paid, which Dave brought in. "Somebody has sure spoken to you! And all I. E. Snelgrove hopes is 'Speak to him again, girl! Speak to him again!'"

This was Snelgrove's most direct reference to Dave's personal affairs. Business was booming, partly because of the coming of the warm days of spring with their call to the car and partly as a result of the new energy with which Dave worked. It amazed himself quite as much as it did Snelgrove. He felt that he could do anything; yes, for Fidelia, he could do anything.

He worried no more about the increase in price of the new Hamilton six; in so far as he worried at all now, it was as to whether the factory would make good on their promises of the car, and deliver on time.

To be sure, it bothered him at first not to have money of his own for his personal expenses; for he recognized that, when he drew money at the office, it either came from Mr. Fuller's loan or else was taken from the deposits paid on the orders for cars not yet

delivered. But the use of this money disturbed his partner not at all.

"It's only business, boy," he assured Dave indulgently and in a tone which conveyed wonderment at his junior partner's perplexity in the presence of the soundest business practice.

Mr. Snelgrove attested the complete comfort in his mind by liberally increasing the scale of his personal expenditures; he purchased several new suits; he bought himself a diamond; and lent to his friends with more lavish hand.

For it was plain that the good tidings that Irving again was flush, had spread from the Turkish baths and cabarets to the "barrel" and "flop" houses along south State and Clark streets whence appeared the more picturesque of the down and out comrades of Mr. Snelgrove's youth. For each, he cheerily and generously "tapped the till" as he himself called it.

Also in growing numbers and frequency, women phoned for Mr. Snelgrove or dropped into the office, in person.

It became impossible for Dave to doubt that his partner was a man whom his father would call "steeped in sin"; yet, in spite of this, Dave got along with Snelgrove better than before.

"We make a great pair, you and me," Snelgrove frequently complimented Dave and himself. "You stick with me and watch the big money roll in. I got the experience and the point of view; you got the pep and the education and the polish."

Snelgrove frankly envied Dave his education but even more he admired and valued his junior partner's

“polish.” He commented: “You can work in anywhere, boy; you know how to meet ’em all!”

Dave did know, since Alice had taken him in his freshman year out of the meager round of contacts, which naturally would have been the lot of a minister’s son working his way through Northwestern, and had gradually, through four years, made him accustomed to the acquaintance of the prosperous and “worldly” people who frequented the big house on Sheridan road.

Often, when meeting a prospective customer and realizing that he was getting along with the prospect easily and favorably, Dave would feel a sudden, sharp pang of conscience at the thought that Alice had prepared him for this success.

He did not quickly separate Alice’s interest from his own; he had formed the habit of including hers with his so completely that it startled him to discover, during the round of the day, how much he had cast from his life. Particularly toward evening, when the hour came at which he always had telephoned her, he felt lonely and lost. And the week-day mornings, when he had classes with Alice, became most difficult in another way.

At that wretched midnight, when she had left him sitting in the cab beside Willard, he had thought in his dismay: “Have I ended college for her?”

Of course he knew that she had barely three months more of attendance at classes to win her degree; but this only weighted his guilt if now she dropped out.

But Alice did not drop out. On Monday morning, as usual, she appeared in her car at the edge of the campus. The difference was that he did not meet her;

she came up the walk alone and they did not encounter each other until they were entering the class-room.

Everybody was watching them; for already everybody knew that it was "over" between Alice and Dave; and everybody knew why as certainly as though her cry to him in the cab, when she struck him with her little fist, had resounded through Willard: "I'll never say it! Never! Never!" They knew Alice would never have said it; they had been waiting for him to jilt her for Fidelia Netley. Now they knew that he had done it and here, coming to class again, was Alice.

She looked up at him and she was white but she was calm; quietly she said: "Good morning, David."

He quivered as he replied to her, in almost the same words. With himself, he realized: "She's not quitting. I didn't know her when I supposed she might."

Tremendously this sight of him stirred her that morning. It was far more than she had expected; she had thought that, when she saw him, some change in him, in his physical appearance, would lessen her longing for him. But he was not changed; nothing seemed changed in this class-room after the lecture began. There he was seated before her in his accustomed place; here she was in hers, watching him, dreaming about him. No! No more of that; she dare not let herself relax and dream; for, if she did, she must go through the agony of realization again. She could not bear that.

But what, what was different? There he was; here she was, where she had been happy through so many hours like this because of her nearness to him. It became more incredible, not less, now that she saw

him, that he had ceased to be hers, he would never again clasp her and kiss her, that he would not want to; incredible it was, indeed, that even their talks together, their confidences and friendship were finished because Fidelity Netley had come.

Alice had drilled herself for the eleven o'clock meeting with Fidelity when they both—Fidelity and she—would come to class with David. Alice had warned herself: "I mustn't hate her! I won't! I won't!" Yet this morning, during the hours between nine o'clock, when the first class with David was over, and eleven, when she would see him with Fidelity, she was weak with fear. What would she do when she saw Fidelity? Then she came upon Fidelity suddenly in the girls' study room.

"Why, Alice!" Fidelity exclaimed and seized her hands. "Why Alice!"

A fury within Alice wanted to snatch her hands away but another power submitted her to Fidelity's warm, close clasp. But while submitting, Alice searched Fidelity's eyes. She saw no triumph in them; she saw no look, such as she expected, which taunted, "I've taken him from you."

And she realized that Fidelity felt no taunt and no triumph over her. She realized that Fidelity was not feeling sorry for her, either. Fidelity had done a terrible thing to her and Fidelity knew it but was only beginning to realize it now that she saw Alice.

Alice clenched her fists within Fidelity's hands and then suddenly relaxed.

There rang in Alice's throbbing brain, words which Myra had spoken in warning before Fidelity had ever

seen David. "She can't help being an enemy." That was what Myra had said; and Fidelia could not help being an enemy of Alice but she did not mean to be an enemy. Fidelia had no more planned to stay out on the floe and draw David to her than she had planned to sit in the sun on her first morning in class. She did such things because her nature made her sit in the sun and dare the starlit cold; and her nature, which made her do such things without planning or thinking, drew men away from girls who had no such nature. And this struck Alice to helplessness.

Yet, with her helplessness, she found herself amazingly without fear of Fidelia now. What a strange discovery to find her fear of Fidelia gone; for you can not fear one who no longer can hurt you; and Fidelia had taken away from Alice all that any one could. She had taken David and ended the meetings at the campus edge; ended their glances at each other, their sharing of plans, hopes, dreams; she had taken away the twenty-second of June, the wedding day! What a surprise to feel no fear of Fidelia! What did she feel?

She did not know; she knew what thought ran through her. Alice thought: "She'll have the wedding day; she'll be David's wife."

Alice drew her hands from Fidelia; the bell for class was ringing. "Come," said Alice; it was her first word; and with Fidelia, she went to class and to David.

Later, when she told Myra of meeting Fidelia, Alice said: "She didn't want to spoil my life. She didn't, My!"

“What did she want to do?” Myra demanded.

“It just happened to be me who had David who had—who had to have her. She didn’t do it, My; he did.”

“He did his half, all right!” Myra admitted; she had become as open in her enmity to David as to Fidelia. “And you don’t blame him, either!” Myra accused and she went on uttering her impatience with Alice’s “abjectness.”

Alice replied. “I don’t care if I am abject. I can’t think of anybody but him. My, I’ve all my life planned for years and years ahead—with David! We planned it all together. Where we’d live and how, and everything we’d do. We’ve taken the same courses for four years so we’d be interested in the same things; we’ve—” Alice broke down and cried:

“You start at forgetting Dave!” Myra commanded almost savagely. “You start forgetting him right now!”

But no one knew better than Myra that Alice never could do it; no one more fully realized the force of that tremendous, initial advantage which David had taken of Alice when he came to college, an overworked, serious and awkward boy, so strange to social manners that others laughed at him but Alice drew to his defense; no one better understood that Alice never could hope to find, nor could she ever have heart to seek for, a substitute for her love for David which had been growing throughout the four years they had been developing from girl and boy together.

Theirs was an intimacy not to be likened to any ordinary engagement and least of all to the lightly held

“campus engagements” which led to far more “petting” and physical contacts than Alice and Dave ever permitted themselves. Theirs had been—or had been believed to be—one of those fine friendships between boy and girl which naturally mature to the most beautiful and happiest of marriages such as are forever the glory of each class of girls and boys who have gone through college together.

Betrayal of this was not merely a hurt to Alice but partook of the nature of an offense to many. Naturally, Dave felt the criticism of Alice’s friends and particularly of those who disliked Fidelia. He had expected that; but he had not prepared himself for other currents which ran against him. He became self-conscious even among his own fraternity brothers and in his own room with Lan; in fact, he was especially self-conscious with Lan; for he had betrayed what Lan was loyal to.

Dave avoided his own room when Lan was up there. Lan minded his own business; he made no criticism but merely became silent with Dave or else was wholly casual in his talk. Gone were the old, frank discussions of the room-mates in regard to their personal affairs; gone were the pleasant, natural mentionings of Myra and Alice and the planning of their parties of four. Lan seldom referred to Myra and never to Alice. To think that Alice’s name had become taboo!

But if Dave occasionally was made to feel self-conscious and guilty, always—or almost constantly—he was aware of a new exhilaration which supplied that confident energy which gained the business results so pleasing to Mr. Snelgrove.

He found that the sensation of freedom, which had seized him when he was skating out from the shore, abandoned him only temporarily after his return. He had cast off, with Alice, a burden of conscience. He wrote to his father: "Alice and I are no longer engaged. We will never marry each other." Also he wrote, but he did not send: "A girl has come to college who is of the type you would find more detrimental to me than Alice. For she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen. I know almost nothing about her character except that she is pleasant, strong in physical endurance and keeps cheerful hour after hour under trying conditions. The truth is, I think little about her character and less about her religious faith. I believe, as a matter of fact, she has none, though she likes to go to church. I love her.

"Probably you wouldn't call it love. You'd say I desire her. All right. But I mean to marry her, if I possibly can."

Dave wrote, even for himself, no more than that, though he kept what he had written and was tempted to send it on after he received his father's reply. For his father assumed that the end of the betrothal of Alice and David had come as a result of sober realization of David's "duty." Ephraim Herrick protested his satisfaction and his conviction that it "followed the will of our Lord."

There came also, in the same envelope, a sheet written by his mother who prayed that her son had no heartache; and it was this which held Dave from a rejoinder to his father. Instead, Dave called upon that fund of accrued, but not yet earned, commissions

which Snelgrove drew upon freely; and Dave sent his mother fifty dollars extra that month, writing her: "Please spend it on yourself, every cent of it. Oh, mother, do get yourself a few nice things."

This gave him some satisfaction, though he knew his mother never would spend that money upon herself; and after she had not but had written him a careful accounting of how it had gone, he determined to buy an outfit for her himself next month. So he wrote his sister Deborah to abstract from the old packing trunk the winter dress his mother would have put away and to send it to him.

When it arrived, he did not know quite how to proceed; for Alice always had helped him in the selection of any considerable present for his mother. His idea was to take the dress down to Field's, exhibit it as a sample for size and trust to the aid of the salespeople.

He thought of asking Fidelia's advice; but he had yet done nothing so deliberate as suggesting a shopping expedition with her. Daily he saw her, of course, frequently he walked with her; and, besides meeting her about the university buildings and on the campus, he found her at dances to which he went.

There was a "formal" at almost every week-end; and often there were two big affairs. For spring was the natural season for festivities. Winter had its dances but they suffered, in comparison, from being necessarily shut into ball-rooms and heated halls; also the basketball championships went on through winter, claiming many Friday and Saturday evenings. Autumn was a far sterner season than spring, not only by

reason of weather, but because of football; the whole college followed the eleven at home or away, gathering at the gymnasium nearly every Friday night for a great "pep" mass-meeting to practice songs and yells and to cheer the team; and then Saturday was to be saved, hopefully, for the celebration of victory.

But May and June were the months of minor sports, of baseball and tennis to be played and of races to be run during the afternoon, leaving the evenings free; and the twilight was long and agreeable. Everywhere windows and doors were open; lawns became carpets of soft, cool grass; elms became quiet canopies, and the lake lay like a mirror for moon and stars, inviting to canoes. So these were favorite months for the music of "formals" from which couples could wander between dances and stroll hatless and without scarf over bare shoulders or dance with equal delight on veranda or ball-room floor.

Almost every fraternity and sorority saved one of its allotted quota of entertainments to give a ball on some such Friday or Saturday evening of May or June.

It was the custom of each society, when entertaining, to invite, in addition to its friends of the opposite sex, a select few from each of its own rival organizations. And last year, no matter whether a fraternity or a sorority was the host, Alice Sothron and David Herrick were on every list. This spring, every fraternity invited Alice and every sorority chose her for one of the guests from Tau Gamma; but every sorority but one, besides Tau Gamma which already had en-

tertained, dropped Dave; and only one invited Fidelia.

This was criticism direct; and Dave felt it; for he knew with what frank discussion each group of girls made out their lists. However, the fraternities invited him as usual; and every fraternity invited Fidelia.

She received no mere general "bid" to each of these dances. Prior to the issue of the engraved invitations, at least one member of the fraternity to entertain called on Fidelia and offered himself as her escort. So she went with a different man to each of these dances.

When Delta A entertained three Saturdays after Tau Gamma, Bill Fraser took Fidelia. He had gone to Dave before the invitations were out.

"I suppose you're taking Fidelia," he commented.

"I'm not taking her," Dave replied. "You go ahead, if you want her."

"You bet I do," Bill assured enthusiastically; and then inquired: "Who you taking, Dave?"

"I'm staggng it," Dave said and reddened.

Fraser descended to the living-room and reported: "I'm going to ask Fidelia Netley. Dave's still laying off."

Very consciously Dave was "laying off." If Fidelia had been showing especial liking for any other one man, Dave might have done differently but she was making friends, impartially, with many.

Bill Fraser put his own case fairly for all the rest: "I'm certainly crazy about that girl," he confessed. "But I don't fool myself that I'll ever have a chance. but I bet Dave could sell himself there."

Dave, while "laying off," wondered about that. Fi-

delia gave him no sign; she remained friendly and interested; but during these weeks following his break with Alice, Fidelia never by word or act did one thing to lead him on. He considered: "She never actually made a lead for me; yet, she went with me as far as I asked her. . . . But I never asked any distance."

He was in his room one warm, May noon preparing to go to town when he saw Fidelia come from Mrs. Fansler's. Fidelia was in blue street dress with scarf; she had on hat and veil and gloves, all evidences of no mere local errand but of an expedition to Chicago. Dave picked up that bundle of his mother's dress, which had been long waiting his decision, and he went out and turned in the direction of the railroad station.

He saw Fidelia half a block ahead but intentionally he did not overtake her until she reached the station platform.

"Going to a *matinée*?" Dave asked; the day happened to be Wednesday.

"I don't know," Fidelia admitted. "Maybe."

As the train roared in, he waited until they were seated side by side before he pursued: "You mean you want to go to a show but aren't sure of tickets?"

"No," said Fidelia. "I'm just going to the city. I don't know what I'll do; maybe a play; maybe shopping; maybe just seeing lots of people. Don't you like to be that way?"

"I never have," Dave replied. "I say, how about lunch? Have you had it?"

"No. I'm going to have that in the city."

"Where?"

She smiled, her pretty nose shortening in its attrac-

tive way; she was profled to him before the window. "Why, I'll think up a place now, if I must!"

"I've one all thought out," Dave assured, "for both of us."

"Aren't you going right off to business?"

"Not to-day." And he didn't.

He took her to Marshall Field's luncheon room; not at all a daring place, but a pleasant one particularly as they arrived rather after the shoppers' noon hour. They had a table in the cool Narcissus room near the quiet fountain with the wide basin of water-flowers and lily pads. The tables near them became deserted. They ordered the same things, sharing them in the intimacy of split "portions."

"It's funny," said Fidelity, as she served him half of an order put before her, "how one likes things dainty like this, everything crisp, just right, nothing burnt or soggy; and then you'll call the best dinner you ever had a camp supper scorched black in places."

He was watching her hands, her beautiful, strong hands, capable, but which obeyed and never guided.

"You cooked that supper?" he asked.

"Well, I helped."

"It was in Idaho, I suppose."

"Yes."

With that word, she shut off further question in the gentle yet wholly final way she had. Dave explained to himself, "Because the man she had it with, is dead." And he was jealous of that man, though dead.

"I've never had a camp supper," he said. "But I'm

going to have one!" He thought of her hands helping another's hands; he thought next of her hands helping his in preparation of their camp supper.

When luncheon was over, she asked him: "Now what are we going to do?"

He had been wondering when she would think of that. He said "I should have ordered theater tickets before we sat down. But we can get something yet."

"Do you want to?"

"No."

She said: "I never did. Do you have to take your bundle somewhere?"

He explained: "I was taking it here. It's a dress of my mother's. She won't buy things for herself. My father's a minister, you know."

Fidelia nodded.

"My mother mostly wears worn clothes—I mean clothes which other people have worn," Dave proceeded and flushed hot.

"Yes," said Fidelia. "I've lived in little towns."

"I'm going to get," said Dave, "the best clothes for her that are in Marshall Field's!"

Fidelia arose. "You're exchanging that?" She referred to his bundle.

"No; that's a sample for size. It's a dress some one gave her and she'd made over."

"Give it to me," Fidelia asked. "I'll look it over in the women's room for size." And she took his bundle away, to reappear with it a few minutes later.

"She must be tall like you, David," Fidelia said.

"She is."

"She's awfully thin."

"Yes"; said Dave.

"She's—pale?" asked Fidelia.

"Usually."

"You see I've got to think about the color," Fidelia explained. "Her hair's brown, I suppose."

"Pretty gray now," said Dave.

"Come," said Fidelia and she took the lead in this.

"Something for yourself, Miss?" asked the salespeople eagerly when Fidelia halted in the dress department. She explained she was shopping for a friend who was older and she gave a size.

She selected a dress which never in the world would Dave have chosen though it had been shown him a dozen times; nor would Alice have approved it for his mother. They both would have thought it too gay; Dave would have thought, "Mother'll never wear it." But he did not think so now.

"There! Isn't this lovely for her? Think of her in it!"

Dave thought and wholeheartedly approved; he bought the dress and a few minutes later a hat to go with it.

"Now you go and get her gloves and I'll get other things. Please don't you bother about anything else," Fidelia said.

When they met below, Fidelia was satisfied. "She'll have as good garments as anybody, underneath or outside," Fidelia reported. Dave asked: "How much do I owe you?" For they had been prepaying their purchases and having the goods sent direct to Itanaca from the store.

Fidelia asked: "Let me do that last little bit, David! You see," she explained, "when I saw that dress, which I took out of your bundle, I couldn't help seeing my aunt Minna."

"Wearing the dress?" said Dave.

"No; I thought of somebody like aunt Minna giving it to your mother, after it was worn; and I had to send what I did. Now let's go see lots of people!"

She would not tell what she had spent; and Dave gave up argument, knowing he would learn of these purchases from his mother. He went with Fidelia to Michigan Avenue where they turned south along the gay, fashionable shops. He longed to buy something for her; when he looked into the windows, he thought how this and that would look on her. He was light-hearted and happy as he had been only with her; and he thrilled with the admiration she aroused on the boulevard.

Every one had to gaze at her; many stared; and nearly every one, after staring at her, glanced at him and envied him. She took the attention beautifully, not pretending to be utterly unconscious of it but never made self-conscious by it.

Perhaps, upon that warm May afternoon in the shadows of the tall buildings, with the shafts of the sun laying their golden light at each street intersection, Fidelia was fairer and more alluring than ever before. She made no obvious attempt to attract; she was in a plain, blue street dress with a straw hat and gray gloves; only now she left off her veil. Obviously, to be sure, she was happy; and to Dave, that was a triumphant walk. He had never felt of such account

before. He wanted to go on and on with Fidelia; he wanted to show her to Snelgrove and to men he knew on "the row" far down the boulevard. But she stopped when they reached Congress Street.

"You have to go to work now, I know," she said.

Dave denied it but she determined to return home.

She said "home" meaning Mrs. Fansler's in Evans-ton; but the word struck Dave with dismay at the thought of her departing in a few weeks, at the end of the college year.

"Where'll you be going when school's out?" he demanded.

"I?" she said; and considered for a moment. "Why, I've no special place to go. Dorothy Hess wants me to visit her for a while after graduation. What would you think of that?"

"Where does she live?" Dave asked.

"Streator, Illinois."

"That's a good idea. I'd do it."

She gazed at him seriously and asked: "You'd like me to?"

"I would. Will you?"

"I will."

He said: "Then I'll come down and call for you there."

"What?" she asked.

He was quivering. He had not known what he was to say until he had spoken it; now he planned aloud: "That's what we'll do, Fidelia. You go down to Streator; and I'll call for you. Will you?"

She held her breath for a moment and then asked: "Will I what, David?"

“Go down with Dorothy Hess. You said you would, before I said I’d call for you. Will you now?”

She replied: “Yes. I’ll do that.”

“I’ll,” he said and stopped for breath. They were standing on the street corner and, so far as any one passing might guess, they were arranging only some ordinary appointment before they parted—“I’ll call for you as soon as I can.”

He thrust his hand forward and she gave him hers; and their eyes met. “Good-by now, David,” she said.

“Not now!” he denied.

“Yes; you go on to business. I want you to; I want to go back alone!”

She drew her hand away and turned from him; he took a step after her, then he stopped and watched her as she was caught in the crowd on the walk. He was suffused as he realized the compact he had made with her. He, who had broken solemn betrothal with Alice, had made an agreement to “call for” Fidelia at Streator; and he knew he would not fail in this.

The very vagueness of their compact satisfied him better than would any formal pledge; for he had just broken the most definite of promises and Fidelia knew it. Moreover, David had a feeling against making any final assertion until after the twenty-second of June. He knew this was wholly to satisfy an emotional protest within himself; but the protest was there and he could not ignore it. Now, Fidelia would wait for him until after the twenty-second, when he would go to Streator and fetch her; he would carry her away with him in the warmth of June, on the evening of some day like this; he would take her to a forest shore

far from the rest of the world; he would have his camp supper with her!

He planned the place while he walked alone after she had vanished; he thought of the Wisconsin woods above the shore of the lake with the moon above the warm, mirrored waters in which Fidelia and he would bathe; he thought of their campfire on the fringe of the sands; their bed on the ground.

He thought of his father and of the Apostle Paul; and as he planned his preparations for his marriage, he considered how he would prevent his father from discovering what he meant to do. His father intended to visit Evanston for the Commencement exercises; but David could prevent him by simply refraining from sending home any more money.

So David sent presents home instead of making his usual remittance for June. His mother was delighted with the dress which Fidelia had selected but she returned, for exchange, the articles which Fidelia had chosen for her personal gift and which were the finest and softest of silk underwear. Sarah Herrick obtained several times the number of cotton garments for herself and her daughters with the credit.

David did not tell Fidelia of this and he made no attempt to persuade her to accept repayment of the money she had spent. He was meeting her daily, of course; and outwardly there was little change in their relations; no one could report, with more certainty than before, that Fidelia Netley and David Herrick were "engaged."

When they were alone, David spoke boldly of

“Streator”; he said, “when I come to call for you!” He divided time into periods “before” and “after I call for you!” Fidelity, when she referred to their compact, used his phrase for it; but it seldom came to her lips. Sometimes she seemed, indeed, to wish to avoid thinking of their agreement; this bothered him but when he asked her, point blank, what was the matter, she kissed him.

Yet he had few kisses. This was not the result of any deliberate regulation between him and her. She was shy with him; and he, himself, was holding off. He argued with himself: “With her, this is the way to be. I won’t try for more now. I’ll have all at once!” Still her shyness, and her reluctance to speak of what they would do after he called for her, worried him.

She was not to be graduated, but, after most of the students had gone home, Fidelity remained at Mrs. Fansler’s for the end of Commencement week. Dorothy Hess, being a senior, was staying on; and Dorothy not only won her diploma but was given her coveted honor of the Phi Beta Kappa key.

Dorothy’s parents were in town for Commencement; Myra’s mother and father had arrived from Rock Island and Lan’s had come for the graduation ceremonies; but David’s were not there. His father wrote him a long and very earnest letter; his mother sent him the first flowers from her garden—they came by post wrapped in wet newspaper and bore the message, “For my boy, my oldest son, Mother.”

Alice’s family of course came to the college for

Commencement; and her mother cried and her father watched with eyes blurred when Alice walked up in her turn to take her diploma and when the class and the other students clapped and clapped for her as they did for nobody else.

Alice hardly thought of what she was doing; she thought: "David's here with me for the last time." The epoch of their perforced meetings was finished. She thought: "Only by accident will I ever see him again. He'll marry Fidelia soon. He's waiting until after the twenty-second." For Alice knew David so well that she realized how he was feeling about that date of the twenty-second.

David saw Fidelia off on the train with Dorothy and her mother and father. They departed in the morning after Commencement; and it seemed to David, on that morning, that Fidelia purposely avoided letting him find her alone.

He made her promise, again, to wait for him to call for her at Streator; but, after she was gone, he worried.

He had torn up, after one reading, the letter which his father had sent him; but he kept his mother's flowers until after they faded and then he preserved one white petalled daisy, pressing it between the leaves of the bible his mother had given him.

Two days after the twenty-second, the Hamilton factory happened to make delivery of several car-loads of automobiles which David sent at once to the customers who had ordered; and so he had earned and had in hand considerable money of his own. He wired Fidelia that he was coming for her; that night he was

in Streator and no longer he found Fidelia shy with him.

He thought, confidently: "The trouble with her was that we were in college where I'd been engaged to Alice." He made his few arrangements that evening and upon the next morning he stood with Fidelia before an Episcopal clergyman in the front parlor of Dorothy Hess's home. "Before God and this company," which consisted of Dorothy Hess's family, David and Fidelia entered into that holy estate which is "not by any one to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts which have no understanding; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in fear of God."

The words, when they were repeated, brought before David the image of his father; and David banished it. In his waistcoat pocket, where he had the ring by which he would wed Fidelia, he had a dried and faded flower—the daisy blossom which his mother had sent him. His fingers touched it as he felt for the ring.

On the evening of that day, their wedding day, David and Fidelia were in camp on the shore of the lake. They were in the Wisconsin woods at a spot like the haven of David's dream. They were alone; not even a guide was with them. They exulted, "Nobody within miles!"

Together, and with quivering hands held to the same utensils, they prepared and cooked their camp supper; and never was a meal like that in all the world, in all time, ten thousand years ago or now! When

they were finished, they heaped up their fire so they would not have to tend it again.

Late, when the moon was above the pines, when the fire glowed in embers and the tree toads were singing, David lay awake from the tumult of his soul. Fidelia was sleeping, lovely, far lovelier as she lay beside him with her throat bare, her hair in loose braids, her arm toward him, far lovelier than ever he had dreamed.

He lay beside her, staring up at the sky, aghast at the teachings which had all but possessed him but which, by this night, he had denied.

“This is what they call the great sin,” he repeated to himself, “unless done ‘reverently, soberly and in fear of God.’” He laughed quietly at his father’s God. “The wonder of love with her!” he exulted. “And to think I’d been taught all my life to fear love and to look upon love for love as low!”

A star shone clearly between the branches of the trees:

“Up from Earth’s Center through the Seventh Gate,”
he whispered:

“I rose and on the Throne of Saturn sate;
And many a knot unravelled by the road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.
There was the door to which I found no Key;
There was the veil through which I could not see;
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There was—”

He turned and gazed at Fidelia’s face in the moonlight.

“And then no more of Thee and Me.”

He whispered: “All right. Who wants Eternity?” he cast his defiance to the stars. “I’m satisfied with the Throne of Saturn. ‘No more of Me and Thee’ after a while; but now Thee and Me!” And he kissed Fidelia, his wife.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BRIDAL CAMP

THE wedding journey was to last two weeks. David had arranged business affairs so that he could be away that long but he had never discussed the time with Fidelia.

“We can stay here thirteen days more?” David asked her on their first morning in camp; and it seemed to him he hoped an incredible thing.

“Why, David, of course I can, if you can.”

“I mean,” he explained, “no one’s expecting you?”

“Who’d expect me?” she asked.

“Or you’ve nothing else to do?”

“Why, what else have I to do than to be your wife, David?” she answered and kissed him, lovingly.

“That’s right,” said David, wonderingly and held her hand clasped in his. They had been in the lake together; they had raced on the beach; they had cooked and eaten their camp breakfast. After bathing, Fidelia had put up her hair before it was quite dried; now she shook it down and it was over her shoulders in a bronze and golden shower. They sat, side by side, in the sun on the warm, white sand with the lake rippling at their feet. They had no duty to trouble them; they could be idle for hours, if they liked, they could follow wholly their inclination.

None of this seemed strange to Fidelia; to her, it

was perfectly natural and right; and David tried to feel as untroubled as she about it. He was happy; yes, he felt a happiness which he had never known before. But with it, was wonder and disquiet.

It was the hour of the day at which David Herrick was used to doing something, to be absorbed in following and recording a lecture in class, to be hard at work or to be seriously attentive to a service in church. On recent Sundays, David had not gone to church but he had never been idle when he stayed away. So this idleness, with the prospect of much more of it, was in itself strange to him; and how strange to be married, to be far away from every one with a girl who had no duty to any one else, who had nothing in the world to do but be his wife!

"I'll write to Mr. Jessop, the first time we're tramping over by the railroad," Fidelia said. "He's a dear; and Mrs. Jessop'll be awfully glad I'm married."

"I'll write father," David said. "I know I ought to do it to-day and get it off to-night. It'll be worse, if he hears from somebody else, first."

"Worse," Fidelia repeated and shivered there in the sun. She was sifting the dry, fine sand through her fingers and she gazed down at it. "Worse," she said again.

David accused himself hotly for this hurt of her; he declared, hastily, "I told you he was opposed to my marrying any one at all now. He was opposed to Alice, Fidelia!"

"Not so much as he would be to me."

"That's not so!"

"David, look at me!" she asked, gazing at him.

"There!" she said, when he met her eyes but soon faltered.

He seized her and cried: "Well, what do we care?"

When he released her, she asked him, seriously: "David, why won't your father—why don't people like me—what would they want me to do?"

"People are crazy over you!" said David. "Nearly everybody."

"Lots of people hate me, David. They always have."

"You've always been pretty."

Fidelia shook her head. "That's not it."

"Why isn't it?"

She gazed at him honestly and said quietly: "Alice has always been pretty; and everybody's loved her. She hasn't a hater in the world, David."

Alice! The thought of her stabbed David; he thought of her as he had seen her last when she stepped forward on the platform at Commencement to receive her diploma and all the audience applauded and applauded. Fidelia was so sure that this was in his mind that she said: "If that had been me, how many would have cared?"

David protested: "What I did put people at the college against you."

Fidelia shook her head; she raised her hands to her hair and thrust her fingers through it. Watching her, David thrilled with realization that he possessed her.

"Come here, Fidel!" he commanded. "Fidel!" he repeated, proprietarily creating his own name for her. "Now," he said, more satisfied when she was closer, "let's you and me plan where we're going to live."

"Where do you want to?" asked Fidelia.

He said, playing with her hair and pulling a strand lightly to tease her: "I believe you've got married with no more plan than you took in town with you that day—our day. You just went to town; and you just married, didn't you?"

"You think I ought always have a definite plan, David?" she questioned him, seriously.

"No," denied David, delighted with her. "Never, if you don't want to."

"You see, I know what I'll have every month," Fidelia sought to explain herself, "but I don't know about you. I get three hundred dollars a month, David; or I can get it, if I want to."

"You mean you don't always draw it?" he asked, somewhat surprised.

"No. Mr. Jessop keeps the extra for me, if ever I need it."

"I see," said David. "Well, we'll have out of the business, if sales keep on as they've started, about five or six hundred a month. But I've a personal debt of ten thousand dollars, Fidelia; it's all right for it's capital investment but it was put up for me by a man named Fuller, who lives in Itanaca; and of course I've got to pay interest on that first of all. And I must keep on sending money to my mother."

"Oh, David, can't we send more?"

"More!" said David, pleased and amused. "You don't know how much we send now, do you?"

"No; but I saw that dress—your mother's dress which your sister sent up, don't you remember? Somebody'd given it to her and she'd worn it until—" Fidelia's eyes filled. "I couldn't forget that dress,

David. I'm so glad we're married and I can talk to you about her. She's so thin, David; I'd like to see that she has delicious things which she'd like."

"Oh, she gets enough food," David objected.

"But she *is* so thin! Couldn't we hire a maid for her?"

"Mother," exclaimed David, "with a maid!"

"I mean to cook for her and do the housework. I love her already, David; and I want her so to love me!"

"I want her to!" muttered David and his throat felt choked. He gazed away from his wife and then, looking at her, he bade, suddenly: "Put up your hair."

She obeyed him and he could see that he had puzzled her by his tone; for his father and mother, and the thought of bringing his wife to his home, were in his mind and had made him order an end to abandon. He could not explain this; he suggested: "Shall we go out in the canoe now?"

She arose, giving him her hands, warmly clasping his.

When they were upon the water, there fled from Fidelia's mind all concern over what his father would want her to do; but David did not dismiss it so easily. He thought how he had discussed this identical matter with Alice, when he had explained to her his father's idea that man and woman ought not to marry for the gratifying of desire for each other but only for the purpose of together working the pleasure of God. He thought how Alice had comprehended this idea; and he thought, as he watched his wife drawing her hand through the warm water beside the canoe, how bewildered she would look if he started to tell her that he

should not want, first of all, to please her and she should not live to gratify him.

He thought how different she was, not only from his mother, but from Alice. On the beach, a few minutes ago, he had told Fidelia for the first time of the ten thousand dollars he had borrowed from Mr. Fuller and she had completely ignored it; what she had talked about, the next moment after, was sending his mother some food. How tremendously serious a matter that debt had been to Alice! How she had debated it with him and had entered into the responsibility of it! He thought of her as having felt it almost as much as he, himself.

He drove from him, by deliberate effort, his images of his close companionship with Alice; but, in going, they stirred in him connected thoughts. He gazed at his wife and wondered who was he who had been to her what Alice had been to himself? Who was the man who had been her companion on the occasion when she had to beat wind and water to live and who had been in the party about the campfire where Fidelia had shared "the best supper ever," although it was burnt black in places.

David thought, as he looked at his lovely wife: "You meant you cared for him." David knew that the man was dead; for Fidelia had told him so during the night they drifted on the ice off Alice's home; but since then, she had never mentioned him and David had found no good opportunity to ask more.

This was not the time to ask, when he would put his question out of nothing more than his own thoughts. How little he knew about this beautiful,

loving girl who was off here alone with him, away from the rest of the world, and who was his wife! Everywhere she had been, men must have sought her; and one, at least, had made her care for him.

What memories of that man were coming, bidden or unbidden to her thoughts, as images of Alice came to his own?

David wondered about this so much that he dared not ask, without some excuse which would make his question casual. So he put it off during the day; and then, at night, asked it abruptly, after all.

They were in camp and cooking their supper when David suddenly said: "What was his name?"

"Sam's name?" asked Fidelia.

"I didn't know even that his name was Sam," said David, quivering with realization this Sam was, at the same moment, in his wife's mind.

"It was," Fidelia told him.

"What was the rest of his name?"

"Bolton."

"You were engaged to him once?"

"Yes, David."

"When he died, you were?"

"What?"

"Engaged to him?"

Fidelia gazed into the campfire and thought; and David wondered: "Why does she have to think? Can't she remember that?" Then she looked at him, very seriously and said: "Not exactly, David."

She replied so soberly that David explained to himself: "Bolton's dead; and of course she wants to be

fair to him." Aloud he said: "You broke with him, you mean."

"No. Not exactly. We both did it, David. He went away; that's how it was. Then he died."

David was sure that she had sent him away; he was glad that her break with Sam Bolton had happened before Bolton's death and had been of her doing.

David asked: "Do you want to tell me, were you ever engaged to anybody else?"

"I wasn't David," she told him and it was a satisfying assurance which prevented him from asking more.

Fidelia wrote her letter to Mr. Jessop by the camp-fire that evening; she finished hers quickly; but David wrestled long with his letter to his father. He destroyed many drafts before he composed a simple statement of the fact that he had married a girl, named Fidelia Netley, who had no family, who had come to college at mid-year and who was the girl with whom he had been carried out on the ice. He added the date and place of the wedding and stated that he purposely had kept his father in ignorance of his plan.

They tramped through the woods to the railroad and mailed their letters in the morning; and they returned to their camp, singing. They moved camp on the next day, not from any discontent with the spot they had first chosen but because David required occupation.

Fidelia liked to exert herself in the packing of the camp kit; she liked the paddling of the loaded canoe and the clearing of the camp site; she liked to expend

her strength. Also, she liked idleness; she could indulge in sleep and in day-dreaming indolence upon the warm sand to an extent amazing to her husband. But she never shirked any of her duties; she always arose to do them promptly and enthusiastically.

She had one daily task of which he did not learn for some time. Fidelia had brought along a new volume, bound in red leather, in which she continued her diary, writing in the mornings after David left her alone in camp. Once when he returned sooner than he had expected, he discovered her absorbed in her book; and her intentness was so great that he watched her in surprise.

When he stepped nearer and she heard him, she shut her book and arose, facing him with eyes aglow.

"David, it's our ninth day in camp!" she cried to him. "We must go back to-morrow!"

"Why?" he asked her; and added, "what was that you were doing?"

"My diary, David."

"I never knew you kept a diary."

"Oh, I have—ever since I was ten years old."

"I'd like to see that," he said; and as her fingers clasped more tightly on the book which she held closed, he amended by saying: "I'd like to see the one you kept when you were little, Fidelia."

It made him imagine her when she was a child, without a home but the schools to which she had been sent; it made him feel the loneliness of the little girl who had bought a blank book, when she was ten years old, to take the confidings of her troubles and her thoughts.

“What was that about our ninth day in camp?” he asked her.

“We ought to go back, now!”

“Why? Aren’t you happy here?”

“Oh, I’m wonderfully happy, David.”

“Then—”

She broke in upon him: “But we ought to go back!”

He knew her well enough to realize that this might be merely the result of some emotion which seized her without much or any reason; whatever the cause, her indolence was at an end. Of herself she set about the business of breaking camp and when she kept at it, he asked her: “See here, Fidelia; did anything happen when I was away?”

“Happen?” she said.

“Was any one here? With a letter or a message, I mean.”

“Why, no, David.” And, as he bent beside her, she kissed him. “We’ve been awfully happy here, haven’t we?” she said. “Only it’s hard for you to be just happy very long, isn’t it?”

“Hard!” he protested.

She kissed him again, with her soft, warm tenderness. “You’re good to me; I love you. Then, let’s go—won’t we, David?—when we’re so happy, yet?”

He said, holding her: “We’ll be happy always, anywhere.” But when he released her, she went on packing and he helped her; and they left camp that afternoon in time to take the night train to Chicago.

That train, which rushed them southward through the dark, reminded David of the tug-boat which had rescued Fidelia and himself from the floe in the lake and

which had brought him back, from the wonder of his first flight with Fidelia, to his duties and responsibilities. He had the same feeling of coming again to an accounting; and he could not keep out the idea that, in the accounting upon his return, Alice was concerned.

CHAPTER XVII

A PARLOR CAR TO ITANACA

FIDELIA wrote in her diary, upon the second morning after their return to Chicago:

“We’ve been married eleven days and nothing wrong has happened. Nothing at all! David just gets more and more wonderful with me every day. There’s nothing like having character in a man you’re married to; it counts in so many ways. It makes a man think about the girl . . . but it keeps him thinking about other people, too.

“Now S——” [invariably Fidelia referred to “S” by initial only in this volume of her diary; but she always wrote David’s name] “was about as different as a man could be. He didn’t think about me. He didn’t! Of course, if he wasn’t thinking about me, then he wasn’t thinking about any other girl, either. He was just having his way. David’s fine to me. He keeps me right in his mind.

“He keeps Alice, too. He doesn’t want her instead of me. Maybe he might, if I was afraid he might and if I didn’t mention her and want him to. . . . I want him to see her, too.

“I like his thinking about her. I do. I like his thinking about his father and mother. He hasn’t seen Alice or heard from her in any way; but his father and mother both wrote him yesterday; I mean, he got the letter yesterday at his office. It had been waiting for him about a week. I’ve seen the envelope; he wouldn’t show me what his father said nor all his mother said.

“I don’t think she said what she wanted to, quite; for her letter came enclosed with his; but she said “Bring my new daughter to me, my son, so I may love her.”

“Mother Herrick is sweet. I know I’ll love her and she will truly try to like me. I guess it is pretty sure that father Herrick won’t. We are going to Itanaca this afternoon.”

Fidelia was writing in a room at the Blackstone Hotel. She had a beautiful and luxurious room and she liked the comfort of it after their camp; but it did not particularly impress her. She was used to stopping at very good hotels when she visited cities and she had little idea of the mental struggle it had cost David to decide upon the extravagance of this room.

To her, the decision depended chiefly upon whether they could afford it; and David had assured her that he could and he was particularly positive after he had visited his office and talked with Snelgrove; for he discovered that during his absence the factory had continued delivery of cars and the model was proving a “catchy” and popular one. Customers were coming in and buying.

Fidelia had in her dresser drawer five ten-dollar bills which her husband had given her, for her personal use, and which were a sort of trophy taken from his commissions which had been accumulating for him. She did not need the money and she had no idea of spending it but she liked his giving it to her. She had a hundred dollars of her own, which she had carried to camp, and now she went out to buy gifts for David’s family.

She walked up Michigan Avenue debating with herself what she could bring. She could not give clothes, at least not necessary clothing such as she had helped David select in the spring; yet she must give some

expensive things to show how much she wanted to please them.

Stopping before a shop window, she remembered that David had told her his mother had liked that colorful dress which Fidelia, herself, had selected, so she picked out a gay, green parasol to go with it. She gazed in a silversmith's window upon shining vases, platters, teapots and table-ware which tempted her; but she passed on to a florist's. Flowers never gave offense, she considered, so she purchased a huge box of roses which the florist promised to pack so as to endure a four-hour railroad journey and to deliver at the hotel just before her time of leaving. Fidelia hesitated at the door of a shop showing laces and scarfs and stockings but she went on to a confectioner's where she bought five pounds of the most expensive chocolates and had them sent in an extravagant basket, lined with satin, and to be used, when emptied, for a lady's sewing.

Fidelia succeeded in spending almost sixty dollars for these and she was glad of it. She had forty more to spend upon a gift for David's father and she went out again to the sunlight of the warm, summer morning and wandered along the boulevard looking for something which would prove she wished to please him.

Nearly every one who passed—and particularly the men—gazed at her; and Fidelia got to thinking about them. Here on the boulevard where faced the clubs and the fashionable shops, no man gave in his glance anything but approval of Fidelia Herrick. No man

she offended; no man but would try to please her, sparing her any need of thought to please him except with herself. But Fidelia knew that, though none might pass her this morning on Michigan Avenue, there were men more implacable than any woman could be in regard to her; there were men whom never could she please, no matter what she did, but to whom, however hard she tried otherwise, she only added offense; and she realized, as she wandered along with her forty dollars, how worse than useless would be a gift if David's father proved to be one of these men.

David met her in their room at noon and when she showed him what she had bought for his mother and sisters, he kissed her and told her that her gifts were just "like her." And how like her they were! How little knowledge they showed of the home to which he was taking her; how little knowledge his wife had, indeed, of himself.

There was an incident at the railroad station, tremendous to David, and which Fidelia did not even suspect. It was his purchase of parlor-car tickets to Itanaca. David had bought Pullman tickets twice previously; but both times under conditions so strange as to call up no comparisons; for the occasions were when he was leaving Streator at noon with his bride and when he and she were returning from their camp to Chicago. But now he was going home on a familiar train made up of half a dozen ordinary day-coaches, in which David Herrick always had traveled, and a parlor car in the rear which he had never entered.

None of his family had ever entered it. Not his father nor his mother nor had his sister Deborah upon

her one journey to Chicago. Of course it had been possible for any of them to spend an extra dollar for a seat in a parlor car; but no one of them had thought of doing it. What a contempt had David Herrick for people who paid to put themselves apart from others or who cared so much for the comfort of a cotton cover over plush that they spent extra fare for it! Yet, here was David Herrick escorting his wife aboard the parlor car for Itanaca.

It did no good for him to argue with himself that, considering what he was making, he "ought" to take a parlor car; his own feelings answered him, as he sat in his separate seat with its clean, white cover over the plush, with the window beside him screened against dust, with an electric fan whirling noiselessly above him—and in the next seat a girl so beautiful that every one gazed at her in admiration and who was his wife. He was a different person from the boy who used to travel, to and from college, in those hot, grimy, common coaches ahead.

The train, leaving the city and the region of the lake, passed into the country, into the familiar, flat, cloudless cornland of central Illinois. Over the fields, black and brown and gray and all studded with the bright green leaves and stalks of the growing corn, lay a glaring, heavy heat. No breeze stirred the solidity of it. Motorcars cut it, cleaving in straight lines on the level, yellow roads and the dust, raised by their wheels, remained suspended in long streaks which showed the substance of that hot sunlight; the cars which stood at the crossing, waiting for the train to go by, were halted under hanging, powdery halos of haze.

It was a day when men worked in sweat and swift weariness. David Herrick well knew the burden of labor on such a day. How he used to work himself, unsparingly, brutally because of the belief bred in him, that labor and hardship for their own sake were good for his soul!

This heat, slapping in through his screened window, struck his cheek with a challenge which the ceaselessly whirling fan could not cool; it inquired of David Herrick how much of principle had been involved in his denials of self-indulgence, how much they had been merely a result of necessity.

Here in the heat and the glare, he suddenly thought, oppositely, of night darkness and cold; he thought how, with Alice in her car stopped at the edge of the graveyard, he had declared he would cease to sacrifice his opportunities for pleasure on this earth for the sake of laying up uncertain treasures in heaven.

The graveyard that night and the snow and the dark and the storm over the lake had not reproached him as now did this afternoon glare and heat over his homeland.

Fidelia took off her hat; the porter brought a paper bag to protect it and put it upon the rack overhead. David pulled lower the heavy green window-curtain, as the sun got around to the side of the car; and Fidelia leaned back her head comfortably and dozed. Now and then, as an air current or a lurch of the car puffed in the curtain, a streak of sun shone on her hair and made it glorious; and David, watching her, felt his throat close and choke. How lovely she was and how sweet and docile, always! How she

wanted to be liked! And how little idea she had of the home, his home, to which he was taking her!

He gazed from her to her presents piled on the floor beyond her seat. It was not yet too late to prevent her from offering them; he had still time to explain that it would be far, far better for her to come to his father's home empty-handed, in poor clothes and plain in appearance. Then his father would know that David had married his wife out of no lust of the flesh.

David swung about, denying such a notion. They would see her as she was and bearing the gifts for them which she, herself, had selected.

CHAPTER XVIII

“BUT AND IF YE SUFFER”

FIDELIA disappeared into the women's room, half an hour before the train was due at Itanaca, and when she emerged she was fresh and radiant without a sign of four hours' hot travel. David arose as she rejoined him and she asked: “Do I look all right now?”

“You're the most beautiful girl in the world!” he whispered to her and he was sure it was so.

The heat and excitement brightened her large eyes and heightened the clear color of her lovely skin. David was excited.

The town, which the train was entering, differed in no important aspect from other towns passed during the afternoon. The drab, dusty station was a replica of others; behind it lay a wide, rutted, sunbaked road. Harder's general store showed a sun-blistered side to arriving passengers; Eldrige's feed store faced it and there was old Jake Cullen shoeing a horse in the door of his blacksmith shop. Half a dozen identical cars, all identically dusty, clustered before the Ford Garage. The dry, dust-powdered elms of July drooped in the parched parkway before “The Itanaca House”; an opposite clump somewhat shaded the west front of the new, white painted picture theater and of Lekkin's billiard hall next it.

In David's mind, as he gazed from the car, there

attached to each establishment and each person in sight the pronouncement of his father's judgments. Lekkin's hall was a place of idleness, gambling and vileness; David's father would, if he could, shut the hall and burn its furniture. The picture theater did much more harm than good, though it might be made only an instrument for good. Mr. Harder was a God-fearing Christian and generous, if easy-going; Cullen drank in secret. . . .

David looked past the fronts of the stores and up the road which reached away in a pleasant vista of trees between which showed the roofs of homes; the home of Henry West, whom David always had been told to respect; of Theodore Lorber, whose first wife had divorced him for scriptural sin and who brazenly had married again. On a rise of ground appeared the big, red brick house of Mr. Fuller from whom—in defiance of his father—David had borrowed the ten thousand dollars with which he had bought his partnership in the Hamilton Agency.

He turned his eyes to the left and he sought and immediately found a tall, tapered, solitary steeple. He could not see his home; he could not see even the church building below the steeple but, almost as vividly as though he stared upon it, there formed before him the wide, grassy lot of the church enclosure, surrounded by a picket fence which ran around both the plain, poor, white clapboard church and the plainer, poorer, white clapboard cottage beside it.

Often when he thought of the church and of his home, the soul of them seemed to be his mother, his gentle, loving, patient and dutiful mother who was busy

every waking moment at some task about the house or for her children or for her husband or for the church. At this moment, David did not think of his mother; the soul of that steeple, the soul of that home, the very soul of the town itself seemed to be his father. Not only to David but to every one in this town his father's pronouncements were known. Men could defy them, as David himself had defied them; but no one could ignore them. They cast on the defensive the proprietor of the pool hall, Cullen, and Lorber, Mr. Fuller and David himself; for his father fought for a standard of life—a bigoted and narrow and out-of-date standard, men might say; David himself might say it—still it was a standard for decency and right. Suppose that standard altogether fell, David thought. Suppose his father deserted it; suppose his father abandoned the faith, which David himself was denying. Suppose that steeple, with no belief below it, merely pointed to an empty sky.

The idea shook David; he caught at Fidelia's sleeve. "There's father's church," he said huskily and tried to clear his throat and could not. "Our house is right beside it."

The train stopped and, when the parlor-car porter had raised the trap over the steps and placed his little stool for Fidelia's feet, David followed his wife to the ground. Idlers, who always were about the station, saw her and came closer, staring; they saw David, the preacher's son, coming from the parlor car. "Hello, Dave!" they hailed in frank surprise.

David replied to them by name and he drew Fidelia

from them. She knew that he had not written to his family to tell the train upon which he and she would arrive; and he had explained to her that, except by appointment, no driver met a train at Itanaca. If anyone wanted a car, he walked across the road to the Ford garage; but no one hired a car to go to the Methodist parsonage; at least, no Herrick ever did. The house was hardly a half mile from the station.

“Of course we’ll walk,” Fidelia said and she took from the porter her box of roses and the long, narrow package of the parasol. David picked up their suitcase and her huge basket of chocolates; the flush of his feeling for his father was gone. At any moment he might meet his father; or he might see his mother in Harder’s or at the counter of the butcher shop selecting, with her scrupulous care, a good cut of cheap meat. But on the street he saw no one of his family. Many friends spoke to him and every one stared at Fidelia; several stopped him. “This is your wife, Dave?” they asked.

Every one knew he had been married; so his father must have told them; his father would not depute to any one else the task of telling his congregation that his son secretly had married a girl whom the family had not yet met. But Fidelia amazed them. No one was prepared to see David Herrick bring home a girl like her.

“They’re nice people here,” Fidelia said to him, when she and he walked on alone.

“Anybody ought to be nice to you!” David replied. She was kept flushed by the many meetings

and the warmth of the walk. "They all like you!" he declared. "They never saw anybody as beautiful as you before."

He and she were alone when they reached the picket fence. "Here's home," David said.

At this hour of a summer afternoon, the shadow of the steeple fell across the path to the house; and David stood in the shadow after he opened the gate.

The church was closed and quiet; the cottage was as quiet, although the door and windows stood open. No one was in sight.

David said: "Probably only mother and the girls are home. Probably they're busy in back." Ordinarily he would have called out, at coming home; but now he did not. He led Fidelia to the door. "We'll go in," he said.

The house within was quiet; a sweet odor, that of strawberries cooking, came from the kitchen. "Mother's putting up preserves," David whispered to Fidelia. He did not want to announce them just yet; he was watching Fidelia as she glanced about his home.

Plain, cheap curtains, but very clean, hung at the windows; the carpet on the living-room floor was nearly threadbare. The furniture was a plain, oak table, dented but polished, a horse-hair covered sofa and a severe rocking-chair and several plain, "straight" chairs of differing ages and design. The wall paper was clean by dint of repeated rubbings with bread crumbs and at the cost of much of the gray and brown pattern which originally had decorated it. Upon the furniture, upon the curtains, upon the carpet, every-

where one looked closely were proofs of repeated repair and care for cheap, outworn things.

Fidelia's eyes filled. She put down her packages and one of her hands sought David's. As he felt her clasp, he hardened his hand within hers to oppose her pity for his people.

"They don't care whether they have *things* or not," he whispered almost fiercely in his pride.

He heard his mother's voice and, in the blue gingham dress in which she did her cooking, she came from the kitchen. "David!" she cried; and then she looked on the beautiful, vivid girl who had come with him.

What Fidelia saw was a woman not beautiful at all and who never had been beautiful. She had wonderful eyes, large and gray, of the grayness which is warm and friendly and patient. Her eyes were set rather far apart in her thin, plain face. Her body was very thin, even more so than Fidelia had expected from that dress which she had exhibited to the salespeople at Field's. But thin as she was, she was not flat-bosomed; she was motherly, in spite of her thinness. She had brown, abundant hair, nearly half gray; her hands, besides being very thin, were calloused and wrinkled. But her eyes and her lips showed she was not old. As a matter of fact, she was barely forty-three; for she had married when she was twenty and David had been born within the year.

Fidelia did not feel that she was old; she was younger than Fidelia had expected her to be but she had worn herself so much more! Fidelia thought of her washing and polishing and mending over and over the poor, cheap possessions of this house; Fidelia

thought of her accepting from neighbors worn garments and wearing them out, as she had worn that woolen dress which Fidelia had seen; Fidelia felt how she herself and David had hurt her by marrying without even letting her know; and Fidelia felt from her for David and for Fidelia herself, only love. Fidelia sobbed.

“Why, there!” said David’s mother and the thin arms were about Fidelia; and how soft the wrinkled, calloused hands were on Fidelia’s face. “Why, there, my dear—my dear!”

“You’re so sweet!” sobbed Fidelia. “I didn’t know you’d be so sweet!”

A plain quiet girl came from the kitchen. “Hello, Deborah,” David said. She was in blue gingham like her mother; she had dark hair, unlike both her mother and David; but she was tall like David and nearly his age. A little girl of ten with brown hair and big gray eyes stared at Fidelia. “This is Esther,” David said and picked her up and kissed her.

When Fidelia’s mother released her, Fidelia sat down and took the little girl in her lap. Fidelia wanted to do something for these people and to do it at once; and Esther offered the chance to begin.

“I’ve got a basket of chocolates, Esther,” she said, kissing the child. “A great big basket. Get it for me, David, please.”

He got it and the flowers and the gay green parasol. So they were all about—the extravagant, long-stemmed roses in a white china water pitcher, the satin-lined candy-basket open and the parasol out of its wrappings—when David’s father came in.

Fidelia, still holding the little, gray-eyed girl in her

lap, looked up at the doorway to see a tall, black-haired man in black. Dark eyes—brown, they were, actually, though under his black brows she could not see the color—gazed at her. A thin, but strong looking hand, dark from the black hair upon the back of it, grasped the side of the door-way in which he stood.

David arose; his sister Deborah arose; David's mother, who had sat on the sofa, also arose; the child in Fidelia's lap, whom Fidelia was feeding chocolates, freed herself from Fidelia's arms; but Fidelia did not get up.

She felt, with a sudden drop from her joy in giving her gifts, that it was no use for her to try to please this man. She thought of the forty dollars she had planned to spend for a gift for him and thought: "Suppose I'd done it!"

His eyes examined the extravagant basket beside her; he noticed the flowers and the gaudy parasol. They did not surprise him; they seemed to be what he expected, after seeing her. He gazed at David.

"Father!" said David. "Father—"

"I was at Mr. White's when I heard you had come home, David," he said. "I returned at once."

"Yes, father," said David.

His father took his hand from the doorway and came a few steps closer to Fidelia. "You must be my son's wife," he said slowly. "You must be—Fidelia."

"I'm Fidelia," she said, frightened. Seldom indeed did she feel frightened; she did not know at exactly what she was frightened now but she was.

"I'm glad you have come to visit us. I want you to take your place in my family."

Fidelia did not know what to reply to this man; she did not know how to treat a man who disapproved of her, upon whom she made no favorable effect at all. She said, nervously: "We haven't come for a visit."

"She means, father," David put in quickly, "we've come down just for the day. I've got to go back to-morrow night."

His father turned to him. "Why must you go back?"

"For business, father."

"Your automobile business, that is."

"That's my business, father."

"Yes," his father said, as though he had had to recollect. "Of course that's your business."

Then David saw that his father was shaking. His father said: "Come to my room after a minute, David."

His father faced Fidelia again. "This is now your home," he announced to her. "You will always be welcome here; always," he repeated.

When his father left the room, David went to his wife and kissed her; then, quivering himself, he sought his father in the church.

His father's room—the chamber his father meant when he said "my room"—was a small, square apartment under the church steeple which a man less given to the plainest in speech and thought would have called his "study." It contained the books which his father had had at the Seminary, the later-bought volumes of sermons, *The Life of Christ*, four brown backs of *Josephus* and the dictionary of the Bible in three severe, regular rows upon home carpentered pine

shelves; it contained a flat, deal table, with a drawer, which his father used for a desk and two straight, cheap chairs and a swivel chair bought, secondhand, at a sheriff's sale when a local insurance agency had failed. The square of brown carpet was a masterpiece of matched ends and corners which had been trimmed off when a new strip was laid in the aisle of the church below.

There were four tall, narrow windows, one in each wall; and a characteristic of the room was that, late in the afternoon, the sun shone straight through it, in the west window and out the east. David knew no other room where the sun did that. The rising sun similarly shone through to the west, of course; and David, from his window in the house, used to watch the gleaming spot in the shadow of the steeple. That light, shining through, used to seem a mystic symbol of special power endowed upon his father in that room. There his father went to write his sermons; there he went to meditate and pray when perplexities came upon him; there his father, alone, underwent those spiritual experiences when he "felt the presence of God."

To David, this room was more a solemn place of God than the pulpit in the church below. Sometimes, such as on Christmas day and during Sunday school entertainments, there might be merriment in the church but never was there merriment or lightness here. No one ever visited this room except on a serious errand; no child from the cottage ever played here.

A large, black Bible always was upon the desk; it was there now and it was open at some place in the new testament, David saw. His father sat before it

and facing the door at the top of the winding steps which David had climbed. The shaft of the sun, passing through the room, was between David and his father.

"I want you to tell me about your marriage," Ephraim Herrick said at once in his direct way which scorned euphonies and preliminaries. He had a letter on his table beside his Bible and David recognized it for the letter which he had written from camp.

"What do you want to know?" David asked.

"Why you married secretly—that is, secretly as far as your family was concerned."

"Because I'd broken my engagement with Alice," David answered abruptly. "I wrote you that."

"Yes," his father said. "You wrote me that; but you did not write that it was for the purpose of marrying some one else. Why didn't you?"

"Because I knew you'd never approve of Fidelia, father; because—because I loved her, father, and I meant to marry her, no matter what you'd say. And I did it."

"Yes," said his father. "You have brought me an accomplished fact. It is very different from a mere wish or purpose. Fidelia has become your wife; you are her husband. God has joined you."

David jerked, involuntarily, as his father's voice gave him a vision of God—the God of his childhood, whose presence often was here under the steeple and who had joined David to Fidelia, however David denied him.

"I wouldn't have brought you an accomplished fact,"

David said, “if it would have been better in any way to have told you. Before I borrowed that money from Mr. Fuller, I told you what I was going to do; you said about everything you could to me to stop me from going into business and particularly to stop my taking that money; but I went into business. Now I’ve married.”

“I have never denied you the right to marry.”

“You did not want me to marry Alice; so it would’ve been worse if you’d seen Fidelia, I knew.”

“How did you know that?”

“Because she’s further from your idea of a wife for me than Alice ever was. When I wrote you the note from college to say that I wasn’t going to marry Alice, I wrote some more to you,” David proceeded steadily. “I didn’t send it. I think I remember just what I said. I wrote: ‘A girl has come to college who is the type you would find more detrimental to me than Alice. She’s the most beautiful girl I’ve ever seen. I know almost nothing of her character except that she is pleasant and she’s strong in physical endurance and keeps cheerful hour after hour under trying conditions. The truth is, I think almost nothing about her character and less about her religious faith. I love her.

“‘You wouldn’t call it love. You’d say I desire her. Well, I do; and I mean to marry her.’ That’s what I wrote and it’s all true—except that she is cheerfuller and pleasanter day after day than ever I’d thought she could be. I’ve married her and I’m happy with her. Father, I didn’t know what happiness could

be till I married her. It's good and right to be happy, father; and I'm happy as I never supposed I could be, happy—”

“Happy!” His father arose with his hand on his table; he leaned forward so that the sun, striking through the room, shone on his face. “‘But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye! If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye!’ They are the words of Peter, the Apostle, if you forget them, my son; they are the words he wrote when the Roman world was sinking in lust and giving itself to physical pleasures, as our world does to-day. ‘But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye!’”

“I wanted you for the work of God; I wanted you for that happiness some day, and in your right time, my son. You turned from it first to go into business to make money and now you've married for physical happiness. I said everything I could to stop you from going into business; that's true. Not because business is wrong or sinful but because it is wrong for you. I feel as I do about Fidelia, not because marriage is wrong, but because I know this marriage is dangerous to you. And you know it; that is why you concealed it from me, that was why you knew I would have stopped you, if I could.

“But now you are man and wife. God has joined you. God works in his own way; and perhaps, perhaps his way of going about the redemption of you was to double the difficulty of your redemption and break you first under the burden. Perhaps that is it.”

In the evening David telephoned to Mr. Fuller, from whom he had borrowed the ten thousand dollars, and

he asked when he could call. "Any time," said Mr. Fuller cordially. "And bring along that wife of yours I'm hearing about." So David and Fidelia went to Mr. Fuller's on the next afternoon.

Fuller was delighted with Fidelia; and when David and she were leaving, Mr. Fuller detained David at the door.

"Boy, you've a wonderful wife, you certainly made a great move for yourself when you married that girl," Fuller praised David. "She'll be a big asset to you in business."

CHAPTER XIX

RESPONSIBLE TO NONE

FIDELIA surprised David, when they were on the train for Chicago, by proposing a plan for their immediate domestic arrangements. He had intended to return to the Blackstone for another day or so while they could look around for permanent quarters.

“I know just the place,” Fidelia announced.

It was a new, residence hotel built close to the lake on the shore about a mile south of Alice’s home; it was an unusually well-planned and pleasant hotel, with all the modern, popular features for making its guests comfortable and furnishing them entertainment. Its nearness to the Sothrons bothered David but he felt that he should not object for that reason; so Fidelia and he went to the hotel from the train and had their trunks brought from down town the next day.

In the evening, while Fidelia was finishing her settling into their new room, David took a walk alone up the shore drive to within sight of Alice’s home. The house was dark and, going closer, he saw that shutters were on the lower windows. He tried the iron gate and found it locked.

When he reported this to Fidelia, upon his return to the hotel, she said: “Why, Mr. and Mrs. Sothron and Alice are all away in Europe. It was in the society

column the other day. They'll be gone all summer or at least Alice and her mother will."

David thought of the plan which Alice and he had made. According to it, they would have been settled now in a flat upon one of the streets a half mile west of the lake in a neighborhood of moderate rents, where many young married people of the Sothrons' acquaintance were living. If he and she had carried through their plan, Alice would not have gone away this summer. He wondered how often their plan came to her mind and whether she found herself reckoning what she and he might be doing, if they had gone on as they had intended.

He found himself thinking of the people whom he had met through Alice and who naturally would have become his friends, if Alice and he had married. Occasionally he saw them on the street or in a car and, though they always spoke to him, no one suggested any improvement of acquaintance with him. The men were just the sort he would have liked to know; and he would have liked Fidelia to make friends with their wives. Instead, she had to make her own friends at the hotel; and it was amazing to David how many friends she made, both women and men, and how the life of the hotel occupied her.

His day and hers began early; for he had his habit of early rising and Fidelia always got up with him. They slipped into bathing suits and, with moccasins on bare feet and robes about them, they went down to the water. He usually dove first and when he came up, she dived. He caught her as she came to the top and they laughed and splashed at each other and

climbed up and dived again. Then they swam out, side by side, into the deep water.

"You go back now," David would warn her.

Upon such an occasion, and upon such alone, she disobeyed him. "I'm going out if you are."

So, after a moment more, he would turn back; she turned, swimming strongly beside him, her bare arms just under the surface of the water.

Her glorious hair was hidden under a rubber helmet cap but her face was never less feminine for that. He whispered to her, when they were alone, "You're the loveliest that ever lived." When others were about, he watched them gaze at her and he exulted that she was his.

When they dressed in their room, Fidelia shook down her hair, for in spite of her cap, always some edge got wet, and the glorious red gold of her hair lay upon the clear, pink pearl of her fair shoulders. David had breakfast brought to their room. He dressed for breakfast and sometimes she did; but usually she got into a dressing-gown and left her hair down over her shoulders and she sat at the side of the table in the sun.

At eight, promptly, he left for his office and he seldom returned before six, for the Hamilton car was attracting real attention on motorcar "row." Old, established agencies for other cars began taking notice of Snelgrove-Herrick and they paid the new model the compliment of knocking it. David encountered unexpected difficulties in selling the new shipments from the factory; but he was used to difficulties and he honestly liked hard work. For him, the idleness of honeymoon days was definitely ended; but the return

to the city brought no serious occupation to fill Fidelia's days.

David bothered about it, at first, when he observed that, after he left her, she seemed to spend about half of each morning in their room; for if he telephoned to her before eleven o'clock, she usually answered from the room. After eleven, the switchboard girl either offered to "page" Mrs. Herrick or reported definitely, "Mrs. Herrick is out." So when David found he would have noontime free, he learned to phone before eleven, if he wanted his wife to lunch in town with him. When he asked her, she always came, though she seemed always to have a luncheon engagement for any day he did not ask her.

She was "out" so regularly in the afternoon that he gave up phoning then. At night, she liked to tell him where she had been and what she had done. "It was auction, David, at half-cent points. Gertrude and I—" Gertrude was a Mrs. Vredick, of about Fidelia's age, who was one of her first friends at the hotel—"we won six dollars." Oh perhaps "it" had been a *matinée* or a motion picture with tea or a soda afterwards. Or Gertrude and she had been shopping; or they had had their fortunes told. Sometimes she had spent almost the entire afternoon with Gertrude, or some other friend, in a hair-dresser's going through the leisurely and agreeable "getting" of a manicure, or a shampoo and a "wave." But she always was in their room, or at least in the hotel, when he returned; always she was ready to go out with him anywhere to dinner or to the theater, to dance at the hotel or to do with him whatever else he wanted. And day after

day she went on thus cheerfully and with every evidence of content.

David did not understand how she could; but he did not speak to her about it. He wondered over it by himself as he lived with her and watched her.

It would have been easy to understand if he could consider it a merely temporary period with her while she was waiting for a child; but she was not awaiting a child. The greatest part of David's wonder about her was that she did not want a child soon.

He had never discussed children with her before their marriage, as he had done with Alice when he and she were engaged and when Alice and he had agreed that they wanted four children and they would want the first child in their first year. He had simply assumed that, if any girl would want a child, Fidelia surely would; but she did not. "Not now, David!" she appealed to him, when he spoke of it to her. "Oh, I want a baby but—not yet, David."

The time, he thought, surely should be the woman's affair; yet she surprised him. He was certain that it was no physical fear which constrained her; he could not think of her physically afraid and what a perfect body she had for motherhood!

He felt, very vaguely at first and then not more definitely but more strongly, the existence of a reason which she would not confide to him; but it did not disturb his happiness with her when they locked their door upon themselves alone and left the world far, far away. It was as when he followed her into the magic valley of the Titans which made him, with her, a god responsible to no one.

When the sun, striking in through their window, awakened them, often they lay and, merely by looking beyond the window and not seeing the frame, they gazed upon the sun rising from the water and felt themselves alone on the edge of Creation and they said that they alone lived fifty thousand years ago or a million ages away in time to come. Of course they could have it whatever they wished for one can argue any age, or any youth, to sky and water and sun.

October came with no change in the manner of life at the hotel except that the morning swim in the lake was omitted since the water was cold. The month brought a lull at the office. The closed-car models were in and being delivered; they were proving very satisfactory and David did not have to work so hard as in the summer.

He had plenty of energy and he had a feeling of laxness at not doing more and at spending evening after evening at dancing, at cards with the Vredicks, at a theater alone with Fidelia or in some party she got up. He enjoyed the evenings and he was doing so well that the expense of the frequent entertainments did not worry him but afterwards he felt guilty about them. He explained it as the result of his habit of doing double work in the fall when he used to be in college and working to support himself and for money to send home.

He missed something else which he could not feel more exactly than as an unexpected lack of full satisfaction in what he was doing. When he had been in the University and also dealing in secondhand cars,

it seemed to him that nothing could be better than to be able to give all his time to this agency which he had now procured; and he did enjoy his success, but he missed college. He missed not only the companionship of Lan and Bill Fraser and the other fellows who had lived in the Delta A house with him for four years; he missed classes, too, and the agreeable sense of advancement one had when in college and each day progressing nearer to the desirable and honorable goal of graduation. He did not suspect, until now, how much of his satisfaction in being in business, when he was in college, had come from his working for money, not for its own sake, but to earn him his education and to help out at home.

He was still helping out at home and that gave him satisfaction. He was not working for money simply to spend upon pleasant living for his wife and himself.

He remembered how Alice said he never could work just for money for pleasure. He remembered how she said it when in his arms that night he defied Eternity and she and he set the date upon which they would be married.

She came home in the last week in October. Fidelia read to David, from the society column, the announcement that the Sothron home on Sheridan Road was re-opened and that Mrs. Walter Sothron and her daughter had returned from Europe.

David met her about a week later. He had driven north in the afternoon to take home a customer, a woman, who had bought a car from him and who

found herself too timid to drive it, alone. She happened to live only a couple of miles north of his hotel, so after leaving his customer and her car at home, he decided to walk, as the day was clear and pleasant.

When driving, he had passed the Sothron house and he had seen that it was open and as he neared it on foot, he watched the door and the walk; but no one went in or out. He was a block past the house and the stir which it had roused was subsiding within him when he recognized Alice approaching from the south.

In his confusion of feelings, he became keenly self-conscious of his new clothes. He had on a new, well-tailored suit, a new, light overcoat and new hat, evidences of much money spent upon himself, evidences also of great difference in him from the David who used to debate with her whether he "ought" to pay to have an overcoat made for himself.

He proceeded until he was within a few paces of her and then he halted; she came nearly to him and he thought, for a moment, that she meant merely to speak to him and pass. She spoke but she did not pass and he took off his hat and held it at his side.

"How do you do, David?" she asked, in her quiet way and her blue eyes looked up steadily at him.

He said: "I saw in the paper that you were home."

It sounded as though his presence near her home was a result of his having seen the item in the paper. He asked, quickly: "You had a good trip?"

"Yes."

He looked down, not at her eyes, he looked at the

walk, at the tips of her small, pretty shoes. He glanced at her hands. How often he had clasped them! She asked: "Where are you living?"

The way she said "you" included Fidelia with him. He told her: "Right down here at the hotel."

She turned enough to glance toward the hotel. "You're near," she said.

"Yes."

"You must be doing well, David," she continued, still gazing toward the hotel; then she looked at him and noticed his clothes.

"I am, Alice. The car's turned out a good one."

"I heard so."

He wanted to ask her how she had heard; but the fact that she, who had planned his business so intimately with him, now had to hear through a third person how it was going, shook them both.

"I suppose," she started and stopped and, after swallowing, she said, "I suppose you're able to start already paying back Mr. Fuller, though you didn't have to till January."

How his arrangements hung in her mind! It was not strange for they had been her arrangements too.

"We could pay off something now—I mean Snelgrove and I," he particularized his "we." He had meant Snelgrove and himself, not Fidelia and himself; he never thought of Fidelia with him in the business although he realized that always, with Alice, he had said "we," for her and him, when making the plan. "But Mr. Fuller doesn't want us to lower our balance yet. He's well satisfied."

Alice asked: "How's your father, David?"

"The same," David answered, shortly.

At last Alice asked: "How is Fidelia?" And when she did it, another part of their plan—Alice's plan and his—was in his mind. It was the part of their plan which hoped that she would bear a child in their first year.

"She's—the same," said David and Alice gazed into his eyes and she left him.

Upon this afternoon, Fidelia was not in when he reached the hotel for he was considerably earlier than usual. She returned at her customary time and, opening the door of their room, she came upon David sitting in the dark by the window.

"Why, what's happened?" she cried and she switched on the light.

"Nothing," denied David. "I had a 'drive home' up this way a while ago and there was no use going back to the office." He kissed his wife and she asked no more but waited.

She began taking off her suit to dress for dinner and while he was changing his shirt, he said: "I was up beyond the Sothrons' and I walked back. I ran across Alice."

Fidelia made no comment immediately and he did not look at her. In a moment she said: "You surely stopped to speak to her, David."

"Yes. She had a good trip. I told her we were living here. She asked about business and for father and you."

Fidelia went on undressing and when she next spoke

it was to tell him lightly where she had been that afternoon and David had no idea of how she dwelt on the incident.

She recorded it carefully in her diary as soon as he left her alone the next morning.

An inevitable effect of such recording, which Fidelia did not appreciate, was to give more weight to some circumstances than they perhaps merited. It was her nature to exaggerate her feelings and she wrote, in part: "I came in on David to-night in the dark; and it gave me a start! I knew right away he had had some experience. He had; he'd seen Alice for the first time since we've been married. Of course he'd feel badly and be sorry for her. I am. But he wasn't just sorry for her; he was thinking about her; he wanted to think about her there by himself; that's why he was sitting alone in the dark.

"There's things between them that stay with him and I don't make him forget. I feel it a lot of times. She's got a hold on him that he can't help and maybe I can't. . . . His father's got another hold on him. Sometimes I'm much more afraid of that, though David and I are man and wife now and that means forever with father Herrick. But if he ever found out about Lakoon, and it turns out I'm wrong, I guess he'd not stop at anything with me."

In several entries in her diary of following days, she made similar reference to the possibility of her being "wrong" about an event which she described no more definitely than "Lakoon." It was in her mind, troubling her again and again. One morning she wrote: "I am sure about it; I've every reason to feel

sure. Any one would say so: but I don't absolutely *know*. Something might be known now that I haven't heard; of course that something might be either way. Flora would have heard, if any one did. I'll write Flora."

Several days later she again inscribed: "I ought to write Flora." But she did not; she put it off and off, lulling her fears by various visits to fortune tellers. From the past, there was nothing of great account to trouble her, they said.

PART II

CHAPTER XX

“PLEASURE IS THE END!”

FIDELIA was brushing her hair beside an open window where the sun streamed in. It was an August sun, clear and hot and ten o'clock high in a turquoise sky. The lake under her window reflected the lucent blue and tinged it with a tint like the pale jade of the bracelet upon her arm. She slipped off the circlet of polished stone and held it before the water to compare the colors. She sang quietly as she resumed her brushing of her hair. David had gone to the office more than an hour ago, leaving her alone.

This room of hers high above the water and with wide, pleasant windows to the east and south was a particularly delightful “living-room” with its soft, blue rug and big, blue lounge, with pretty table and a desk and chairs painted that hue of gray which is gay and made more cheerful by little lines and designs in brighter color. There were bookshelves and books, a parchment-shaded lamp and a small, beautiful grand piano which was open. It was always open and with music on the rack. A dozen times a day Fidelia slipped into the piano seat and played; she loved to play but not to practice.

Beyond the blue Japanese screen before the doorway was a white and blue bath where also the sun

shone in; and next was a bedroom, for Fidelia and David had a suite at the hotel now.

Fidelia had just finished doing her diary. In her locked trunk, which was in the hotel store-room, were fifteen red volumes, three new ones added to the twelve she had brought with her to Mrs. Fansler's, and the red bound book which lay open before Fidelia, with its pages for this morning filled, carried the record of Fidelia Herrick past the third anniversary of her marriage to David and up to this morning in the second month of their fourth year.

It was a record which might have dismayed Fidelia if she ever totalled the sum of her doings and reckoned the result of her days; but she never thought of anything like that. She often referred back to old volumes but only to reread certain pages or passages which she wished more vividly to recall. Yet the record emphasized her consciousness of certain tendencies such as the greater and greater infrequency of David's and her visits to Itanaca. As a consequence of the cessation of their visits, father Herrick was taking every opportunity to come to Chicago; he had arrived in the city on church business yesterday and looked in upon David at his office. This morning father Herrick was coming to call upon Fidelia.

"He's simply going to make himself feel more terribly about me," Fidelia said. "That's what he always does."

She did not like to be a subject of distress to him but she had just about abandoned the making of efforts to please him. What was the use when he was sure to see wrong in the most innocent things you did?

A pack of cards lay upon her table and, as she picked them up, idly, she thought how he condemned cards whether you played with them for money or not or whether you simply dealt them to tell your fortune.

She shuffled and began dealing her fortune, as she often did and she forgot father Herrick as she dealt a card to the right and a card to the left. The fall of cards upon the right-hand pile was to tell her fortune in respect to the fortune of the pile to the left, which was Alice Sothron's; for it was Alice who was in her mind.

Alice was at home this summer in the big house a mile up the shore. In every previous summer Alice had gone away, either to Europe or to the Atlantic coast or to the Colorado mountains. This was a summer when Alice might have remained at home for a number of reasons entirely unconnected with David and Fidelia Herrick but Fidelia never thought of Alice doing anything without having David in mind. Alice was still unmarried and though Fidelia knew that she often went out with men, yet Fidelia knew also that Alice never was seen frequently with the same man. Now and then, in the three years, Fidelia had happened to meet Alice and Fidelia knew that Alice had never given up David.

Her idea of Alice disturbed Fidelia this August more than before; for Fidelia was feeling that David was not as happy as he had been. She was sure he still loved her; she did not think of him wishing for Alice, or for any one else, in place of her. She loved David; but in spite of their love for each other, he was less happy.

It could not be the result of business troubles, she knew; for business was good; and he denied that the widening break between his father and himself bothered him. Yet David was less happy. So Fidelia was dealing her cards of fortune, one to the right, one to the left, when some one knocked at her door.

This was no timid knock of a chamber-maid or of a boy bringing up letters; it was the positive summons of a man full of his message and although it was nearly an hour earlier than she expected father Herrick, Fidelia knew it was he; his rap was as unmistakable as though she saw him.

For an instant she had a desire to have her hair "up" and arranged and to be in her suit as though she were going out or at least as though she had some occupation in prospect. She started to gather up the cards; then she desisted and left them on the table and merely closed her diary before she called: "Come in."

As the door opened, she arose and father Herrick gazed at her and then glanced past her at the cards. He said: "I have interrupted you, Fidelia."

"No; come in, father Herrick," she invited, but he stepped back from the door as he again observed her.

"I will wait, Fidelia," he said sternly. "When you are ready, you may let me know."

Fidelia flushed but she was glad she had left the cards spread out. Since it shocked him, anyway, to find her as she was, she liked to give him an extra fillip; but he always succeeded in making her sorry.

“Good Heavens!” she exclaimed as he shut himself out. “Good Heavens!”

Ephraim Herrick waited in the hall at a window which looked toward the city. He heard doors open behind him; he never turned to see but he imagined women in negligée passing back and forth and he stood straighter and more sternly in his black coat to rebuke them. He looked down upon the calm, languid lake upon which little boats idled out from the green and yellow shore. He looked upon luxurious dwellings, some of them separate mansions with gay, striped awnings spread to the sun, with pergolas and gardens above the water; some of them were aggregations of many dwellings under one roof, apartment buildings which fostered the idle, indulgent habits which Ephraim Herrick deplored. Strong as was his feeling against these rows and rows of flats, yet it was nothing in intensity compared to his abomination of the hotel and of the idle, self-indulgent life lived by those who made the hotel their home.

His feeling of the sloth of these surroundings, just now exacerbated by the sight of his son’s wife seated in a painted chair with her hair down and playing with cards at half past ten in the morning, was whipped again by the soft, indolent voices of other women and by his view, from the window, of the luxurious and seductive shore.

Fidelia came into the hall. Her hair was now up and she wore a plain, white skirt and white linen blouse and she had changed from her slippers to white ox-fords; but since Ephraim Herrick was not turning

about at the sound of opening doors, he did not see her and she did not speak for an instant while she stood struck by the likeness of father Herrick's posture to David's when he was thoughtful.

Here was the same squareness of shoulder, the same lift of the head, the same pressure of vigor. The back of his head was identical with David's; it was long and handsomely modeled and forceful. But father Herrick's hair was not brown like David's but was black; it was cut in country fashion, rounded and not "feathered" at the back of the neck. Although father Herrick was fifty this summer, his hair was still nearly jet black; and his figure was spare and as straight as David's.

"Will you come in now, father Herrick?" Fidelia asked.

When he turned he looked old; he was looking much more than three years older than he had appeared when she first saw him, Fidelia thought. His face had become deeply lined and his mouth more habitually somber; but his eyes were the same, his dark, vigorous eyes. They never seemed satisfied with contours, as most men's were; they seemed to be always burrowing inside one and making one—at least they always made Fidelia—uncomfortable.

Never in the three years she had known him had he once told her that she was beautiful; never had he noticed, approvingly, any prettiness of her attire. He seemed always to make his own a rebuke to lightness and color; for habitually he wore a black suit and a white shirt with never a dot or line or design in the linen; he wore a stiff, wing collar with a white lawn tie

and black, high shoes. In her presence, he kept his coat buttoned, no matter how hot the day; and Fidelia had never seen him except when he was clean-shaven, but his beard was so heavy that it darkened his skin.

Knowing that he and his wife and six children had lived together in a small, crowded house, Fidelia never could have understood how he had maintained the separateness from them which all his children felt, unless she had visited Itanaca and seen him at home and, in particular, unless she had learned about his room in the tower under the steeple.

She had seen, at one of her visits, that there was a screen in the bedroom which he shared with his wife and she had learned that his wife dressed behind this screen, when he was in the room. As his wife and he occupied the same bed, Fidelia could not follow the direction of his ideas of modesty at all.

He said to her, gesturing to the door with the hand in which he held his black, felt hat: “Go in.”

“How is mother Herrick?” Fidelia inquired, as she obeyed.

“She is as usual, recently,” he replied.

“No better?” Fidelia asked and she flushed with feeling for the thin mother with warm, gray eyes and sweet smile who always kissed her and liked to call her “daughter.” Mother Herrick was not as strong as usual this summer, Deborah had written to David.

Ephraim Herrick, having already answered Fidelia’s question, ignored its repetition. He stepped into the room and felt assailed by a personal offense from the gay luxuriousness of this suite of his son. Such living held no proper place in his scheme of things.

The men who had taught him, and those who had taught them, had been Bible-reading, Hell-fearing men who had moved out of New England and into western Pennsylvania and Ohio and on into Indiana and Illinois in advance of the vanities and despising them. When these men ceased to go westward and when they settled and luxury and easy-living came about them, they did not therefore cast off their stern ideas; on the contrary they founded colleges to train men to their ideals of Christian service and seminaries to teach their creed of high-thinking and self-discipline to combat the new allures to self-indulgence.

They enlisted in a losing fight but, to the end, they fought the fight—most of them; they finished their course so keeping their faith that they inspired a few, at least, to devote their lives to keep up the combat. To Ephraim Herrick, the long, hard example of his own struggle never seemed so despised as now when he stepped into this room of his son which the girl, who a moment ago was idling at cards with her hair over her shoulders, shared with his David.

He was in distress, Fidelia saw; and she saw that he was perspiring and she longed to unbutton his coat. She could not do that so she crossed to the bedroom door and brought ice-water to him. It was in a gayly painted carafe upon a lacquer tray with two iridescent glasses and these elaborate trappings for a swallow of water offended him; but he drank.

He sat down and Fidelia seated herself upon her painted chair and watched him. He had come with a determination in no way to compromise with the duty

upon his soul; and soon he started by asking directly:

“You are still satisfied here, Fidelia?”

“Why, yes,” she said, not thinking.

“This completely satisfies you?”

“What?” she asked now.

“This life you lead.”

“Why,” she said “why——”

“You think,” he demanded, “that this can go on indefinitely?”

“Why, yes,” Fidelia said but she was not thinking at all of what he said; for he always said much the same thing. She was thinking, after having noticed again his likeness to David: “I mean absolutely nothing to him. If David grew to be like him, I’d mean absolutely nothing to David.”

Now she heard father Herrick asking her something more which required an answer. “Do you never consider how all this must pass away?”

“All what?” she asked.

“These,” he said, motioning with his hand to her painted chairs, to her iridescent glasses and her pretty rug; at least she supposed he was pointing to the chair and the glasses and the rug—“these vain things to which you give your life.”

“Yes,” she responded; and he demanded, “Fidelia, what was in your mind while I was speaking to you?”

“Why,” said Fidelia, honestly. “I was wondering how much you ever were like David.”

He said: “Very much, as David once was.” And Fidelia jumped.

“Fidelia,” he said. “Here is the matter upon which I have come this morning. I might have come about it before; probably I should have but now I can put it off no longer. David and you have been married for three years, for more than three years. You have no children, Fidelia. Is it because God has forbidden them?”

“No,” answered Fidelia.

“You do, then.”

“Yes,” said Fidelia.

“So I was sure; I was sure,” he repeated.

Fidelia caught breath and leaned toward him and suddenly she was pale. “You mean—David told you?”

“No; David would not discuss it with me. But I know my son; I know he would want a child, at least.”

“Yes,” said Fidelia. “Yes.”

“Why don’t you?”

“I don’t, father Herrick!” she cried quickly and piteously.

“Why not?” he pursued her. “Because of this?” he gestured. “Because you prefer this, you live for this—this—”

His hand was going again and for a second time it accused objects, her painted chairs and the Japanese tray, her piano and the gay glasses; then it came to a stop at the door of the bedroom.

“No; no; no; no!” Fidelia cried pitifully; and he ceased. He had never seen her pitiful before and it bewildered him and made him less certain. He said: “Fidelia, you want to please my son?”

“Of course, father!”

“Then have your children, Fidelia. Have them, I warn you.”

“But I can’t!”

“Why not?”

“I can’t tell you.”

She was piteous, so piteous again, that he could not further goad her. He arose and gazed away from her, wondering. His glance fell upon the red volume on her gay desk. He read the inscription “Diary” stamped in gold on the cover and he picked up the book.

“This is yours?” he asked, turning to her.

“Yes, father Herrick.”

“What is in it?”

“Why,” she said, “what I do every day.”

“What do you do?”

“Why,” she said again, “why—”

He spread the book and Fidelia gasped; he merely ran the pages past his thumb but he noticed how the fear that he was examining the book excited her. He held it open but he turned it upside down to himself and handed it to her.

“Read to me,” he bid, “your doings for a day.”

She took her book but she closed it.

“Why not?” he demanded. “Are you ashamed of what you do?”

“I write what I think,” Fidelia said, “besides what I do.”

“Are you ashamed of what you think?”

“It’s what I think,” she replied and she made her book safe by raising herself slightly and thrusting it under her thigh and resting her leg upon it.

So she lost the pity she had roused in him. He felt himself defied and he said: "Everything must be pleasant and easy for a man and his wife in these days. If God did not ordain that the giving of life be wholly convenient and cause no interruption in pleasure, so much the worse for God or at least for the sacred function of giving life. It must be sacrificed, with everything else, for pleasure. Self-gratification, pleasure, it is the end of all!"

He wiped his brow with the palm of his strong thin hand. "I can distinctly remember, Fidelia, when I first read an account of a philosophy which put up the pursuit of pleasure as the proper aim of life and when I learned that considerable groups of people had lived who deliberately fashioned their lives on the satisfaction of their appetites and who considered that the gratification of the senses brought them the greatest good. 'Pleasure is the end of all,' they said.

"When I read that in my university days, little more than a generation ago, Fidelia, this part of the world, at least, was still serious and soberminded and close enough to God so that this philosophy seemed to me only a peculiar relic of a past paganism. But I have lived to see my world give itself over to the pursuit of pleasure as the end of all and to see my son and his wife deny their duties to themselves and to God for the purpose of self-gratification."

"Why, father Herrick, David and I go to church!" Fidelia cried.

He shook his head in despair and turned his back upon her. Not only had he made no effect—so he

believed—but she did not even understand what he was saying.

He heard her pass behind him and enter her bedroom. When she returned, she had a parasol. “Shall we go down by the water, father Herrick?” she asked.

He let her lead him out to the esplanade at the water’s edge where bathers hailed her and urged her to come in and “bring along your friend.” A canoeist offered them cushioned seats in his craft; and when Fidelia thanked him and refused, father Herrick asked her: “You would accept, if I were not here?”

“Oh, probably,” Fidelia said.

“We will both accept,” he decided and when they were in the canoe, he made conversation of the tranquillity of the lake this morning in contrast to the fury to which it could be whipped in time of storm.

The canoeist, who was an agreeable boy of eighteen, said, “You speak as if you’d been on the lake when it reared up, sir.”

“He has,” Fidelia replied with pride. “He was at Northwestern when the students manned the coast guard station, day and night.”

The boy looked over the black-suited man with more interest: “Have many wrecks, sir?”

Father Herrick said: “I will never forget one night . . .”

While he told how he had helped take off the crew of a ship sinking in a winter’s storm, Fidelia watched his eyes shine; she felt he was happy in his recollection. He made no personal mention of himself until he related how, after the life-boat had been driven back

again and again by the waves, he prayed as he pulled at his oar until "God gave us strength and we reached the ship."

He told it simply, sincerely and the more thrillingly for that; and though Fidelia had heard the story before, it made her cry and she had to clasp his hand. She thought: "That's how he spent his spare time when he was in college, working on the coast guard crew. He could have made more money at something else. But he liked that. He's fine, really."

Ephraim quietly freed his hand from Fidelia's. She expected this and she took no offense but she thought: "He is fine but hasn't he a queer way to be happy? He has to see other people in trouble or doing wrong so he can help them. When he sees everybody perfectly safe and just enjoying themselves, he thinks it terrible."

She would have enjoyed just floating in the calm sunlight; but she knew he would not so she kept the boy paddling, or she paddled, sending the canoe somewhere until it was time to take father Herrick to her table in the pleasantest corner of the big dining-room of the hotel. For when he had telephoned from the city, she had invited him to lunch and since he had then accepted, she knew he would stay.

Fidelia delighted in the gay, brightly decorated room almost over the water's edge. Nothing unusual was going on when they entered. It simply was the one o'clock hour when wives who had been bathing and drying their hair or canoeing during the morning, or who had been lying late abed, were descending to the wide, cool, beautiful room, open to the lake breezes,

shaded from the sun, where white linen and silver and crystal and soft but gay colors offered a bower of ease and pleasantness for the midday meal. Men servants—mulattos—pulled out pretty chairs with the pleasing obsequiousness and the graceful flourish of negroes; they passed noiselessly and undulatingly to and fro bearing trays displaying extravagant, iced melons and elaborately chilled creations sparkling with the glitter of ice and the bright hues of ripe fruits; they bore decorative platters of cold meats and fowl, canapés, salmis and many covered dishes and, anomalous beside the glasses and bowls heaped with crushed ice, were flaming and steaming chafing dishes presented to deliver one viand boiling hot immediately after another icy cold.

All this thrilled Fidelia; she never got used to it. The many extravagant delicacies, brought from far and near, made her think of the feasts which, in the old days, only a Roman emperor or a great pro-consul could order—“flamingo tongues, roast and chilled mushrooms, locusts in honey, fish, meat and fruits.” Here, for her choice, was much more than all of those.

At her appearance, the head waiter hurried up and she said in her pleasant way: “Albert, this is my husband’s father. Tell us what’s especially nice to-day.”

As she sat down, many people spoke to her from surrounding tables or waved to her and she replied and waved: almost everybody looked at her and those who did not were told to, by their companions.

She started to order for father Herrick the especially nice dishes which Albert recommended but Ephraim

stopped her. He ordered sandwiches and a glass of milk.

He had never felt so beaten by Fidelia as this morning; he believed that he had never said so much to any one with so little effect. He thought, "And now she believes that if I let her waste money on expensive food for me, we'd finish with a good time."

Glancing about, he saw a little boy at one table, a little girl at another; further on, two children sat together. Fidelia knew that these children were not related but that one had been left by his mother in charge of the mother of the other. Father Herrick did not suspect this and his glance rested upon that table with less disapproval than when he looked elsewhere.

The cry of Isaiah was echoing in his head.

"Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters. Many days and years shall ye be troubled.

"Tremble, ye women that are at ease. Upon the land of my people shall come thorns and briars; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city."

It seemed to Ephraim Herrick, as he slowly ate his sandwiches and drank the milk, that he scarcely could sit silent here at this table in the accustomed place of his son; it seemed that he could not again go away having affected Fidelia not at all.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TIE OF THE PAST

DAVID telephoned to the hotel early in the afternoon and found Fidelia in her room. His father had left and when David asked if she had had a very hard morning, she replied: "What do you think, David? I actually got him into a canoe. Then we had lunch here." Consequently, David felt relieved. He always was bothered when his father was in town and particularly when his father was calling upon Fidelia; he was glad this call was over without having hurt her unusually.

Of course David understood her far better than did his father yet David had little comprehension of the habit of concealment of her hurts and troubles which Fidelia practiced. She was so affectionate and she showed her happiness so obviously that he supposed, if she felt unhappy, she must show that too. But he did not realize the effect upon Fidelia of having been cast upon her own very early in life. At seven when she was sent away to school, already she had learned to keep her griefs to herself and her long lack of home, her continuous attendance at schools had fixed her habit.

Her diary became her outlet. When she was only ten she had learned that if she wrote out a trouble she lost the pressure of the feeling that she had to tell it.

David never suspected this use for her diary; he

looked upon it as her personal record of the past and sometimes he wished that she would want him to read it; sometimes he felt more content not to know. For she had cut herself off from her past prior to her appearance in Evanston, with a completeness which became more and more disquieting to David as the years went on.

She wrote regularly to, and as regularly heard from, Mr. Jessop in the bank at White Falls; occasionally, in the large envelopes which contained her income checks and the periodical statements of the condition of her affairs, there seemed to be other enclosures but nothing to indicate even a haphazard correspondence with friends. She never mentioned to David anybody whom she had known before, except Mr. and Mrs. Jessop, her aunt Minna and Bolton, and of him, David knew no more than he had learned three years ago. Fidelia had loved him once and had had a dangerous adventure with him; then she had sent him away; he was dead.

David wondered often upon what days in the year the events with Bolton had occurred; he wondered what anniversaries ran in Fidelia's mind, as there ran in his the yearly return of May second, the day upon which Alice and he had become engaged. Then there was Alice's birthday, which was October tenth. The approach of that day still set him planning; he felt himself vaguely avoiding engagements on October tenth and, when the day came, he felt queerly guilty.

The occasions of his father's visits, though they were not made upon fixed dates, also had the effects of summoning Alice to David's mind. For he had had

Alice in his arms, not Fidelia, when he had declared his original defiance of Eternity and spoken his denial of his father's God by the graveyard. For Alice, not for Fidelia, had he borrowed the ten thousand dollars. He was following, in business at least, the plan which Alice and he had made together and it was succeeding as they together had hoped.

For Snelgrove-Herrick were prospering. The mahogany furnished office in which David awaited his father, was his own. Upon his desk, between his telephone and his bronze clock, were five little ivory-topped buttons. Press button one and his stenographer appeared; button two brought instant response from the manager of the used car department; button three rang the foreman of the service shop; buttons four and five had no functions yet but they would be assigned to the task of summoning others from additional office space soon to be required by Snelgrove-Herrick.

The painted announcement over the entrance door, proclaiming that Snelgrove-Herrick had the biggest increase in sales in the price-class of the Hamilton car, was literally true. Three times in three years the agency had doubled its business.

The sales amply justified the wide front of plate-glass window display facing the boulevard and necessitated the service shop and the used car department. Whether or not they warranted the present scale of Snelgrove's entertainings and his largess to his down-and-out friends, might be a matter of doubt; but David never needed to overdraw at the office to meet, on Monday morning, the weekly hotel account for Fidelia

and himself; and promptly and without embarrassment he sent his remittances to his mother at Itanaca.

To be sure, he had not yet returned to Mr. Fuller the ten thousand dollars which, on that night when he had held Alice in his arms, he had listed as the first debt to be paid; but Mr. Fuller was still as satisfied as he had been when David reported on this matter to Alice long ago. Indeed, Mr. Fuller had willingly increased his investment in the agency to enable it to have the capital to take care of its growing business. So David now owed to him twenty-five thousand dollars.

To secure this debt, David had insured his life for the same amount in favor of Mr. Fuller and when Ephraim Herrick was told of it, he called it the pledging of his son's body to Mr. Fuller after David had sold his soul. It was, of course, only an ordinary business procedure and his father's description of it offended David; it hurt David, too, when he took no pride in David's success. For, deny it as he might, David wanted his father's "well done" more than the praise of any one else.

"But I've got to do it in business. I'll make him see it," David swore to himself. He wondered this afternoon, while he waited for his father, what it meant that Fidelia had got his father out in a canoe. Was it possible that his father was relenting, even a little?

When his father came into the office, David knew at once there had been no relenting; his father was tired and silent. He denied being tired.

"I've just been walking a little," he said. "I came

from the hotel by the elevated and I got off a mile or so away to walk down and consider."

"Consider what?"

"I must consult with mother; before I take the next step, I must consult with her."

David felt the threat and he paled; then he said: "I don't care what step you take about me. No; that's not true. Of course I care but I mean it doesn't make any difference what you do to me. I can take care of myself. But don't hurt Fidelia, father! She doesn't deserve it."

He stopped and his father remained silent so David went on: "She wasn't brought up by ideas like ours; she wasn't brought up with any ideas at all except what a girl could pick up for herself from a bank and from schools. I didn't ask her about any ideas when I married her. I just asked her to marry me and she did. She's my wife and I won't have you hurt her.

"You can say I am not living up to myself, if you think that way; but you can't say she isn't. She's herself; she's just herself; that's what she is and you shan't hurt her."

Still his father made no reply; he sat down and took off his hat and yet said nothing until, after a few minutes, he arose to start for the station.

"I'll drive you," David said and he did; and he went out with his father to the trainshed and a dusty day-coach for Itanaca.

They passed the parlor car with its clean, white covers over the comfortable chairs, where the electric fans were spinning; David passed the car without idea

of suggesting entering it. Following his father, the smell of the old, sooty day-coaches assailed David and restored to him the sensations of long ago with his father, particularly of the time when he stepped upon a car platform on the hot, September day when he first set out from Itanaca on his way to Northwestern.

His father turned on the platform, and David reached a hand after him—David gulped; he could not help it. Pride in him and hope, high aspirations for him then had burned in his father's eyes and thrilled in the grasp of his father's fingers; now was disappointment, disillusion.

"Good-by, father," David said. "I'm sorry I spoke so; but—I meant it."

"Good-by, boy," his father said.

David did not wait for the train to go out but, when he passed the fruit stand, he bought the biggest basket there and he ran back and thrust it in the open window beside his father. "For mother," he cried, as the train started. "Make her take care of herself."

He stood watching the train till it was out of sight; and then, from the assertion of old habit, barely thinking what he was doing, he entered a telephone booth in the station. So far as he thought, he meant to call Fidelia; but it happened to be the hour at which, long ago, he had never failed to telephone to Alice and after he had spoken a number, he did not realize what he had done, even after the call was answered.

A voice said: "Yes."

Since the switchboard girl at the hotel usually answered differently, he asked: "Who is this, please?"

The voice said: "Is it David?"

He replied, "Yes," and he knew what he had done.

She said: "I'm Alice."

"Yes," he said. "Yes, I called you." And he could not leave it at that; he could not cut off. He had to say something and he had no choice but to go on. "Father was just here. I just saw him off. I—I called your number, Alice."

She said: "I see. Of course I see. You meant to call Fidelia." And quietly, not sharply at all, she cut off.

CHAPTER XXII

THE THREAT OF THE FUTURE

HE stood in the hot, stuffy booth and was wrenched by what he had done. To do this to Alice, after the rest! He wanted to go to her; he was shaken by a need to comfort her, such as had seized him so inconsistently on that night he left her to go out on the ice for Fidelia. Many times, when he thought of Alice, he had had pangs of this need but never with such sharpness as now when it was doubled by the need within him to check up the account to tally the total of his days which had passed since he had made the decision, against his father, with Alice.

He could not tally them over with Fidelia; she had not shared with him the making of the decision; she had come in only afterwards; she had never known the David Herrick who had followed the ideas of his father and, above all, she had no need to make a tally at all. But Alice had; she and he could go over everything together with complete understanding of all that was involved.

Arriving at the hotel, at his home, Fidelia met him with the announcement that the Vredicks had asked them to a supper-sail. The Vredick's sloop, the *I'll Show You*, lay with canvas flapping near the hotel; a bit of a breeze was blowing.

“Can't we get out of the party?” David asked.

"Why, I've accepted," Fidelia said, "but I'll tell George we can't go."

"Do you mind?"

"Of course I don't," she said with ready compliance as she always acceded when she gave up what she expected to do. She went up with him to their room and, as soon as the door was closed, she was in his arms, offering her warm lips. He kissed her lips and said, "You had rather a bad time with father this morning, I guess."

"Oh!" she said. "Oh!"

"I'm sorry, Fidel, I know he went for you. I told him it was none of his affair how we live. It's not; it's just yours and mine." And he kissed her again, fiercely.

"David!" she said.

"What?"

"Kiss me again like that. You haven't for so long!"

He kissed her again but it was not like that and he knew it; the fierceness of the other was from the fury of his defense of her against his father. Of course Fidelia felt it was not like the other. She freed herself, but a few moments later, when he had thrown himself down on his bed and was staring at the ceiling, she knelt beside him, touching his cheek with her caressing fingers.

"David, do you think so much about a baby?" she whispered.

He sat up. "So he had the nerve to go after you about that!"

"Do you want a baby so much, David?" she asked.

"Not if you don't, I've told you. That's your

affair, if anything is." He reached for her as he saw her trembling. "Don't you let him bother you, Fidel."

She said, hiding her face: "That's nice."

"What?"

"When you call me Fidel."

"I always will, then."

She shook her head. "You don't so much, David." She got up from her knees. "I'll call Gertrude and tell her we won't go sailing. What shall we do to-night?"

That was it; what, better than sailing with the Vredicks, should she and he do to-night or any other night? A voice came cross his conscience: "I'm Alice." Always when he had happened to see Alice, or even when any round-about word of her reached him, he had told Fidelia; but he could not tell her how he had called Alice an hour ago. For he could not tell his wife it was merely a stupid accident; it had not been that; it had been wish for Alice then.

He said: "Don't call Gertrude; we'll go, Fidel."

So they had supper on the smooth deck of the *I'll Show You* which was scarcely tilted by the breeze as it sailed out into the lake; they had punch and iced champagne because George Vredick, who was a broker in unlisted stocks, wanted to celebrate a great killing he had made in rubber that day.

David drank a little, decidedly less than the other men; Fidelia merely sipped her champagne. After supper, the four men of the party smoked and two of the girls did. Fidelia was one of the two who did not for she cared little for smoking and David preferred her not to smoke. They all sang, rousingly:

“Oh, a capital ship for an ocean trip
 Was the walloping window-blind;
 No wind that blew dismayed her crew
 Nor troubled the captain’s mind. . . .”

They sang, “The Little Grey Home in the West” and “It’s a Long, long Way to Tipperary.”

These they sang more solemnly; for voices of young men were singing these in England, which was at war, and behind the battle line where trench faced trench from the Belgian shore to the Swiss frontier.

The afternoon papers on the cabin table of the *I’ll Show You* proclaimed the Russian evacuation of Vilna, the German advance on Brest-Litovsk. The British were landing at Sulva Bay, Gallipoli, and the submarines were continuing their toll. For three months the *Lusitania* had been under the waves off Kinsale Head; the first rage had lulled. To-day’s sinking of the White Star liner *Arabic* seemed almost an expected event.

George Vredick pronounced upon the war, importantly, since he sold stock and felt himself on the inside on Wall Street. He did some figuring on paper to prove that no matter how the military situation looked, the financiers would call a halt within two months. He said that “Washington” knew it and that was why Wilson watched and wrote notes and waited.

David did not entirely believe this yet it served to lessen the pang of ignobility which he felt at being safe far away from the trenches where the English, the French and the Canadians stood. He knew several men who were in Canadian regiments; some of his classmates were in France; but they were not married

and they had not been involved in businesses of their own so that they owed, personally, twenty-five thousand dollars.

That life insurance policy, taken to protect Mr. Fuller from loss, would not be paid if David fell in war, for the war risk was specifically excepted. And so, to the extent that David's debt confined his choice of conduct, it was true that Mr. Fuller owned his body and soul.

Of course Fidelia had money of her own which might have freed him; she had more than twice twenty-five thousand dollars in Mr. Jessop's care and, if David were killed, she might meet his obligation. But David could not suggest this to her. He had said to her once: "If I went and was killed, or put out of business, father would pack my debt to Fuller. I don't know how he'd pay it; but he'd try—he and mother. I can't think of that."

"No," said Fidelia. "You certainly can't." If she had said, "If you don't come back, I'll pay Mr. Fuller," David would have had no choice but to go.

He thought of this as he sat beside her in the dark of the deck and her warm hand softly caressed his. He thought: "If she'd said that, she'd feel she was sending me away. She wouldn't do that."

They went in swimming from the boat and late in the evening the *I'll Show You* skimmed back toward the hotel, sailing so close to the shore that individual lights became discernible.

There was Alice's home; there, indeed, was Alice's window alight. While David watched it, the light went out and he thought of Alice there.

His mind went to her bonfire; her useless bonfire, which she had burnt on the shore the night Fidelia and he were adrift on the ice. They had been just about here on the lake. As he recalled the callousness with which he had watched that fire, it became incredible to him how he had cast off the dear, confiding friend with whom he could talk things out as with no one else.

He thought: "If I'd married her, and was in the same fix with Mr. Fuller, she'd say, 'I'll see to the debts, if anything happens. You must be free to do what you feel right!'"

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW FATHER HERRICK STRUCK

EPHRAIM HERRICK wasted no time in taking his next step, which was a refusal to accept, directly or indirectly, any further aid from David. Ephraim first consulted with his wife and, for her sake, he was reluctant to resort to this method of striking at his son for he was well aware that the chief burden, which must become heavier from their decision, must be borne by his wife.

For this reason, Sarah Herrick was prevented from protesting. Her husband asked her a difficult thing for the sake of their son's soul and she had to agree to it.

Ephraim planned to make his action as stinging as possible by waiting until David forwarded his next check when Ephraim meant to return it; but David's mother intervened and, trying to take some of the sting from this hard decision, she wrote to David not to send the money.

Her gentle letter, written after much evident labor to make her words bear her love, affected David as no words from his father could.

"The time has come for me, my son, when with my heart full for you," she began.

The letter arrived in the morning mail, which was brought to David's and Fidelia's rooms while they were breakfasting. David had realized, ever since the days

when he talked over his father with Alice, that his father had this weapon in his hands; yet the stroke from it when dealt, was heavier than he dreamed it could be.

"Why, David!" Fidelia cried in alarm and hurried around the table to him. "What's happened at home?"

He had no choice but to tell her and she set at once to comforting him. It hurt her, too; oh, he knew that; but he had no idea how piteously she was hurt.

He required several days to determine what to do and finally he sent his usual check to the bank at Itanaca with orders to open a special account to his mother's order and he wrote his mother telling her what he had done and saying that, whether or not she used the money, he would continue to deposit it for her.

Fidelia took even longer to fix upon her action. She thought it over entirely alone, except for her diary, and she acted without telling David anything about it. She recorded her final decision on her diary page for the second of September.

"It is the only thing for me to do. It will finish everything for me or make everything right forever. I think I want to do it. I've got to now, anyway."

Thereupon she descended to the hotel store-room where was her strong trunk, with the excellent lock, which defended the volumes of the record of Fidelia Netley, what she had done and what she had thought about her doings, since she was ten years old.

From the pile of books, she abstracted that volume with charred covers which twice she had thrown into

the fire and, after locking up the others, she wrapped this and carried it up to her room, where she bolted the door.

Here she reread those pages dated at Lakoon, Idaho, and in the valley near there. During her reading, she had to stop several times for the rush of sensations which shortened her breath and caused her to flush and perspire. Twice she shut the book and faltered over her decision; but she finished and took an envelope and wrote, "Mrs. Hartley Bolton, Menton, Oregon." She stamped the envelope and she set herself to compose the enclosure.

Several times she tore up sheets half written but she always went at her letter again until she completed a page which she enclosed in the envelope.

She mailed it in the letter drop on her floor; then she carried down the diary with the burnt covers and replaced it in her trunk. She carried also the torn sheets upon which she had written the unsatisfactory drafts and, taking these to the furnace which heated water for the hotel, she thrust them into the fire.

CHAPTER XXIV

SATURN AGAIN IN THE SKY

OF course Alice had no knowledge of any of this. To her, the fourth year of the marriage of David and Fidelia appeared to proceed as had the others; and to Alice, this year brought little change. What there was seemed to be for the better. Her friends said: "Alice grows lovelier every year and her tragic experience with that boy whom she did everything for, has only brought out the real quality of her character."

She was becoming lovelier with the fresh, young maturity of her twenty-five years. She was as slender as when she was in college; oh, she looked to her figure! She was slight in the waist, her limbs were smooth and light but little changes came, all to make her more attractive. Her neck rounded beautifully and her bosom was fuller. She walked a great deal and swam in summer and in winter exercised under the direction of a dancer.

When people praised her beauty of character, she frequently wondered what they would say if they knew what feelings sometimes lay under her calmness, what instincts seized her, what passions played in her dreams. Alice came to understand perfectly how a woman, who has been robbed of her love by another, may do wild, desperate things.

Once to have been loved by the boy you loved and

then to see another girl take him from you! Once to have felt the kisses of love, the embrace of his arms, his warmth, his stir, his wish for you above all others in the world; to long for him and to feel his longing to mate with you, to give yourself and receive him in return; to form no plan, to know no hope or dream apart from him! Then to have it all torn from you, never to feel again his lips on yours, his arms about you but to know he is gone to another, giving all to her, leaving you unwanted and useless.

Her feeling of uselessness was something which she had not foreseen, when she lost David; it was something beyond her expected loneliness and hurt. It was a nullifying of her own nature which was to bear children; it was a forbidding of her very body to perform its natural purpose. It was almost incredible that Fidelia could have robbed her of so much.

If Alice had been able to foresee this, she never would have let David go so easily, she thought. It became amazing to her that she had not made more struggle. She did not know how she might have held him but she accused herself for not having done more, more. She thought of herself as having been unable to believe that Fidelia could so quickly destroy all that had grown between David and herself through three and a half years. Now Alice denied that Fidelia had destroyed it; certainly Fidelia had not destroyed it in Alice; and what lived in her must live, a little, in David, too; and if it lived, it must have power again to grow in him.

But suppose Fidelia bore David children! Alice hardly could let herself think of that; yet it had to

enter every reckoning. "Is Fidelia bearing a child?" was what she meant when she asked David, "How is Fidelia?" at the time she first met him after his marriage; it was what stirred her whenever she caught sight of David or Fidelia later and whenever any one spoke to her of them. Now a child must end every hope for Alice; but the months and the years, three of them, were gone and Fidelia remained childless; and this—so Alice began to believe could not be from choice. She became certain that Fidelia, in spite of her splendid body, was barren.

So Alice had her moments of feeling triumph over Fidelia; Alice had complete faith that she, though weaker than Fidelia, could bear. Never had she doubted that; nor had David. How confidently had David and she made their plans together on the certainty of children! She thought of him as having transferred her plan and his to Fidelia and himself and she was sure that he must, therefore, be disappointed. She thought of talks which he and she had together, when he was in his moods of self-reproach and examination, and she thought, "He must miss me, sometimes."

That telephone call, when he rang her number from the railroad station, proved to her that he did. Of course she knew that he had not intentionally called her, but instinctively he had! What had he told her? "Father was just here." That meant he was having trouble with his father again; probably it was more serious trouble than usual and, in his trouble, he had needed her.

It was a small incident to build upon but it be-

came much to her who lived within a mile of David and who yet was cut off for months at a time from even a chance glimpse of him in a car or upon the street and who seldom met any one who knew him. For Alice had been avoiding the university and the university people who lived near, although she kept up correspondence with girls who lived out of town and especially with Myra, who was at her home in Rock Island.

Through Myra, she heard about Lan, who had finished his medical course and was an interne in a hospital in Baltimore; but Lan knew nothing about David in these days and, conversely, it was probable that David knew nothing about Lan, not even that Myra and Lan at last were to be married, next month. The letter from Myra, which told Alice the day, recalled almost unbearably the plan which the four of them—David and Lan, and Myra and she—had made long ago when David and she would first have Lan and Myra for best man and maid of honor and then David would be Lan's best man and she, Myra's matron of honor.

The letter came in the week when college was opening again and when the "active" Tau Gamma chapter—the girls in college—were telephoning to Alice to please come up and help "rush"; for with the start of the new term and the appearance of a new class on the campus, every fraternity and every sorority was in combat against each other to pledge to itself the best of the freshman girls or boys.

This combat was so keen and so serious that it en-

listed not only the active members of each chapter but it called upon the popular alumnae, too. Tau Gamma always had appealed to Alice for help and for three years she had excused herself; but now she promised to "come up" for she determined to cease avoiding the campus where, in September of happier years, David used to meet her.

So she drove again to the edge of the shaded road up to the old University; she walked under the arch of trees with the leaves turning brown and fluttering down as they used to do when they marked for her the beginning of another long, delightful epoch of close companionship with David in this pleasant, set-apart world of the university. She went through the familiar halls and to chapel; she returned to Willard Hall, filled with girls, mostly strange, yet all very like girls she used to know. She went past the fraternity houses and the boarding-houses; here was the Delta Alpha house just as it used to be.

She gazed up at it, seeking a glimpse of the window which had been David's. Boys were all about and men of the younger alumni. David might be there but Alice did not see him, though she recognized a couple of men of her time. Here was Mrs. Fansler's, filled with girls again. Mrs. Fansler's house had been newly painted, it looked fresher and more cheerful. A girl had just come to Mrs. Fansler's whom Tau Gamma wanted to know; and Alice had agreed to go with one of the active Tau Gammas to call on this girl, for neither of them had the slightest idea that Fidelia would be at Mrs. Fansler's to-day. No one knew that

Fidelia had come up to college for the Tau Gammas never called on her for help; but there she was in the parlor with Mrs. Fansler.

It was Alice's first meeting with Fidelia in a room since they went from their last class-room in college; it was the first encounter in which she could not nod and merely give a glance and pass on. Alice and her companion came in upon Fidelia and Mrs. Fansler, seated. Immediately Mrs. Fansler got up and was flustered; Fidelia arose but she was not flustered. She said: "Why, Alice!" and she offered Alice her hands.

Alice did not take them. Whether or not she should touch Fidelia's offered hand, Alice hardly considered; for she could not. The old seizure of her helplessness before Fidelia—that helplessness which started with her fear when she first saw Fidelia on the evening of her arrival in Myra's room, which was doubled on the first morning in class when she saw Fidelia sitting in the sun and which overwhelmed her finally at the Tau Gamma dance—that possessed Alice again.

"How do you do, Fidelia?" she said; then she spoke to Mrs. Fansler and, becoming aware that Mrs. Fansler was urging her to sit down, she did so. Mrs. Fansler introduced Fidelia and the undergraduate girl with Alice. "Mrs. Herrick," Mrs. Fansler said.

Alice saw the girl stare in admiration at Fidelia; and no wonder; for Fidelia was the same as ever. Gone from Alice was her poor triumph over Fidelia because she had no child; gone from Alice was her comfort from that telephone call and her built-up belief that David needed her.

Fidelia asked: "You're helping rush?"

"Yes," Alice answered.

"There's a fine class entering, I think," said Fidelia.

"Some very desirable girls," agreed Mrs. Fansler, emphatically.

Alice said, not half thinking of the effect: "You remember Myra Taine, Mrs. Fansler?"

"Certainly I do."

"She's being married next month," Alice said and looked at Fidelia; and she knew that Fidelia did not know about Myra and Lan. Immediately Fidelia confessed it. "To Lan Blake?" she asked.

"Lan," said Alice and no longer could look at Fidelia. "He's in Baltimore now, interne at a hospital where his uncle operates, Mrs. Fansler. He's going to Serbia with a Medical unit from Baltimore, as soon as it is organized. But Myra and he'll be married first."

"I'm glad of that," said Fidelia; then she kissed Mrs. Fansler; she spoke to the girl whom she had just met; then added to Alice, "David will be glad to know that. I'll tell him." And, in a moment, she went.

Fidelia journeyed to Chicago feeling a reluctance to tell David which Alice never suspected; for knowing nothing of the step which David's father recently had taken, Alice had no idea of the effect which the report about Lan would have upon David; but Fidelia knew what to expect.

She had an errand in the city which was not at David's office or in the stores or at a tea room or theater or any other place of usual resort. She went directly from the train to the post office where she inquired at the general delivery window for mail for Fidelia Netley. There was nothing for her, though there ought to be;

for there had been plenty of time for Fidelia's letter to Mrs. Hartley Bolton to reach Menton, Oregon, and for a reply to reach Chicago.

On this day, as upon others when she inquired for a letter and received none, Fidelia felt relieved, at first; but the relief did not last. She went to a film theater for the rest of the afternoon, leaving in time to be sure to be at the hotel when David got in.

He and she were alone while dressing before dinner and after dinner they were alone again but it was not until late, when they had returned to their suite and were preparing for bed that Fidelia said: "I didn't tell you, I was in Evanston to-day. I was at the college, David."

"You were? That's good."

"Yes," said Fidelia. "Rushing's started. Tau Gamma is after a lot of girls."

"Were you," asked David and stopped, "were you helping Tau Gamma rush?"

"No; they don't ask me," Fidelia replied. "I was up seeing Mrs. Fansler. She often phones me, you know; she's just had her house done over, inside and out; she wanted me to see it."

"Yes," said David and waited, sure that something else was coming.

"It's gray and green outside now. It looks awfully much better."

"Yes."

"The woodwork's white now. I saw Alice there, David. She was rushing for Tau Gamma; there's a girl at Mrs. Fansler's they want."

"Yes," said David again with pulses hastening.

"Alice told me about Myra and Lan."

"What?" asked David, his pulse suddenly halting. "You mean they've married!" And he might have said aloud, "And I didn't know."

"No; they're just going to. Lan's an interne in a hospital in Baltimore where his uncle is. He's going—Lan, I mean, David—to Serbia with a Baltimore medical unit; but he's going to marry Myra, first. I told Alice I'd tell you."

"You mean she asked you to?"

"No; but I told her I would."

"Alice," said David, "she'd just heard?"

"No; I don't think so."

Fidelia continued undressing but David did not; he went from the bedroom into the living room and when he returned, after a couple of minutes, it was to put on the collar and tie and coat which he had taken off.

"I'm going out for a walk, Fidel," he said.

She offered in her willing way: "Shall I dress and go with you?"

He said: "You're ready for bed."

"Yes," she accepted his refusal without offense. She came to him and touched his cheek with her palm.

"You care a lot about Lan, don't you, dear?"

David cried, "I roomed with that fellow for four years! He's the fairest, squarest little fellow—" He broke off. He jerked away from Fidelia's hand but he seized her hand before she could lower it and he kissed it. "Don't you mind for me, Fidel!"

Fidelia got into bed after David went out but she had no idea of seeking sleep. She thought of David and of his mother, who was so thin and not so strong this

year yet who was getting along, Heaven knew how, without David's money. Fidelia thought of her warm, friendly gray eyes and her sweet smile and her very thin and very worn hands and she thought of David's money deposited for her but lying, untouched, in the bank. And Fidelia thought also of Lan, the plain, square, likable boy who was the first person she had met on coming to Northwestern; she had always liked Lan and at first he had liked her. But now, because of her, he had hurt David.

Of course the hurt, itself, would not have been so sharp but it flicked upon the raw of the hurt before.

When David came in, she lay without moving; and he did not disturb her. Long after he was in bed, and after he had ceased to shift about and turn, Fidelia lay awake.

A star was bright in the square of sky which she could see through the open window; it was near to the course of the moon and strange to the constellation in which it shone to-night. Fidelia knew therefore that it was a planet; she marked it well in her mind and the next day she inquired what planet it was and she learned, as she expected, that it was Saturn, again, the wandering star of misfortune which had ruled the sky on the night David and she were adrift on the floe.

CHAPTER XXV

TWO COMPLETE THEIR PURPOSE

MYRA wired to Alice, at the end of that week, "He wants a regular wedding so I'm coming to Chicago for clothes"; to which Alice immediately replied, "Come right here." And the next day Myra arrived and Alice and she shut themselves in Alice's room for a long talk about everything.

"Don't your own doings beat the Dutch?" Myra appealed. "Here Lan and I have been passing up month after month since he's been out of medical school and when he might just as well have been married; because he felt he'd be getting into the war before it's over; and now we're getting married because he's about to go."

"You two get married!" Alice urged vehemently.

"Don't worry!" Myra rejoined and longed for ability to take her friend into her happiness.

As soon as she could, Myra inquired cautiously: "How's Dave making it with Fidelia?"

"Very well, I think."

"Do you think it?" Myra demanded.

"Yes," Alice replied but she thought about that telephone call and Myra discerned that she held a reservation.

"Nothing peculiar happened yet?" Myra asked.

"Peculiar?" Alice repeated.

"Something peculiar is due with her; we knew that

in college, Allie. Wasn't there a secret that Roy When knew and that our Stanford chapter was covering up? There was a girl visiting in Davenport, just across the river from Rock Island, who was in Stanford when Fidelia was. She was awfully eloquent about a man named Bolton—he wasn't in college but he was playing around ardently with her."

"With your friend, you mean?"

"You know I don't; with Fidelia. He was large and handsome with black hair and dark eyes. He was one of California's proud native sons—a second or third son of somebody who owned about half of a California county. They run to area out there. Well, Sam Bolton was one who went simply wild over Fidelia. He used to arise at midnight on the farm—or the ranch, whatever it was—and ride all night over the mountains to steam into Palo Alto to see her. Or if he was quite a ways off, when he got the feeling that he couldn't live except in her presence, he'd burn up the California highways at sixty or seventy miles an hour when everybody else was asleep. He was especially given to strenuous and spectacular stunts."

Myra halted.

"Well?" said Alice, breathing irregularly.

"Well, what?"

"What did he do? I mean, did she care for him? Was she engaged?"

"Oh, she was engaged to him all right."

"Then?" said Alice.

"That's it; then? Then Fidelia left college; that is, she didn't come back. And neither did he. The next thing we know, it's a year and a half later and

she's come to our chapter with something she's covering up."

"But what was it, Myra?"

"That's what was asked me. No one knows. I wonder if Dave does."

Alice's bosom fluttered. Of herself, she never put much store by that secret of Fidelia's but this revival of it excited her.

Myra inquired, bluntly: "Fidelia has no baby yet, has she?"

"No."

"That seems funny to me. I thought she surely would, she's so naturally animal."

"I thought she would," said Alice.

"You and Dave ever talk over the subject of children?" Myra demanded mercilessly.

"Yes."

"You were going to have them, of course."

"Yes. He thought, Myra, for man and wife to live together except with the idea of having children was sin. He was brought up strictly about that, but he modified the idea, some."

"Evidently he's modified it a good deal more. Men are remarkable creatures, Alice, with their ideas. Thank God Lan takes to normal, scientific, rationalistic notions. Yet he's overtaken with sentiment sometimes. Of course he is about me; I like it. He suddenly insisted on a real father-give-away-the-bride wedding with flower girls and potted palms everywhere. Heavens, I don't care what I'm married in or where. I'd gladly go to Baltimore as I am or to the dock to marry him before he sails, but he wants

to come and get me at home from amid be vies of brides-maids and the maid-of-honor—that's you, of course. And he wants a best man and who, do you suppose?"

"Who?" asked Alice.

"Dave! Can you beat it?"

"Who?"

"Of course, only if you agree, Alice."

"I don't understand."

"I don't blame you. You have to remember Lan's going to war; he's got to thinking that after rooming four years with Dave, and getting to care more for him than any other man he ever knew or ever will, you can understand that . . ."

"I can understand that," Alice said.

"Oh, I didn't mean to say that. I meant, Lan got to feeling he'd turned down Dave pretty hard when Dave never did anything to him. So when he comes through here, he wants to bring Dave to Rock Island with him. Dave alone, not Fidelity, of course. He thinks Dave will understand and do it—if you don't care."

"I?" said Alice. "You give me that to decide?"

Her breast, which fluttered before, almost collapsed, then swelled violently with the draw of her breath. Why not? Why not have him come where she was and see what power she had?

As a result of her answer, Dave looked up from his desk in the forenoon two days later and saw Lan standing in the door of his office.

Dave leaped up and Lan advanced with his broad,

square hand extended. "Hello, Dave!" he hailed, heartily.

"You old burglar!" Dave cried in his delight. "Where have you been keeping yourself?"

"Baltimore, but I'm on my way to Rock Island."

"That means a wedding, I've heard."

"Have you, Dave?"

"You bet I have and I've heard about Serbia, too; you're going."

"Yes."

"When, Lan?"

"Next week."

"You are!"

They looked each other over and agreed: "You're about the same."

Then Lan said: "Dave, I've been doing a lot of thinking about old times."

"So have I," said Dave.

"I guess this sounds like a last minute idea, Dave; but it isn't. I'm going to Rock Island this afternoon; the wedding's to-morrow night and what I'm here for is to take you along with me, Dave."

"You want me?" cried Dave.

"You've got to stand up with me!"

"What do you mean?"

"Be my best man the way we've always planned. I'd have written you long ago but Myra had to see Alice first."

"Alice!" said David.

"Myra's having her, of course. Myra's just been here, at Alice's. She's taken Alice back with her;

they're both at Rock Island now. It's all right with Alice, Dave; Myra wired me."

"What's all right?"

"For me to bring you. So you'll come with me, Old Top! You'll stand up with me. You won't throw me down now."

Dave looked at Lan and forgot everything else for the moment. Lan's "now" meant not only now when he was being married, at last, but now when he was going away to war. Dave thought of Lan at work in Serbia; he pictured Lan working under fire and in pestilence; not with the greatest skill perhaps, but with no idea of sparing his short, stubborn self. Dave promised: "You bet I won't throw you down."

"That's good," Lan accepted immediately. "That's great! That's settled, then. That makes everything all right. I'll wire Myra. You'll stay at her home, of course."

Then Dave remembered Fidelity and that this invitation could not include her; but with the thought was memory of the night when she had brought him word, from Evanston, that Lan was to be married and he had felt badly, and she had, because she thought that Lan, on account of her, meant to ignore him. He wanted to tell her how it really was.

"Fidelity'll understand," asserted Lan. "I'll wire now."

"I'll call her first," David said; and immediately, with Lan there, he did so.

Fidelity insisted that David go; she urged him to go on the afternoon train with Lan. "Of course you'll go, David," she said, "I'm just glad about it. You

mustn't think of anything else." And she asked to talk to Lan over the phone.

David kept his promise to go but he did not leave with Lan on the afternoon train, although Fidelia offered to pack his suitcase for him and bring it downtown. David did not deceive himself. His visit to Rock Island was to be not only a return to the companionship of Lan, also it was to be a return to the company of Alice. It must be; there could be no avoiding it. And he knew that Fidelia fully understood this.

As there was a train in the morning which would take him to Rock Island in ample time for the wedding, he saw Lan off in the afternoon and he returned to the hotel at his usual hour.

"Lan's wedding is the only thing which could happen that I've got to be in without you," he said to Fidelia. "Leaving to-morrow morning, I'll get into Rock Island about noon. "I'll be at the Taines' to-morrow night, of course, but back here by noon again. Will you come in for lunch with me?"

"Of course I will," Fidelia said. "You know that I wish you'd gone with Lan, if you'd liked to."

"I didn't want to," David said.

"I wish you'd stay longer in Rock Island, if you find you'd like to," Fidelia urged.

"Why would I stay?" David asked. "Lan and Myra of course will be gone."

Neither he nor she mentioned Alice, except when he said in confirmation of what he had told her over the telephone: "Alice is going to be maid-of-honor, of course," and when he told Fidelia in order that she

might have no idea that Alice also would be on the morning train, "Alice is in Rock Island now."

He arose earlier than usual in the morning and he was awakened by unconscious currents of impatience nearly an hour before he arose but he did not stir about, as he wished not to wake Fidelia; however, she also was awake and she was aware that he was.

She dressed for breakfast with him and they breakfasted, not in their room, but in the restaurant, as David suggested it "to save time." As a matter of fact both of them felt under tension this morning when he was leaving her to visit Alice and they found the tension less when they were not alone.

He reminded Fidelia, when he kissed her good-by: "To-morrow at one-thirty. We'll have our lunch at the Blackstone."

She said: "I'll meet your train. But remember you must stay later, if you'd like to."

When he was on the train for Rock Island, and it was started, he felt the tension no more; he was not at ease, yet he felt freshened. The direction of his travel drew his thoughts ahead of the train; Fidelia was not in that direction; ahead of them, where he was traveling, were Lan and Myra and Alice and he was going to join them; it seemed, sometimes, not only a journey to a meeting again of the four of them but almost it seemed a return in time to the world of the four.

Of course, he was Fidelia's husband but the others were the same—Myra and Lan now being married, as they long ago meant to do; and Alice was the same. Or, was she?

To be the same, she must still care more about David Herrick than about any one else in the world; and did she, now? When he had last seen her, she had appeared to be the same as he had known her since he had married; but he had not seen her at all for several months and he went over in his mind what Fidelia had told him after she had talked with Alice at Mrs. Fansler's; he reviewed Lan's declaration that Myra had reported it "all right" with Alice to have David in the same wedding-party with her.

This morning on the train he found himself interpreting this into belief that Alice was changing and was ceasing to care for him. He argued that of course he ought to be glad of that; but he was not. The idea of Alice indifferent to him, disturbed him; it brought back tension to him. He became more impatient to reach Rock Island and learn whether it was so. If it was, very likely she had come to care about some one else and this was more disturbing, although it was exactly what he ought to hope for her.

"I'll know when I see her," he assured himself but he did not know at once.

Lan met him at the station and drove him to the Taines' where the family and bridal party were about to sit down to luncheon. It was a big party and the house was full, so when he found Alice, she was in a group of girls to whom he had to be introduced.

He could not guess how she had debated whether she would meet him thus or alone and how she had rehearsed herself to speak to him without betraying too much of her feeling. In the confusion of the first moment, when he gazed past other girls to meet Alice's

clear, blue eyes and to reply to her calm greeting, he thought: "She doesn't care."

She and he were not at once placed together, although they were maid-of-honor and best man, so Alice was able to keep up her pretense during the afternoon; and Myra's manner helped her; for Myra was so happy that she went about beaming at David, as at every one else. Of course he had expected her to be civil to him in her own house and at her wedding, but he thought, if Alice still cared, Myra must show more reserve with him for Alice's sake.

It was in the evening, at the wedding, when Alice's pretense failed. There she had to stand on one side of Myra as David stood side by side with Lan while Myra and Lan were being married. Here were two of them completing their part of the purpose of the four, as they had always meant to do; and when David looked at Alice and met her look toward him, he knew not only that she cared and cared for him alone and forever but that she cared more than before. Then in a moment, Lan and Myra were man and wife, and David and Alice, with her arm in his, were going down a church aisle to the measures of the Mendelssohn wedding march.

At the door of the church, others came about them; thereafter they were constantly with others through the festivities and the solemnities of the long evening.

At last Lan took Myra from her home; hand in hand, leaving laughter and tears behind them, the bride and groom ran out to their motor car and were driven away.

David and Alice were with those who followed them

to the gate but after the car drove off, Alice immediately disappeared and David supposed she had gone with the guests who returned to the house where people were dancing again. David did not go in for he was battling with conflicting feelings. He was stirred by his thought of Alice as she went with him down the aisle of the church; he was sobered by the idea that his handshake of good-by to Lan was very likely to be the last time he might grasp that broad, square, earnest hand; he was roused by the disturbing contrast this wedding of Myra and Lan furnished to his marriage to Fidelia in the parlor of Dorothy Hess's home.

He argued that the contrast was due to this being a church wedding, with a large bridal party; he argued that, since Lan was going to war, that fact naturally endowed this marriage with an exalted tone entirely missing from his own wedding; but he could not down his own discomfort. No; there had been something noble in this night—something properly and inherently exalted and beautiful in Lan Blake's marriage to Myra Taine which had been lacking in David Herrick's to Fidelia Netley and which would not have been in the wedding at Streator, even if David then had been going to war.

He glanced up and noticed the stars; and the sight of them brought him to his camp with Fidelia on the sand of the shore; he thought how he had looked up at the stars, as he lay awake with his joy on his wedding night and exulted:

“Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
And then no more of Thee and Me,”

and how the idea had satisfied him that, having Fidelia, he had all he could want and that, after life with her, he would ask nothing more. But he was asking for more now.

He heard some one and, looking down from the stars, he saw Alice in the dim light from those far-away galaxies of the sky. The starlight was the only light over the lawn.

It was a large, wide lawn with many trees, some of them bare of bough on this October night, some of them fir and cedars which stood in great, tapering clumps against the stars.

To-night this western shore of Illinois, washed by the silent, wide waters of the Mississippi was warmer than the shore of the lake. From across the river and up from the southwest plains a mild sirocco was blowing and the season seemed earlier than in Chicago. It was like a mild night in autumn or spring when David and Alice used to wander outdoors from dances at college. She was in white, wearing her maid-of-honor dress, and she had not even a scarf over her white shoulders. Oh, it mightily reminded him of old times with her.

Alice asked, as she approached him: "You've heard their train?"

"No," he said. "But I haven't been listening for it."

"She's happy," said Alice. "Happy as ever she hoped to be. Happier, I guess."

"He is," said David.

"He ought to be."

"Yes; he ought."

She was silent beside him; vaguely he could see her face, her hair, her neck, the round of her bosom, the slenderness of her waist. He used to have his arm about her, when they were alone in the quiet like this; he used to know the feel of her against him, her lips on his, her arm about his neck, holding him down to her for another kiss.

He said: "Alice!"

"What?"

"How about you?" he demanded; and the outrightness of it caught breath from her. She gasped, then after waiting a few seconds she said: "There's nothing new about me, David."

"There's got to be, Alice!"

"What," she said and repeated it, "what ought to be new for me?"

He did not answer and she asked: "You mean I ought to care for somebody else? That's it? You'd be happier if I could?"

He could not say it; what he said was: "I want you to be happy, Alice. I want that more than anything else."

"More than anything else you've not already got, David," she corrected him, quietly. "Maybe that's true. For you've got almost everything you wanted, haven't you? You've made money; you're doing well; and you have Fidelia. I bother you sometimes; that's all. But you shouldn't bother about me; I don't want you to. What can you do for me now, David? Besides, I'm all right."

"You're not."

That stopped her short; it silenced her and seemed

to crush her breathing while she thought. At last she said: "Of course I'm not, David. Are you all right?"

"What do you mean by all right?"

"What you do, David."

"I'm all right," David declared.

"Perfectly happy?"

"Of course."

"Then you've changed a lot!"

This caught him up; he expected nothing like it.

"How've I changed?"

"You're not living with her very much as you planned to live with me."

He made no reply and she proceeded. "You never talked about a hotel to me; and we—we were going to have children, David, weren't we?"

She made him answer "Yes."

"We talked over the number. We'd have four; not six, like your parents, but four about two years and a half apart. You thought that would be best for me. Wasn't that it?"

His hand brushed hers as he moved it and she drew hers from touch of him with whom she had talked over having children; and she said:

"It's funny how I keep thinking about your business, David. That ten thousand dollars we used to talk about—the last time I asked you about it, you hadn't paid it back yet; but you have now, of course."

"No; I haven't, Alice."

"You haven't. Why? It's queer for me to be asking, David, but that special ten thousand got to be a sort of debt of mine in my mind, once. You see, I thought, when we borrowed it—for we did in a way do

that together—I'd pay it back, if something happened so you couldn't. Why haven't you paid it back, David?"

"Because I've borrowed more. I owe Mr. Fuller twenty-five thousand now."

"You mean you aren't doing well?"

"I'm doing fine; I borrowed more to give me capital to take care of more business."

"Your father," she said and he followed the way of her thought. Naturally with mention of Mr. Fuller and his ten thousand dollars, his father came to her mind. "How are you and your father now?"

David replied: "How would you suppose?"

"He's been here—in Chicago, I mean. You told me so, David, that day you phoned me—by mistake."

"Yes; he was seeing me."

"I thought there was—I had to tell from your tone, you said almost nothing to me—maybe there was special trouble."

"There was."

"Much trouble?"

"Much?" said David. "He's stopped taking money from me now."

"He has? Why?"

"He has, Alice; that's all!" David said quickly and he waited in the dark, expecting she must ask more about it; but she said: "Your father used to be against me; you remember David? Yet now I think of you finishing with your father and me at the same time. What was the time, to you, David, which was the end of me with you?"

He said: "I don't know."

"I do," she replied calmly. "Whenever I go back over it, always it's the night Fidelia came and you drove me home in the snow-storm and you stopped your car by the graveyard, remember?"

"Of course I remember."

"And you said you weren't going to live by your father's idea, you said you were tired of Eternity; you wouldn't have it any more. You thought that night—didn't you—that I'd do instead of Eternity. Then you thought I wouldn't but Fidelia would."

He realized in a moment that she was moving away. She did not turn but she stepped from him, saying no word but very evidently she meant to leave him. In another instant, she had turned and she was upon the walk to the house. He watched her while she went from him and her white figure became more visible as she approached the light upon the porch; she went up the steps without even looking back and entered the house.

David stayed out in the dark by himself and, turned from the house, he gazed away toward the wide, midnight sheen of the Mississippi. Lights glinted upon the river from the long bridge and a train slowly moved from the Illinois shore and crossed to Davenport. It could not be Myra's and Lan's train; for they were bound east; but it brought to David thought of them on their train; and he thought of Lan having to-night more than he had had in his camp with Fidelia on the Wisconsin shore; he thought of Lan starting with something he never had gained and this had nothing to do with Lan's going away to war.

The last of the guests were gone when David went

up to the house; Alice had disappeared to her room. He went up to his room and to bed almost immediately but he did not sleep. He was not accustomed to be alone with sleeplessness but to-night he lay alone in the silence looking up at the stars above his window and to-night, in his sensation, the stars drew him on and on into their infinite space above, into the reaches of Eternity which he had assumed to say made him tired, of which he would have no more, which could lay no obligations upon him. Eternity! He would not live for it; he would live for pleasure with Fidelia.

He turned from the stars and gazed down at the river flowing on and on ceaselessly, silently, forever. He shut his eyes to it but still he saw the stream, and, more, he seemed to feel the flow of it; he felt himself carried off in the course of that current which became no mere earthly river but the ever-rolling stream of Time bearing all the sons of creation, one after another, away.

“Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away.”

He felt himself struggling in the stream of Time washing him on into that endless Eternity which made him tired, which he would not have but instead of which he would have his wife.

A psalm set to beating in his brain:

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all Generations.

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting thou art God.”

And the Lord God of the little boy learning his first chapters of Genesis, the Lord God who had a voice to be heard and from whose voice Adam hid when God walked in the Garden in the cool of the day; God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush; God who sent the Angel of Death who slew the firstborn in the land of Egypt; God, the I Am the Lord Thy God, Thou Shalt Have no God Before Me; God that night assailed David Herrick.

He wanted to go home. "I'm going home," he decided. "I ought to go home." By home, he meant not the hotel, but Itanaca. He counted with amazement the months which had passed since he had seen his mother. "It can't be," he said; but it was and it was almost a year. He got up, and in his timetable looked up the hour for an early train which would connect with the line for Itanaca. Then he slept.

Alice did not appear for breakfast at the hour David had his; so he left without again seeing her. He intended to telegraph from the station to Fidelia to inform her of his change of plan but he postponed this till he should reach Itanaca, for at breakfast he had found that one of the ushers was driving in the direction of Itanaca and would reach the town before the train; so David went with him.

CHAPTER XXVI

DAVID STAYS AWAY

NOT even the Scriptures can claim that goodness and purity have power to alter human fate; indeed, the Bible says in plain words:

“All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not.”

Yet people persuade themselves that, for the doing of good, a man or a woman may obtain special dispensation of super-human endurance and strength.

When David arrived at Itanaca, he realized with a shock, which was the more severe because of the time which had passed since his last visit; that he had been living in the delusion of a special dispensation in regard to his mother.

To his father's perceptions, to those of David's sisters and brothers and to the neighbors, nothing markedly unusual was apparent; and David found his mother going about her usual duties but he saw alterations in her which alarmed him.

His father admitted, “Your mother is not as well as I would like. I have had her see Dr. Brailford and he is giving her a good tonic.” Brailford was the local physician.

Deborah said to David: “Mother *is* thinner; and

she tires so easily now. I try to make her leave more to me; but she simply won't, David. You know mother." And Deborah, for all her habit of self-restraint, had to cry a little. She was very glad to have David in the house again; for David was the only brother near her age. The other brothers, Paul and John, were much younger. They belonged with Esther and Ruth as "the children."

David felt no inclination to tears, but was aroused by an insurgent emotion almost like anger. It was not against Deborah, and certainly it was not against his mother; it was not against his father, directly, but was against the manner of thinking and living which David once had described to Alice as his father's "game of forever pleasing God."

This game had been going on as long as David could remember and chiefly at the cost of his mother. As he had told Alice, David had never known his father to strive for things to indulge his mother and she had never striven for them herself; she always had been his father's faithful partner in his game of pleasing God, during the progress of which she had borne six children, nursed them, bathed them, made their clothes, taught them their first lessons, meanwhile cooking, washing dishes—and clothes—scrubbing, making beds, being wife and mother and maid-of-all work and, also, leader of the church auxiliaries and charitable societies and in the Sunday school.

Invariably in the little white parsonage beside the spired wooden church, she was the first up in the morning; rarely indeed was any one later to bed than she. David thought of her as sleeping intermittently for she

had formed the habit, when she had many babies, of rousing at small stirrings. She had the knack of leaving the big, double bed, where she slept with her husband, without awakening him when she went her rounds to see that every child was covered and was safe and warm.

David telegraphed to Fidelia: "I have come to Itanaca and will stay here till to-morrow. Will wire later."

He determined to take into his own hands the matter of his mother's health so he called on Dr. Brailford with very unsatisfactory results, as the doctor seemed to observe nothing more definite than that Mrs. Herrick was "run down" and he hoped she would pick up soon.

David asked, "Rest would certainly help her, wouldn't it?"

The doctor shook his head. "Not if you mean a trip to California and nothing to do, son. Not for the type of woman your mother is. I know her; she'd just fret herself to death."

That night David lay awake in the room he used to share with his brother Paul; Paul had been put elsewhere to-night. It was not easy for his mother to arrange that David have a room to himself but she had done it and when his door opened, very quietly, and his mother came in, David understood that she had done it for a particular purpose.

He whispered to her, in order to make sure of rousing no one, and she came quietly to the bed. "I wanted you to be awake, David," she said.

He clasped his arm about her and felt with new alarm how thin she was under her nightdress and robe.

David said, "I've seen Brailford to-day, mother, and he's an old dodderer. You've got to come to Chicago with me to-morrow and see a specialist."

Then she told him, "David, I have. I went down to Peoria and I saw Dr. Winstrom there. He's as good a doctor as there is in the state, they say. He was very thorough with me, David; he saw me several times."

When David whispered, "What did he say?" she evaded and replied, "Your father doesn't know I went. I could go back and forth from Peoria in little more than an hour. He must not know I went, David. You see, my son, my son," she whispered to him steadily although she repeated some words, "Dr. Winstrom made some definite tests; he knows. He is sure and he has told me the truth. You see, there's nothing to be done for me."

"What? What?"

"No; there is nothing which any one can do."

David was on his knees beside her. She smoothed his hair. "My son, my strong son, I have told no one else, not even Deborah, who had to know when I went to Peoria. It has been my secret, David, with God."

With God! David rebelled. Where was God in this? He asked his mother, "What—what does the doctor call it?"

Her hand became quiet upon his head. "You'll go to the doctor, David?"

"The first thing in the morning."

"Let him tell you, then. I've another year, my son; perhaps not quite so long. They don't know exactly about that."

David choked and clung to her and his mother

sank to her knees beside him. "Pray with me, David."

"What shall I pray?"

She said: "How do you pray now, my son?"

"Mother, I haven't prayed for years."

"Yes," she said, not rebuking him at all. "Yes, I supposed so. I've come to pray differently, David; I say our Lord's prayer and now four words, mostly, and they are from our Lord's prayer. 'Thy will be done,' I say. 'Thy will be done.'"

She whispered the prayer and he tried to repeat it with her but a mighty guilt filled him. He thought of his father and mother praying beside him when he was a baby and consecrating him to God, if God spared his life; and after God had spared him, he had cheated God. And who could cheat God, the Lord God to whom vengeance belongeth? For God, if he was God, must have done this thing to his mother and for no fault of hers but for David's.

What did God say of himself in his own commandment? "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children."

But suppose there were no children; suppose your sin saw to that? Suppose, defying God, you lived after your desire but denying children. Then God struck your mother.

David heard his mother's voice repeating the beautiful words of the twenty-third psalm:

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want;

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. . . .

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me. . . .

A few moments later, she arose quietly and kissed David and left him.

Early in the morning he went to Peoria and saw the doctor who told him the entire truth. Winstrom said, "You are the eldest son, of whom she spoke to me?"

"What did she tell you about me?" David asked.

"If your father discovered that she had consulted me, or if any other of the family came, I was to reassure them as much as possible; but she said to tell you the entire truth."

David fought the truth, when it was told, and he tried to deny it; but the doctor took the time to show that there was no doubt of the condition.

David declared, "I'll send her away." But Winstrom, like Brailford, shook his head and said, "In a case like this, the most merciful course is to allow her to keep at her duties as long as she can and to let others learn only as they must."

At noon, David returned to Itanaca and he telegraphed Fidelia saying again that he would stay away for another night and that he would explain later; for he could put no adequate explanation in a telegram. He stayed, in fact, far into the following day and it was late in the afternoon when he took a train for Chicago.

He had spent most of his hours close to his mother and had occupied himself so completely with home affairs that he had seen few others than the family and had visited Mr. Fuller only for a brief, perfunctory call.

As he sat by the car window, watching the dusk

settle over the bare, black October fields, he realized that he had boarded the ordinary day-coach and that thought of the parlor car, in which he had traveled to and from Itanaca with Fidelia, had never entered his mind. In contrast to his feeling when he started from Chicago, he was physically tired; he was without eagerness and appetite. When he thought of Fidelia, he thought of having to tell her the terrible news he bore; it so filled him, it so completely explained what he had done that he never reckoned what she might be believing in her almost complete lack of information about him. He forgot that when he left Fidelia, both of them had been feeling that he was, in a way, returning for a while to Alice; he forgot how Fidelia had urged him to stay longer where Alice was, if he wanted to, and he did not attach the two extra days of his absence to the day he had spent with Alice. Yet, as he reckoned the total time and realized that it was by far his longest separation from Fidelia, since their marriage, he wished he had written her once, at least; but he had not because each day he had expected to return to her that night.

"She'll be hurt," he realized. "But it won't last with her." The train began running into rain. The clear weather of the western edge of the state was changed to a downpour as the train approached the lake; squalls of water washed the window at David's elbow and the lightning crashed in great streaks from the sky.

David had not telegraphed to Fidelia the hour of his return for he did not want to meet her first in the railroad station and when he arrived in the middle of

a thunderstorm, he decided not to try to telephone to her. He took a taxi at once for the hotel.

It was nine o'clock in the evening and the city streets of course were alight. Long, even rows of street lamps glowed behind the blur of the rain and the great blocks of office buildings rose with windows patterned here and there with light. Above them the lightning forked and thunder rumbled but the lightning and thunder seemed powerless here in the city, and buildings walled off the gale. Then there was a sudden, tremendous bolt and instantly the streets were dark; the patterns of the windows were gone and amid rumblings of tremendous thunder, the car carrying David skidded to the side and stopped.

Drivers switched on their bright headlights, and resumed their way but the buildings which David passed remained dark except where a ruddy flame burst above a roof; and between the crashes of thunder, there beat an alarm bell.

Gradually lights reappeared; when David reached the hotel, it was alight as usual. His wife was in, he learned, but she was not downstairs and he went at once to their rooms where he found the door closed but not locked and he opened it slowly.

"Fidelia," he called as he entered.

The light was burning in their living-room but she was not there. Their bed-room was dark except for the light through the door from the living room and by this he saw that she was rising from her bed. She was dressed; she merely had been lying upon the bed, without having opened the covers and he saw

that she was wearing a white ratinée house dress which she often put on for the morning but never had worn after noon.

He noticed this simultaneously with being aware of the paleness of her face. Rarely, never indeed, had he seen her pale like this. He said, "Something's happened, Fidelia!"

For a second, she stared at him; she moved so as to make him turn more to the light; then she said: "Yes, he's alive, David!"

"What?"

"He's alive, I said, David."

"Who?"

"My husband."

"Who?"

"My husband. Sam—Sam Bolton. He's alive."

"*What? Who? What?*"

"Sam's alive, David. I told you he was dead. I thought he was dead. I had good reason to think so. But he's alive, David. He's alive and he's my husband."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SECRET OF LAKOON

D'AVID fumbled for the light switch; he pressed it and saw her plainly and as he stared upon her, she became florid with flushes of hot blood and her bosom swelled with her breath and was full. He held out his arms to her as he asked again, as though in the dark when he could not well see her he must have misunderstood. "What happened when I was away, Fidelia?"

"Sam," she said, "I told you about him before; you can't say I didn't tell you about him long ago, David—Sam, Sam Bolton, my husband."

"Your husband," David repeated, dropping his arms. There she was saying the same thing again and in the light. "Bolton your husband! He was your husband, you mean?"

"Yes; of course, David."

"You mean you married him?"

"Of course I married him, David. What did you think, after what I told you? I told you we'd been in camp; did you think after what I'd told you, I wasn't married to him?"

"Married!" repeated David. "Married! You were married and you never told me?"

"But I did or I practically did."

"Practically!" he repeated. "Practically!"

"And I thought he was dead. Any one would have

thought he was dead, David! The court thought so."

"The court," said David in his daze. Above him, thunder crashed; the room lights went down but in a moment were bright. "The court thought he was dead, so you did. When did you find out he wasn't?"

"To-day, David."

"To-day. How'd you find out? What happened? What happened when I was away, Fidelia? Did he come here?"

"No, David; he couldn't come here. He's in the war."

She cast no comparison at him but David felt it. Sam Bolton whom she had loved before she knew David Herrick, Bolton with whom she had cooked that happy camp supper, which David could never forget, Sam Bolton, who she thought was dead but who was alive and was her husband, was not here in a safe, comfortable place; he was in the war! "He was in London, when he wrote me," she explained. "He'd just come to London from France where he's been fighting, David. He sent for me to come to London; he wants me with him there."

"You talk," said David, "as though you had an idea of going."

"Of course I'm going, David."

He did not set himself yet to combat her; he did not yet believe what she said. From among the thousand items of this affair which he needed to know before he could combat her, he chose one to ask.

"When was this, Fidelia?"

"What?"

"Your marriage to him."

"In the summer, David."

"What summer?"

"When I had my camp with him. I told you I had my camp with him: you know I told you about that, David."

"I thought it was one supper. You stayed in camp, then. You lived with him."

"Of course, David. I was his wife."

"How long were you?"

"Just eleven days, David."

"What?"

"That was all; just eleven days!"

"Then what happened?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? Of course you do."

"I don't, David. I thought I did know but I didn't. I was wrong about him, you see. I'm trying to tell you, David; but I can't tell you all in a hurry."

David burst out: "My God, all in a hurry! You're talking about a hurry and we've been married three and a half years!"

"But I thought he'd been dead almost two years, when I married you, David. It was July, five years ago, I married Sam."

"The summer before you came to Northwestern?" David could not put his mind to counting the years.

"No; the summer before that. It was in Idaho, David; near Lakoon, a town named Lakoon, in Idaho. It's in the northern part. We were married there and we went down into the valley below Lakoon, where we camped."

Their bridal camp on the Wisconsin shore flashed

into David's thought; so she had had another bridal camp before. With whom? Bolton was yet only a name. David challenged her: "Who was Sam Bolton?"

"Why, I've his picture here," Fidelia said; and she turned to the drawer of her writing desk and brought forth a small, square photograph which was an unmounted snap-shot of a tall, broad-shouldered man with black hair and heavy brows and with a strong, straight nose and vain, willful mouth and chin. He was a handsome man; no one could deny that; and he carried himself with the air of a dare-devil.

David took the picture from her but he held his shaking fingers from tearing it across. He demanded of her: "You've kept this with you all the time we've been married?"

"Oh, no, David. I got it only to-day."

He saw then that this picture was not of her husband of five years ago; the flannel shirt and khaki trousers which he wore were uniform, not camping clothes.

"How did you get it to-day?"

"It came in Sam's letter, which I got to-day."

"How did you get his letter to-day?"

"I went to the post office for it. When you didn't come home, I went to the post office and asked for it and there it was, David; it had been waiting for me almost a week."

"When I didn't come home—what in the world are you talking about?"

"Sam's letter, David. You see, I wrote him—I mean I wrote his brother's wife, Flora Bolton, after

your father was here last August because I wanted to be sure I could have children, now, David. I thought Sam was dead; I had good reason to think so; but before you and I had children, didn't I have to be absolutely sure about it, David?"

"What've children to do with this?"

"Why, everything, David. They were all the trouble with your father, weren't they—because I wasn't having them? That was why he stopped taking your money, wasn't it? So I thought I'd have them, David; but I had to make sure then—didn't I?—that Sam was dead. So I wrote Flora Bolton way back in August to find out if the family had ever heard anything of Sam since he was lost. She didn't write back to me, as I thought she would; she didn't answer me at all, though I went and went to the post office to get her letter. She'd sent my letter to Sam in England for him to answer; but I didn't know that, I kept on going to the post office for her letter for weeks, David, until that day I saw Alice in Evanston. I went down to the post office on that day, too; and there was nothing for me then. So I decided it must be all right then about children, David; I decided I wouldn't go again. I didn't go again until this morning; I wouldn't have then, but you'd been away three days. You went to Rock Island to Alice, David, and you were sure you were coming back to have lunch with me the next day; but you didn't. You went home after you'd been with Alice and you just telegraphed me; not a line, not a word about me, David. 'I'll stay another day,' you said, and 'explain later.' So this morning I went down to the post office again to see if there

was anything there for me; and there it was, David, with Sam's writing on the envelope and the English stamp and his picture inside."

Now she had in her hand a pale blue envelope with black, bold handwriting displaying characters formed with broad, sweeping flourishes which was addressed, "Mrs. Fidelia Netley, care General Delivery, Chicago." She said, "You see, I signed myself Fidelia Netley to Flora."

"Why not Fidelia Herrick?"

"I didn't tell her I was married. She didn't know I'd been married even to Sam."

"What?"

"So Sam wrote me, as I signed myself to Flora; only he added 'Mrs.' Here's his letter, David."

He took it and snatched out the enclosure.

"Dear Fida," he read the bold flourish of the words. "Who set you to asking about me? What sort is he? Not much mine, I'll wager. A much more proper person, I imagine; your letter reeks of solidarity. You're after the steady years now, aren't you? I gave you days; and you gave me days; but, my God, they *were* days and nights. Eleven of them, weren't they? They rise like eleven mountains over a plain of mole hills in my memory. Memory! It doesn't seem like memory at all when I dream of you; you are—"

David could read no more. Eleven days they had had together. He thought of the days of Fidelia and himself in camp and how, before their eleventh day, she wanted to break camp. He understood that better now. "What happened," he demanded, "on the eleventh day between you and Bolton?"

"I'll tell you. You see, David, he used to see me at Palo Alto."

"When was this?"

"This was the start. He wanted me to marry him then; he said I must."

"He was in college with you?"

"No; he just lived in California. He wasn't a college man; he wasn't that sort. I liked him, David."

"Liked? That all?"

"He scared off everybody else."

"How?"

"He did. If you knew him, you'd understand."

"Never mind. What did you do with him?"

"Do? In Palo Alto? Nothing, except tell him I wouldn't marry him. Then college was out and I went up into Idaho."

"Why?"

"Why, I had to go somewhere to get away from Sam. I had an invitation to visit a ranch from a girl I knew at Palo Alto. Sam guessed I'd gone with her; and he came after me."

"You mean," said David bitterly, "you went to your friend in Idaho like you went to Dorothy Hess's; then Bolton called for you like I did. You'd done all that before?"

"That's not true, David. I married him but I had no idea of marrying him when I went up to Mondora. The house party was all over before I thought of it. I was going off by myself—"

"Where?"

"I didn't care much. I had no invitation; and I certainly wasn't going back to White Falls. I'd some

money sent me from the bank and I was thinking of taking a trip when Sam came. He asked me to ride with him; and I did it. He had a horse for me. It was a wonderful day, David; I mean the weather. But there'd been a lot of rain just before."

"Never mind the weather."

"You don't understand, David; the rain did it. The river was up."

"What river?"

"The one by Lakoon. It wasn't much of a river, usually; you could ride through it; but this day it certainly was up with the water coming down from the mountains. Sam said we could ford it anyway; but we couldn't. We didn't find it out till we were in the middle of it and our horses lost their feet. We were carried down, David."

She caught breath and told on. "There was a sort of canyon there, David. We got carried into it and lost our horses. They drowned. We almost drowned. I told you about that; I know, I told you something about this once."

"You did," said David. This, of course, was the time when she had to fight water to live and which she had mentioned to him on that morning they saw the sunrise together.

"David, I had no idea of marrying Sam when we rode into that river. I'd just been riding with him; then, there we were in the water, and our horses drowned and we—we had to fight for our lives—I'll tell you! He'd help me and then I'd have a chance to help him when the water was whirling us about. It took you under, David; and there wasn't any use

trying to land. You couldn't, the way the rocks went up. You've seen a canyon, David. You just had to go with the water and beat and beat with all your strength till you could get to the top and suck in a breath.

"Then all of a sudden it stopped, when it looked like it never would. The canyon, I mean. We weren't in the water; we were ashore. We were lying side by side on some rocks and we were holding on to each other laughing; and I wasn't tired at all. Sam wasn't tired."

She stopped with her bosom rising and falling not from her effort in speaking; she was living again that moment on the rock in Sam Bolton's arms and David saw her eyes agleam.

"I felt wonderful, David. I thought I'd have to fight the water maybe an hour more; I didn't know; then it was all over and I had all that strength left. Sam felt the same way. It was just about noon and he said: 'We can be married this afternoon and come back here and camp beside this damned river.'

"That's what he said, David. We'd beaten the river, you see; we'd beaten it together. But he didn't feel *through*; I didn't. I felt just sort of only started. I wanted to do something else hard and risky that I'd never done before. I said, 'All right, Sam.' I was lying on a rock, I remember; it was in the sun and hot. He'd let go of me and I sat up in the sun with my hair down to get it dry."

"Damn!" cried David and saw her in the sun with her hair down and Bolton's arms about her.

"That's the way it was! We walked to the nearest

place where Sam bought horses and we rode to Mondora and bought things and got married in Lakoon by the minister there and we rode down to the river, near where we went in, and we camped there. I was his wife for eleven days. Then Sam went away."

"At the end of eleven days?"

"No; fourteen. I mean we got along for eleven days; we got along all right for a while."

"Yes," said David. "He says so in his letter."

"Then we had a terrible time."

"Why?"

"It was terrible, David. It went on three days and then I woke up in the morning and Sam was gone. He'd taken his horse and a few things and gone. There was a paper pinned to my blanket. 'Fida,' it said. He called me 'Fida.'"

"I saw that."

"He always did, David. I didn't like it, as I do Fidel from you. He knew I didn't like it so he always called me 'Fida' to tease me. 'I'm going off to give you time to get me straight in your head,' he said. This is the note, David. 'I'll be back by night and if you're here, you mean you'll be a good girl. If you're gone, don't fear that I'll follow you.' I stayed in camp till noon, David. Then I went up to the town, to Lakoon."

"You mean you left him?"

"I went up to the town."

"What did he do?"

"I don't know but he didn't follow me to Lakoon. But he did come back to camp and stay there two days."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw the smoke of our fire."

"'Our,'" David repeated. "You weren't in camp then?"

"His fire, I mean, where ours used to be."

"How did you know it was his?"

"I saw him about the camp."

"Then you went back to camp!"

"I didn't; I almost did; but I didn't. I never spoke with him again and I don't think he saw me. I'm sure he didn't. Then he was gone, David. I heard he sold the horse he bought for himself the day we got married; he sold it to a man near Mondora and he took the train from there."

"What did you do?"

"I went to Portland. It just happened to be Portland. I didn't go to anybody I knew. I didn't mention to anybody that I'd been married. It turned out that I didn't have to."

"You mean you had no baby."

"No; and I found out that Sam never told anybody, not even his own people. Neither of us wrote a letter from camp. Nobody knew, except people in Lakoon who never saw either of us before or since. Then in Portland, more than a year afterwards, I heard Sam was dead. He'd been killed in Alaska, they said."

"Who said?"

"His own family. They'd been trying to locate him because of some trouble over a land title. His brother wanted to sell some land that Sam owned a share of; so Hartley had to trace Sam and they found

he'd gone to Alaska and they got evidence that he'd died there. Anyway, they brought it into court and it was good enough to let Hartley sell the land."

"What did you do about it?"

"Me? I just found out what I could, David. I hadn't told Hartley that Sam married me; and I certainly wouldn't tell then. It would look like I was after a share of their land. I didn't want any land."

"But why didn't you tell *me*?"

"I'm telling you now, David, now that I know Sam's alive. He's my husband; he's never married any one else; he's always wanted me. No one'll say they won't touch his money because he's married to me. I'm going to him, David; I'm going." And David realized that she wanted to go.

He realized part, at least, of the hurt to her from his father; he realized part of the hurt to her from his own conduct in the last three days when he had left her alone to her own imaginings and interpretations. This hurt would have healed; he could have healed it by now with his explanation of what he had done, if that letter from Bolton had not arrived and she had not called for it. But that letter, with its fact that Bolton was alive, made this irremediable. For it did not merely bear the news that her husband lived; reaching her when it did, under the circumstances, it regained for Bolton something, at least, of his old domination over her. And David, confronting her, felt it.

He felt that that man who had cooked with her the camp supper which had tasted "the best ever," though it was burnt to a crisp—that man who had been vague

before and who, besides, had been dead and yet who had been the one of whom David never wanted to think—he felt that that man was drawing his wife away.

David Herrick's wife but also Sam Bolton's; for Bolton had possessed her; he not merely had cooked one camp supper with her; he had been her husband and made her happy for eleven days, so happy that, after she had left him, she almost returned to Bolton; almost, but not quite. Now she would go back to him.

David said, "This is why I stayed away from you, Fidelia. I went from Rock Island early in the morning to Itanaca. I found my mother very sick."

"Why, David! Why, David, what was the matter?"

"I couldn't find out at once; that was one of the reasons I had to stay. It wasn't the sort of a sickness a person admits, Fidelia. I'm not telling you this to have you pity me. I don't want pity, Fidelia; but I won't have you have any wrong idea about what I meant by staying away. I found my mother dying."

"Oh, David, she's—dead?"

He shook his head. "They give her a year, Fidelia." And he told her the trouble.

"Oh, why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you send for me?"

He thought, "If I had, she'd not have got that letter. It would be lying in the post office without power over her."

"I couldn't send for you," he said. "No one else knows the truth but the doctor and mother and me

and you, now. The one thing to do was not to make a fuss over it."

"I'd not make a fuss over her. But I could have done something. I love her so, David. Oh, I love her so."

"She doesn't want anything done."

Fidelia touched him; her fingers closed on his wrist as she appealed, "But now, now they're using your money, David!" And at this, he had to shake his head.

Her hand unclasped and drew from him. "Now they will, David. I can do that for her; now he'll take your money, for I'm going away."

She half turned from him, with her hand at the bosom of her dress and he saw that she was pulling at the snaps. For an instant, he imagined that she meant to dress for the street and to go at once; but when she dropped off her dress she went on preparing for bed. She offered no physical act for him to oppose; she merely prepared for bed in their room, as she had always done; and when she had braided her hair and was in her nightdress, she stepped to him and kissed him: "Good night, David," she said and she got into her own bed.

He did not undress. He sat on his bed and gazed sometimes at Bolton's wife; after she was in bed, he switched off the light and raised the blind and the window.

A cool, damp wind blew in off the lake. The rain was over and the lightning had become faint and distant; it flashed very far away and the thunder was merely an echo out of the blackness over the water

but it reminded David Herrick how tremendous could be the might of God, call him God or Nature or All-Being or whatever he wished.

David was thinking of him as God, the God of the Eternity which he had defied and which had made him tired, who had dealt with David Herrick this day.

It was upon the following day, in the afternoon, that Fidelia left him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ILLUSION AND THE TRUTH

ALICE heard of the separation of David and Fidelia six weeks after it happened; and the news reached Alice in the cruel, circuitous fashion in which such information often travels to the person most concerned.

She was attending a luncheon which the Tau Gamma Alumnæ in Chicago gave monthly at Field's Tea Room. This was the December meeting and twenty girls were at the table. Most of them knew each other intimately from having been members of local Tau Gamma chapters when in college but there were always girls from distant chapters who had moved to Chicago and who attended the luncheons to meet the Chicago girls. To-day there was a young married woman who recently had arrived from Minneapolis and she said to the Northwestern group in general, "You all know Fidelia Netley, of course."

"We certainly do," some one replied.

"Do you happen to know what her present move is?"

"Why, she's been married to a man named Herrick for over three years," a friend of Alice's explained. "They're living up on the north shore."

"Oh, I knew that in Minneapolis," the stranger said. "I meant, what's she doing since they separated?"

"Separated!" cried a dozen girls at once; and Alice sat stiffened with fiery blood racing in her.

"Why, didn't you know that?" the Minneapolis girl asked, pleased with the sensational effect of her news.

Every one gazed at Alice; then nearly every one was talking at once. "You mean she's not living with Dave? . . . When was it . . . why . . ."

"I don't know," the visitor had to answer to most of the questions. "I thought you would. It's queer you don't know anything about it."

"Not at all. We don't see Fidelia from one year's end to another, except by accident."

Then, through the chatter, Alice heard the Minneapolis girl coherently explain: "I just happened to call her up at her hotel a couple of weeks ago, not knowing a soul here; and the hotel told me that Mr. David Herrick was residing there but he thought Mrs. Herrick was not. I asked when she'd be back and he was most carefully vague. You know the manner when one knows more than he ought to tell. But he made it perfectly plain to me that he didn't expect her back at all."

A girl asked: "Then did you call Dave?"

"No; I never knew him. I just knew Fidelia slightly, years ago."

"That's *all* you know?"

It proved to be all and Alice quickly realized this and she left the table.

She wanted to be alone; she felt like singing; she felt lifted by the amazing relief at being able to think of David without having to picture him with Fidelia. No longer was Fidelia his wife; she was gone!

Alice did not let herself imagine that Fidelia had left him of her own free will and at her own choice;

far less did Alice dream that Fidelia had departed to go to another man. No; Alice had to allow her first exultation to be complete, so she imagined Fidelia going away because she had found that she had come to her end with David; and Alice had to allow herself to believe that she had much to do with this.

How closely upon the heels of David's presence with her at Myra's wedding had come the departure of Fidelia! But what now was to follow the departure? Where was Fidelia gone? What was David doing in regard to her? When would Alice hear from him?

Fidelia was gone from the hotel, where David had remained; that, after all, was the total which Alice knew; and when Alice went home, she did not tell her news to her family. They might question it too much or question too much that it would result in anything happy to her; and she would let no doubt or suspicion destroy her dream to-day.

She hovered about home on following days to be sure of keeping her happiness; she feared to meet some one who might know more about Fidelia and David and who would tell her some event which would dash her dream; but when one of the Tau Gamma girls, who had been at the luncheon, called her, it was to report that beyond any doubt David and Fidelia had had trouble.

This girl had taken it upon herself to telephone David and had asked about Fidelia, saying that Tau Gamma was trying to get every alumna out for the Christmas meeting and would Fidelia be back in town then? The girl reported, "Alice, I talked to him and he doesn't expect her back by Christmas or any

other time! I asked him where we might address her, and he told me in plain English that he didn't know, but mail to her bank in White Falls would probably reach her, eventually."

A few days after this, Alice accepted an invitation to a dinner-dance which was to be held at the hotel where David lived and which she had never visited since Fidelia and David took up their residence there.

She knew that he was not to be in the party with her yet she prepared herself for that evening with a care to every little detail of her dress and toilet which she had not felt since the night of her last Tau Gamma dance.

David happened to stay down town for dinner that evening, as he frequently did nowadays. He dined, more or less indifferently, at cafeterias where his table companions were economical, serious or hurried people; or he occupied himself with discovering strange, foreign-like cafés where men supped alone or gathered in argumentative groups, reading to each other paragraphs from Italian or Greek or Russian newspapers or where they played dominoes while they sipped ink-black coffee from glasses. Sometimes he went with Snelgrove to watch two good welter-weights "mix it" for four rounds or so before some delectable athletic association where Irving was popular.

Of course the Vredicks and other friends at the hotel, who knew David had been "left," made it a point to include him in their various entertainments but he seldom felt like accepting. To-night he had

dined alone and afterwards had gone to a picture theater, so he arrived at the hotel about eleven o'clock.

Every evening there was dancing and he had the habit of looking in at the floor of the main restaurant before going up to his lonely room. Thus he watched from the door to-night and suddenly recognized Alice among the dancers.

She was in the arms of a tall, young man and her lovely head with its beautiful, dark hair was tilted a little as she looked up at him. She was in blue and silver; her dancing dress was blue, and silver slippers with small shining buckles were on her little feet. She was as she had been at the Tau Gamma dance four years ago when he had last danced with her; and as he saw her here at the hotel for the first time in three years, and saw her in blue and silver, he knew that she had come because she had learned that Fidelia had left him.

Then she saw him, and for the instant, she lost step; she confused her partner. She nodded to David; she flushed and looked up at her partner again, smiling and begging pardon. She danced on and David did not see her look at him again.

When the music stopped, she stood with her back turned to him while she clapped with her partner for an encore; and she danced it; but when this was done, she avoided rejoining the group of her party. Indeed, David did not know that she was with a group. He waited for a few moments after she was seated and then he approached her; and although she gave no sign that she noticed him, he saw her suddenly ask

something of her partner which sent him away. So David came upon her alone and awaiting him with her clear, blue eyes looking up at him and very bright. "Good evening, David," she said quietly but her breast was heaving.

He replied and then asked, "You've heard, haven't you?"

"About what?"

"Fidelias left me."

"What did you say?"

"Fidelias left me; didn't you know it, Alice?"

"Yes," she replied but till this moment she had not known that. These were the words she had expected him to say but not to say them as he did; for he told her Fidelias had truly left him. It was not that he had sent her away.

With this, her triumph over Fidelias should have flown; it should have left Alice empty, it had so filled her before. But it did not. How could she care in what manner Fidelias had left since actually Fidelias was gone and David was beside her with no Fidelias about?

"Sit down, David," Alice said.

"You want me to?"

"Please."

"Why? What's the use?"

"She's gone, isn't she, David? She's not coming back, is she?"

"No; she's not coming back."

"Then what's the difference to me whether she—went or you sent her away?"

At this, he realized that she must have heard that

he had sent Fidelia away; she had come in her blue dress and silver slippers believing that, but finding it not true, what was the difference to her?

He asked, humbly, "When can I talk with you?"

"Whenever you want to."

"Where?"

His words aggravated in Alice another where; where was Fidelia gone? Alice asked it. "Where's she gone?"

"Fidelia? She's gone to London."

"England?"

"England."

"But why?"

"I'll tell you, Alice; she has a husband there."

"A husband!"

"That's what she has." He gasped as he said it and he looked around and asked, "Have you got to dance with that fellow now?"

"I can't. I mean, it doesn't make any difference. I'm in a party; I'm not with anybody in particular."

"Come along then." And she accompanied him, not asking where he led.

She was struggling with the tremendous thing he had told her when he said Fidelia had a husband in London. It must mean that she had had a husband before she married David; and when a girl had a husband, she was not really married to the second man at all; it must mean that David never was really her husband and he was not her husband now.

Alice sat down on a lounge and he was beside her; they had come to a corner of a parlor where was no one else.

"How did she have a husband in London, David?"

"He went there. He's in the war with the Canadian forces. She married him five years ago, a year and a half before she came to Northwestern. He's a man named Bolton she met in California."

Bolton was the name of the man of whom Myra had talked, Alice remembered; he was the man who had been at Palo Alto.

David continued, "She married him in Idaho the summer after she left Stanford. They—stayed a while in Idaho, Alice; then they had trouble and separated."

"Oh, divorced, you mean?"

"No. They just separated and then Fidelia believed he died. But he didn't."

"Then she was married all the time."

"Yes; but she believed he was dead."

"But he wasn't."

"No."

"How wasn't he, David?"

"He'd gone to Alaska and she thought—and his family thought—he'd died there; but he was just staying away."

"Then he came back and heard about you?"

"No," said David. "No; he didn't know about me at all."

"What did happen, David?"

"She heard he was alive and she left me. It happened the night I got here from home. I went home from Rock Island, Alice. I went to see my mother; I found her sick so I stayed there two more days.

When I got home, Fidelia had heard from Bolton; and she wanted to go to him."

"Had heard, David? How?"

"By letter."

"You mean he'd written to look her up?"

"No; he'd written in answer to a letter of hers."

"Looking him up, David?"

"Yes; something like that."

"You knew that when we were in Rock Island, David? That's why you came to—Rock Island, because Fidelia'd written to look up her husband?"

"No," said David. "I didn't know anything about it, Alice." And then, gazing at him, she understood. She said, "You mean you never knew anything about her husband at all?"

"Not till I got back that night."

"The night she left you to go to him."

David arose and went a few steps away. He came back and gazing down at her dark hair and her sweet, upturned face and into her blue eyes, he said, "You know the truth of it now. I'm discarded goods."

"You've never been discarded by me!"

He jerked up and filled his breast with a deep, violent breath and in a moment he asked, "Shall I take you to your party?"

"I can't dance with them now."

"Would you—dance with me?"

"Dance!" she said and she quivered with remembrance of their last dance together when he was going to Fidelia and she was trying to hold him from Fidelia and when he, having her in his arms, had felt

her lacking in comparison with Fidelia. "I'll dance with you, David," she said and she arose and stepped in front of him and did not look back at him as he followed her to the dancing floor.

Nor did he overtake her; he let her lead him while he watched her as she walked before him. At the edge of the floor, when she turned, he stepped to her quietly and thrust his right arm about her in the old, familiar way and her right hand, slender and smooth and gentle, slipped into his hand.

He felt his heart pounding with his stir of remembrance at this amazing moment; he felt his pulses to the tips of his fingers which clasped hers and he felt, against his pulse, the swifter, frightened racing of her heart.

They took a few steps together and turned once about the floor; then she was breathless and, gasping, she told him, "This is all, David."

"What?"

"It's all I can stand!"

He drew her to the edge of the floor and released her. "Good night, David," she whispered and she slipped from him into the women's rooms; and while he waited, she did not reappear. He learned, later, that she had left by another door and gone home; but still for an hour he remained downstairs and did not go up to the dark, empty suite which had been his and Fidelia's.

CHAPTER XXIX

OF USE AGAIN

DAVID gave up the rooms, where he had lived with Fidelia, and he moved from the hotel the next day. He had come to feel freer and more reasonable as a result of his talk with Alice and he appreciated the folly of the mixture of sentiment and stubbornness which had made him determine to maintain his home as it had been.

Of course he had realized that sometime he would give up the rooms but he had been waiting to hear, definitely, that Fidelia had rejoined Bolton. He had not heard this; he had not heard anything at all from her.

He moved about four miles south and nearer the center of the city, taking a room in a so-called bachelors' building near Lincoln Park. Except for the janitor's wife and the maids of the staff who swept and dusted, there was not a woman living in the building.

These quarters were considerably cheaper than the hotel suite and also they involved him in much less indirect expenditure. The move took him from the well-meant attentions of the Vredicks and his hotel friends and cast him more upon himself. He went home for Christmas and stayed there five days and he formed the habit of running down to Itanaca on the late train every Saturday afternoon and returning late Sunday night.

His father again was permitting the use of his money for household expenditures for, as Fidelia had prophesied, her desertion of David satisfied his father.

In Ephraim Herrick's view, God had acted; and Ephraim could believe, consistently, that it might very well be that God had hastened his actions a little so that he might at the same time redeem David and lighten the burden which was weighing so heavily upon His faithful servant, Sarah. Ephraim did not yet have definite knowledge of the certainty of his wife's doom; for David alone shared that secret with his mother. Before others of the family he played a cheerful confidence that she would soon improve and when he was alone with her he spent quiet hours discussing and contemplating the future life toward which, each week, she was more visibly traveling.

When he returned to the city, he longed for companionship as he never had before and he could take less and less satisfaction in the diversions offered by Snelgrove and his other friends. He wanted to have with him some one who knew and felt what he was feeling; and Snelgrove and the Vredicks and the rest did not even know about his mother; he could not tell any of them. What he wanted was to go to Alice; but how could he seek her now?

On her part, she was waiting for him. She had gained, from her meeting with him, also a freedom from her restraint. Upon the next morning, at breakfast with her father and mother, she had mentioned David boldly and added that she had seen him last

night and that Fidelia had left him to go to a man whom she had married previously.

"I danced with David," Alice announced and she waited for what her parents would say.

They possessed the caution and also the self-control to say little, immediately, but Sothron did not start to his office at the usual hour. He devoted half the morning to an anxious discussion with his wife yet they evolved nothing better than a proposal to take Alice to California.

But Alice would not go. She simply refused and said, "Of course you want to take me away from David because you know I love him and you're afraid I'll marry him, if he asks me. Well, I will!"

When her father suggested, "Suppose your mother and I both go to California and we close the house," Alice replied, "I'll stay in Chicago." And nothing more was said about a trip.

Some days later, her father asked Alice, "You're seeing David?"

"No; he's not made any effort to see me yet."

"But you think he will?"

"I hope so, father."

"That means you'll see him, if he does."

"Of course I will."

"Please have him come to the house, then; please do not go elsewhere to meet him."

Alice agreed, "I won't—if he'll come to the house."

Sothron said to his wife that night, "Her abjectness before that fellow is simply inconceivable."

"It's not abjectness," Alice's mother corrected.

“It’s love of a sort you meet once or twice in a lifetime. It may be the most wonderful or the most terrible thing in the world; or it’s both.”

Alice became filled with new fears while she waited, hearing nothing from David. She thought: “Fidelia has come back to him.” And while she was in the grip of this idea, she dreaded to pass the hotel or meet people who had been there. Then she learned that David had left the hotel and was living in a bachelors’ building; yet the fear that Fidelia would return, remained with her.

One evening when she was in the city and she heard boys crying news of an attack by the Canadians, she thought, “Suppose her husband is killed. She’ll come back to David.” And Alice wondered whether, in law, Fidelia would become his wife again upon the fact of Bolton’s death. Alice bought a paper and looked in the list of Canadian officer casualties which the papers were then printing but the name Bolton did not appear.

She rehearsed with herself David’s words and the tones of his voice when he had told her how Fidelia had left him for Bolton; and sometimes Alice convinced herself that even if Fidelia returned, David would not have her again; but it became more and more difficult for Alice to believe it, when the weeks went on without further word from him.

Yet, might it not be that he was awaiting word from her? Finally, in February, she wrote to him: “David: To be sure that there may be no mere misunderstanding of anything, such as possibly you may misunderstand why I could not continue my dance with you, I

am sending this to say that if you wish to come to see me, you will find me at home to you."

He received this just before he left for Itanaca on Saturday and he carried it with him, so he had it when he returned on Sunday evening. From the station where, in August, he had called her number by mistake, he called it deliberately and asked for her and inquired, "Is it too late to see you to-night?"

She replied: "Come, David."

He felt choked by contending emotions, as he was admitted to the house. Here in this wide, handsome hall he had first come as an awkward, bashful freshman, fearing wealth and ease; here he had gained power over this girl so that her father had come to fear him; here he had returned when he was casting off Alice for Fidelia; here he was, himself cast off by Fidelia, seeking Alice again.

She looked as she used to; but instead of approaching him as she had when, upon entering and finding her alone, he used to seize her and kiss her, she was standing away from him. She was paler a little, just now. She was in a soft, white silk dress showing something of her throat, and her arms were half bare, her slender, pretty arms.

"I got your letter," he said. "It's like you to send it. I've wanted to come—awfully. I'd have called you yesterday but I was just going home; to Itanaca, I mean."

"Yes; that night you told me your mother had been sick. But surely she's all right now."

David did not reply. He glanced toward a room

to the east, a small, pleasant room, overlooking the lake, where she and he used to sit. It had agreeable, shaded lights and on cool nights, a maple fire would be burning on the brick hearth. He caught the slight odor of the wood and he saw the flicker of flame.

"Can we go in there?" he asked.

"You want to?"

He nodded and followed as she led into the little room.

The window blinds were up, the curtains were not drawn and the lights were sufficiently shaded so that he could see out to the lake, and he thought that Alice intentionally had left that view of the lake where he had gone from her for Fidelia.

The lawn was not white as it had been on the March evening of Alice's skating party and there was no large field of ice afloat far out, but the shore hummocks and floe were there in a wide, glistening band along the beach.

Alice looked out, as he was doing, and she asked him, "You've heard from Fidelia since she went back to—her husband?"

"Once, indirectly. There's a man named Jessop who used to be her guardian in White Falls."

"I know about Mr. Jessop," Alice said.

"Apparently she wrote him what she was doing and asked him to take the legal steps for the annulment of our marriage. He's been taking them; they aren't much. They consist chiefly in offering proof that Samuel Bolton, who married her at Lakoon, Idaho, five years ago, is the same Samuel Bolton who enlisted

at Vancouver last year and now is a lieutenant in France. He made no mystery of himself at Vancouver when he reappeared so it's really all over."

"Then you're—divorced now."

"The marriage is annulled; it never was legal."

Alice glanced at the couch where David and she used to sit and she avoided it, seating herself upon a small, wicker chair.

"How were things at Itanaca, David?"

"They're all right but mother."

"Then she's sick again?"

"It's the same sickness, Alice; it'll always be the same or worse. She'll not get well."

"Oh, why?"

He told her and he set her to crying. It almost broke him down to have to report the truth about his mother and to make Alice cry; but when it was over, he felt enormous relief. He said, "Now I've put that on you—half of it, it seems."

She begged, "Does it, David? Oh, I'm so glad! It makes me feel of use again."

He said: "But I've no right to use you."

Swiftly she changed the subject. "I had a letter from Myra yesterday. Lan's right in the middle of that terrible mixup below Nish. She copied a lot of his last letter to her and sent it on."

David had had a letter from Lan recently and so, starting with Lan and Myra, they talked about Bill Fraser and other men and about girls from their class, or from their college time, who had gone, or were going "over."

Long before he wanted to, David rose to go.

“It’s wonderful to be able to talk with you again,” he said. “It’s made a different day for me.”

She said, “You can come whenever you want to. I hope surely you’ll come when you get back from home.”

“Every time?”

“Every time, if you care to.” And she held forth her hand.

He clasped it; and in a glow he went out on his way to his room.

She also was aglow; but soon recollections, undeniable ones with despair in them, seized her. Suppose he offered her love, could she feel sure of it? Suppose they progressed so far this time that they married and then Fidelity re-appeared; suppose to-day, in that line of trench across the north of France, the man who had drawn Fidelity away, was fallen.

CHAPTER XXX

"IF SHE COMES BACK"

IN Myra's letter to Alice, and upon a page which Alice did not mention to David, was the question, "What's all this I hear about Dave and Fidelia separating? Is it so? And did it have anything to do with that Bolton man I heard about?"

Alice wrote to Myra the acknowledged facts of the matter, and stated that Fidelia's marriage to David had been annulled. Alice added, after much indecision, "I am seeing David now."

The return mail from Rock Island brought a reply which exclaimed, "Then it's struck! I always knew it would! She's finished for you. Oh, I'm so glad, Allie! . . . Now I can tell you something I wanted to before and which maybe you've suspected from my staying safe at home and not trying to get across somewhere to be nearer Lan. We're going to have a baby. It's the wonderfulest thing. . . ."

It thrilled Alice but it also frightened her to be treated by Myra, the wife, almost as a wife herself and no longer as a girl who could never hope for a child and who therefore must not be shown the joy of another's hope. How could Myra feel so sure that Fidelia "was finished" for Alice?

Fidelia's secret had proved to be as serious as Myra could have suspected; and it was true that Fidelia was gone away to be the wife of another man. But she

was not "finished" for Alice; and would she ever be?

Myra seemed to imagine that David and Alice could, if they would, ignore his three and a half years with Fidelia; she seemed to fancy that Fidelia had not changed him and her and that they had power to put themselves back where they were before Fidelia came to college on that snowy, winter night. But how different were the hours, when now he came to the house, from any hours before!

On a morning in March, Alice walked alone on the street to the west where stood the apartment in which David and she, four years ago, had planned to live.

It had only been building then for they were to move in when the place was new; now, newer apartments were beside it and in comparison "their" apartment looked old and long occupied.

She had not seen it since she had visited it with David on a day before Fidelia was known to either of them; and the sight of it revived in Alice the poignancy of his devotion to her then. To him, she had been without lack, until Fidelia came; but now, though Fidelia was gone and although she might remain away forever, Alice could never believe herself wholly sufficient to him.

Sometimes, when she was with him, she said to herself: "We're as we were in sophomore year." Or she said, "It is like our first year." But she knew that she considered the likeness of manners, only.

They shook hands upon meeting and upon parting; they occasionally sat side by side upon the lounge but as a rule they occupied separated chairs while they

talked of his mother, of business, of the war, of Lan and Myra and of anything and any one but Fidelia.

Their minds swiftly re-established an intimacy in which Alice could feel no break. When he spoke of his relations with his father and with Mr. Fuller and when he told her of his difficulties with Snelgrove and the agency, it seemed just like long ago. It seemed to her not only that she had not heard these things for four years but also that he had not talked them to any one.

“Did you talk this way with—*her*?” Alice asked him suddenly, one evening.

He flushed and then went white as he looked at her and answered, “Of course not.”

“Why not?”

“We didn’t talk this way,” he replied.

“How did you? I mean, I mean I don’t want to make you talk to me just this way.”

“You don’t; you only let me, Alice,” he said. “And please keep on letting me. It’s marvelous to have this again.”

“It is for me,” she said; but she thought, “It really can’t mean so much, for we were doing this when *she* took him away.” Alice thought: “I felt too much interest; I made myself too much like a partner in his work; she didn’t do that at all and she took him away. I’ll be lighter with him.”

But it was no time to be light with him, when he came to her from his mother who was dying; and Alice could not dissemble the intensity of her concern in everything which affected him. She was happiest when

he discussed plans with her and when he reported progress of the plans, as he did in May when he told her: "I owe Mr. Fuller just twenty thousand now."

"You've paid off five thousand!"

"I'll make it five more this year, if business holds."

In June, his mother died. He was at home for several days previous and he wrote Alice where he was, but when the end came he did not inform her until he was ready to return to Chicago when he wired her the bare fact and that he was returning.

She well knew the time of the evening train from Itanaca and she met him at the station with her car and drove him to her home.

When they were alone there, he related to her, "I had a long talk with mother, a few days ago, about what I ought to do. They used to think I ought to go into the ministry, you remember."

"Yes, I remember," said Alice.

"Father thinks so still. He's a literal person, but mother wasn't, so much. She was loyal to father, absolutely, but broader. She told me that years ago she'd given up the idea that I'd go into the ministry or missions or even that I ought to. She wanted me to know that, before she went; she wanted me to know that she trusted me to work out my own best usefulness for myself.

"That was a mighty big way of putting it up to me, wasn't it?"

He asked, "Do you remember that talk we had long ago, Alice—that talk which you said, at Rock Island, always marked the end of you and me? It was when I

said Eternity made me tired; and you said, I thought you'd do for me in place of Eternity and then you said, I thought you wouldn't but Fidelia would.

"You meant that I turned to you, when I was first trying to shake off father's ideas and when I'd got them shaken off, I turned to Fidelia.

"Well, a few of the ideas I shook off—or thought I'd shaken off—are in me again and I think they'll stay. I'll never go into the ministry but I've got to set myself to more than making money and spending it. It's right for me to make money, as I said that night in the snow; but also it's certainly not enough."

"What are you going to do differently?" Alice asked.

His need to do differently was met, temporarily at least, by his enrollment in the citizens' volunteer training camp which that summer was established at Fort Sheridan, in Illinois. It was the July when the British armies, seeking to relieve the frightful pressure of the German divisions before Verdun, were about the business of ceaseless slaughter in battle which soon earned the name of "the blood bath of the Somme."

The Russian front, too, was active and Italy was yet young in the war. The Serbians, swept from their native soil, were reforming in Macedonia, recruiting and making ready to turn. No one now talked confidently and carelessly, as had Vredick less than a year ago, about how the big bankers would soon call an end to war; most Americans were feeling themselves drawn closer and closer into it and Congress already had drafted the National Guard regiments into the regular army and offered to volunteers the chance for training which David accepted.

He enrolled against the vehemently spoken best judgment of Mr. Snelgrove.

“Do your duty, boy!” Irving urged. “Go to it; but don’t pick the exact time when Hamilton is slipping out the sweetest, snappiest, sellingest little summer tourings and all-weather sedans that this street ever seen. Here we wait for four long, lingering years—and I ain’t sayin’ they ain’t been lucrative in their way—yet they’re the waitin’ years lookin’ forward to luck like this model which all we need is you to sell it and set the street on its ear with rage and envy, and you pick this for the prize time to take a month off runnin’ at dummy sandbags and stickin’ em through with bayonets.”

David recognized that his month at the camp was to be costly to him in money but he wanted it to cost him. Besides being expensive for him, the experience returned him to strict discipline and hard, muscle-taxing labor.

It was much less lonely living in barracks than in a room in the city and he was busy nearly all his waking time and he was sure to be tired at night.

He never had let himself get really “soft” and he relearned the satisfaction of spending strength to exhaustion.

One day, when the Fort was open to the public, Alice drove through without intention of inquiring for David, but she was looking for his figure in every group of men she passed. She found him, at last, with a company “digging in” technically under fire. He was all at it, working rapidly, ceaselessly and with more vigor than any other man, but also with more

grace. His strong, well-built body was graceful even when laboring with a shovel; and Alice thought of a time in their freshman year, when he supported himself by labor, and she was going to college in a snow-storm and she had come upon him, in flannel shirt and with coat off, clearing a walk of the heavy snow with that same strong, vigorous, graceful swing of his body.

She watched him as long as she dared; then she drove off before he saw her.

At the end of the month, he returned to selling cars with so much energy that Snelgrove allowed that maybe the camp might help business after all. Irving thought that David's better physical condition accounted for his increased activity; but the actual impetus was his determination to pay off his debt at the earliest possible moment and make himself free.

He returned to his room in the city but he liked it even less than before.

“I mean to move,” he announced to Alice one Sunday afternoon in September when she and he were walking west from her home.

“Where to?” she asked. “Back to a hotel where you'll be more with people?”

“No; I'm through with hotels. I'm crazy, I suppose, but since I've been shoveling and working with my back again, I'd like to keep on doing that sort of work. And I certainly have a hankering for a house and to take care of things again. When I get into that room of mine and all I have to do, before I go to bed, is turn out the light, I feel I've forgotten half a dozen things.”

Alice thought, "He did that for three and a half years with Fidelia but he doesn't think of it now."

He went on. "I was brought up to take care of a house and to cut grass and shovel snow and tend a furnace; and I haven't looked in the face of a furnace, hot or cold, for years."

Alice made no comment, but when they came to the corner at which they always turned, in these days, to avoid the block in which was "their" flat, she said: "Shall we go on to-day?"

"Past the building, you mean?"

She nodded and he said, "I went by a couple of weeks ago."

She said: "I did once last spring." And they did not turn but this time went straight on and looked at the building and gazed at the windows on the second floor where was the apartment which was to have been theirs.

When they were by the building, Alice said, "I want to stop dodging other things, David."

He said, "I do."

"I'm thinking about Fidelia, you know as well as you knew I was thinking about—our flat."

"Of course I knew."

"Where is she now, David? Do you know?"

"I don't."

"Where do you think she is?"

"In London, I suppose; that's where she was going and Jessop said she got there."

"How do you think of her there?"

"With Bolton," he said shortly, "when I think of her definitely."

“Do you often think of her—definitely?”

“Not more than I can help.”

“Because you have to think of her with Bolton, when you do?”

“Yes.”

“I know,” said Alice, “how it was to have to think definitely of you at the hotel with her. I didn’t do it, more than I could help. But all through it I kept on loving you. Of course you know that, so it is useless not to say it. Do you keep on loving her, David?”

“I loved her and I was happy with her—very, very happy for a while,” he replied. “Now—she’s not my wife, Alice. She was his wife before she was mine; she’s his again. I forget her entirely a good deal of the time; then I think a lot about her, when she was my wife. I’d lie to you, if I denied that; I can’t help remembering lots of things. I don’t ever expect to forget them; I can’t honestly say I want to. But I don’t want her again; it’s over between us—her and me.”

“When was it over, David?”

He stopped walking and, when he did, she stopped and he stood looking down at her. They had passed from the squares which were built up with flats, they had passed a square of little houses and had come to some vacant lots fringed with brown, September trees. Few people had met them on the walk and no one at all was near, now.

He replied to her, after he had thought, “I don’t know. You see, what she told me about her husband came all on the night I got back from Itanaca just after I heard about mother. The next day she went

away, Fidelia did. So it was all mixed up in me with the trouble of mother's. Finding out about mother and about Bolton—that he'd had Fidelia and she wanted to go back to him—fixed it for me so I didn't feel much of anything for a while. What started me feeling again was the sight of you in the hotel. I wanted to go back to the time before I ever saw Fidelia. And there you were; and—here you are."

"But suppose her husband is killed! What'll happen then?"

"With her?"

"With you, David, and to me, if she comes back."

"I don't wonder you ask it," said David and ground his heel in the soil beside the walk. "My dear, my dear, I don't wonder you ask it; but, oh God, I don't see how I could ever hurt you again."

"You wouldn't mean to, I know," Alice said. "For you didn't."

She turned and started back toward her home and in a moment he followed.

CHAPTER XXXI

AN END TO PRIDE

WOULD she live always in fear of Fidelia's return? Might it be that Fidelia was now nearing the city, suddenly to appear as she had on that night at college? Or might it be that Fidelia was further away than England? Might it not be, indeed, that Fidelia could never return?

The long silence, without a word from her or of her, suggested this sometimes. It was a year since that day, following Myra's wedding, when Fidelia had left David. A line to Mr. Jessup could clear up the question at once; and often Alice spurred her courage to suggest to David to write to White Falls but always her courage failed. David was trying to forget Fidelia and suppose a letter to Mr. Jessop should bring back Fidelia! So Alice clung to the happiness she had.

She knew she could not keep it as it was, even if she would; soon David and she must have more—or nothing. He was working very hard to pay off another installment of his debt and he succeeded in doing this on January first in spite of the fact that business fell off markedly in the last quarter of the year.

The dullness was due to a general condition on the row which reflected the feeling of the months in which the President of the United States made his last peace appeal to the Powers and received the reply that the

Powers could not enter negotiations until they reached their Objectives.

"The agency is certainly not worth what it was," David said to Alice, when he reported to her that he had made his second payment to Mr. Fuller, "but I think I could get the last fifteen thousand I owe—or something close to it—if I sold out my interest."

"You mean you're thinking of selling out?" she asked.

"Shouldn't we?" he replied, speaking the "we" for her and him, which he had not said since they were in college. "This country's surely going into the war; and selling out is the only way for me to be ready."

"You ought to be ready," she said and her heart halted.

Barely a month after this day the President sent back Bernstorff to Berlin.

It was a Saturday, upon which this was announced, and David telephoned to Alice early in the afternoon and when he had told her the news, he said, "No one's going to buy a car to-day and I don't feel like selling, either. Do you mind if I come out early?"

Alice told him that she did not mind; and while she waited, she shut herself in her room with a letter from Myra, which had arrived a few days before. Myra was full of fear for Lan who was in Serbia and who had not been heard from in two months. Alice trembled as she held the letter and she declared to herself: "*He's* going away too; and it's your pride that's been keeping you from him. You're still hurt because he preferred *her* to you and you're afraid to have what

you can for fear *she'll* take him from you again."

Alice opened the letter and a snapshot of Myra's baby boy slipped out. Alice recovered it and quivered. "You'll take him to-day or never," she threatened herself.

David was reckoning, as he drove out from his office, the exceedingly unsatisfactory sum of his achievement which consisted in the sale, to more or less willing customers, of a few hundred motorcars and in the expenditure of most of his profits in temporarily agreeable living with Fidelia at a hotel.

Now she was gone and their friends, of his extravagant days, meant so little to him that he had not seen one of them in months. He felt he had accomplished nothing since he had left college; he felt how very different might have been this day for him if he had been true to Alice. How different might have been this day for her, if he had stayed true! He deserved the bitterness of this reckoning, but she did not. His thought swept back through their years in college together and to the day when, trembling and incredulous that she could care for him, he asked her clumsily for the right to be always her friend and she had cried and kissed him.

David drove very fast in his haste to her.

He found her at the door when he arrived and the manner of his coming, and of her waiting, was like long ago. He flung off his coat and followed her into their little room overlooking the lake.

"You're lovely," he said as they stood and gazed at each other. His word recalled words spoken to her

years before; he did not think at all of Fidelia. "You loyal, little Alice! What can I do to-day? Tell me what I can do?"

"Love me!"

"Love you! Oh, my God, I do!"

"Do you, David?"

"You mean—do I forget *her*? I don't! I told the truth that day. Often I think of her, when she was my wife. I suppose I always will. But I don't want her now; and that's as true as the other. Alice, I want you!"

"I want you, David!" She raised her hands against him when he moved; and he halted as she held him with her slender, gentle hands. "But I've always wanted you," she said.

"Yes," he replied and was silent.

"David, in my room, after you telephoned, I said that pride musn't make any difference to-day. You're going to war as Lan went. Nothing like pride should make any difference; but it does! David, you had me and you wanted her and you got her and kept her till she left you."

David said, "How can I deny that?"

"You can't but you can tell me another truth. Tell me, if it's the truth, David, but only if it's true! You went to her because there was lack in me; but you found lack in her, too, didn't you? Else, why did you telephone me that day your father bothered you? That day—that day, at least—she wasn't everything for you! You wanted me, though you had her; is that true?"

"Yes."

“Then say to me, though you had her you wanted me! It’s true!”

“Though I had her, I wanted you. Yes; that’s true.”

“I don’t ask you to say anything else. If there was one time you wanted me, though you had her, there must have been others; but I don’t ask you to say more of her. It’s enough, David; that silly pride of mine is down. It’s all right!”

“You mean I can—”

“Your arms, David . . . Davey, your lips. . . . Oh, again! . . .”

In the next room, upon the second day, they were married by his father before her family and Myra and Deborah and his brother Paul.

They chose for their wedding trip the mountains of North Carolina and the train on which they journeyed halted in Indianapolis on the night of the news of the British attack and capture of Grandcourt.

A window was raised in the compartment which Alice and David shared; and as she lay awake, she heard, outside the screen, voices of men who were passing beside the car. One said, “I bet the Canadians were in it. They’re always in an attack; they’re getting the casualties.”

For an instant, the words brought to Alice an image of Bolton killed and Fidelia returning.

Alice moved her hand in the dark and touched her husband.

CHAPTER XXXII

HAPPINESS—AND FEAR

ALICE was very happy. The days of their wedding journey became for her a period of almost unbelievable content. She had David and she was away with him where Fidelia had never been and could never come! And he was happy. He told her so and she knew it. He said to her, when they had only a room in a mountain hotel, "It's home to be with you. It's like having been away, Alice, and come home."

Not only were they happy of themselves but while they were in North Carolina, they received only good news. The crisis following the break in relations with Germany, seemed to be less tense; there appeared to be a chance for peace; and Alice had a letter from Myra which reported that Lan was safe. He had had typhus but was recuperating splendidly.

Alice longed to stay and to keep David in the security of the mountains but she would not alter his arrangement which required him to return to the office at the end of the week. So, after seven days, they again were in Chicago where Fidelia had been and where, at any moment, again she might be. They went for one night to the Sothrons'; upon the next day they found and immediately moved into a bungalow which was to rent, furnished. It had a wide, rough stone chimney, with a cozy hearth and stood in a little lot of its own, all of which delighted Alice.

“Happy now?” David asked her, when they were in and every one else was shut out.

“I never dreamed I could be so happy, David. Are you?”

He touched her cheek and then turned her face up to his. “I know what’s in your dear little head when you look at me like that, Alice: am I as happy as I was with Fidelia?”

“David, I don’t mean to ask it.”

“You can’t help it. And I can’t help it. Dear, this is very different; and this is better, sweet little heart. Now kiss me.”

She did and he said, “This feels like home, Alice; and I never had that feeling before. We’ll buy this house, as soon as we can, won’t we?”

“I’d love to. It’ll do us for years or at least until we have more than two children.”

“Yes,” he said and slipped his hand over hers as he realized that she was taking up her plan with him just where they had left it off five years ago.

It was indeed very different from being married to Fidelia; it was, indeed, very like having been away and having come home. And it was good but it was so different that a comparison was really impossible. So he could say “better” as honestly as he could say anything else.

To him it sometimes seemed that a different person—or at least a different part of him—had married and lived with Fidelia, had climbed with her upon the Throne of Saturn and played with her at being Titans on the far-away dawn of creation’s day. That part—that reckless, pagan impulse which had possessed him

—gave him no trouble now. Purposes possessed him and made him happy.

He continued at his business of selling cars with which he combined efforts to sell his partnership; but Snelgrove had no idea of buying him out and remaining in business by himself and many a partnership was for sale in these days.

“I’ll be lucky to get ten thousand for my interest now,” he reported to Alice, after he had been busy for several weeks and just after the President had called for April second the special congress which already was named the war congress. David added, “And I’ll get less later; so I’ll take what I can get to-morrow.”

“Yes,” said Alice. “I would.” She drew close to him and then, in order to discuss their future calmly, she drew away.

“When you go, I’ll move back to father’s, unless you’d rather I stayed here.”

“No; that wouldn’t be sensible at all,” he said.

“But I’ll keep the house ours. I just can’t give it up, David. It’s our place where I’ve been with you.”

“You’ll have from me,” said David, “probably the pay of an army lieutenant, at most. And we’ve only a lease till May.”

Then she told him, “The owners aren’t coming back, on account of the war. They want to sell or lease; so let’s lease even if I have to sublet to keep this house ours.”

David procured a bona fide offer of ten thousand dollars for his partnership, including stock and his in-

terest in orders and accounts collectable. He wrote to Mr. Fuller about it and received a reply advising him to accept, as the amount would exactly cancel the balance owing.

As the balance was fifteen thousand, this answer was puzzling, until David received, through Fuller's bank in Itanaca, one of his notes for five thousand dollars stamped "paid and cancelled."

Knowing Mr. Fuller, David had no illusion that the cancelling of this note was a bit of philanthropy and it was equally impossible that it was a mistake. At once David suspected the truth; Alice had paid the note. She had done as he had believed she would do when he had been thinking about her that night he sailed by her windows on the *I'll Show You!* she was sending him to war. And sending him, she would keep as long as she lived—if he did not return—the home where she had been with him.

He sold out his business and paid his debt to Mr. Fuller and, owing only to Alice, he went to Fort Sheridan when war was declared.

It was a stern and very serious course of training which he underwent for a brief, intensive period. The citizens' camp of the year before seemed almost like play in comparison; this, plainly was a prelude to war. It absorbed him, excited him, exhausted him for he went into it with all his energy. He could not go at anything half way and he liked to work not only with his muscles but with his mind, too.

He liked mathematics and the instructors were eager for men with strong bodies and clear, vigorous minds

capable of grappling with the intricacies of ballistics, trajectories and the rest of the problems of modern ordnance, after the other work was done.

It was something like being at school again; and to Alice he seemed to be at school; and though she could not come to class with him, yet she could visit the camp at prescribed hours of certain days; and even this prelude to war had its intermissions which permitted David to go to Chicago.

He telephoned to her, and she met him at the train and in the city they would have supper together before going to a theater or somewhere to dance. Then they went to the bungalow; for Alice was staying there while he was at the Fort.

They were under the constant excitement of war; and they were sure that he would be sent overseas, as soon as he was commissioned; but when he was made first lieutenant, he was moved, not to France, but to Camp Grant, near Rockford, in Illinois, where the drafted men were coming to be trained. So Alice sublet the bungalow and followed to Rockford where she took a furnished room in a boarding-house with other officers' wives.

She was happy and impatient for a child. Wives of her own age and with children lived in the house with her; other wives who arrived as brides had secrets to whisper as the summer wore on; they appeared with nainsooks and soft, fine flannels in work-baskets which had been filled with wool yarn for soldiers' socks; and they boasted, proudly, of morning indispositions. But Alice remained as usual.

It bewildered her because of her previous confidence

that she was certain to bear. Of course, she realized that the first half year was no test yet it might be all of her time; at any moment the order might be given for the division, to which David was attached, to entrain for a port. Indeed, repeatedly rumor ran in Rockford that the division was immediately to go overseas to complete its instruction in France or England.

There Fidelia was; and amid Alice's fears of the war, grew again fear of Fidelia, which for a time had abated. She imagined, not Fidelia's return, but David's meeting her on a London street. "What then?" Alice challenged herself. "Nothing," herself replied. No act, surely, and no word disloyal to her; for acts and words would be within his control. But feeling would not be!

She put down such thoughts. David showed nothing but love for her, even when he was caught off guard.

She was standing with David and a few other girls and men on a Rockford street when a man came up and hailed, "Hello, Herrick! How's that wonderful wife of yours?"

"Hello," David replied and he caught Alice's arm with a firmness of pressure which she did not understand until she met the stranger's stare after David said, "This is my wife."

"Oh!" said the fellow. "Oh! Glad to meet you," he muttered and turned away without interest.

David led her away from the others and she looked up at him and asked, "He knew you and Fidelia?"

"The idiot!" David said and swore at the fellow and clung to her and made her happy.

No; she had no right to fear Fidelia in England.

As it proved, David never went across. He was very well liked and he worked hard and gained a recommendation which won him a captaincy and assignment, with other officers of unusual energy and ability, to take special instruction at the School of Fire, at Fort Sill, which was in the southwestern part of Oklahoma.

This fort was near the town of Lawton; so Alice went there and found furnished quarters in an Oklahoma boarding-house where, through winter rain and summer drought and dust and heat, while David drilled for the great artillery attack which was to be made in the spring of 1919, Alice watched the war out.

Other wives at the boarding-house went home, at their appointed times in that year, and telegrams arrived telling of the birth of a boy or a girl; some of the mothers returned with their babies; and a few had their babies born at Lawton; but Alice was without child and she returned alone with David to the bungalow with the wide, rough stone chimney and the room, beside their own bedroom, which she had said would be their baby's.

She cried by herself in the little house; she cried not solely from her disappointment. With the war over, with its duties for her and its excitements ended, and she without a child, what was she to do?

She felt that David and she were approaching the condition which surprised them at the end of their term in college. Again he had been doing double work at school and had given to his hard task his entire in-

terest and energy; he had finished the long grind of duty and he required contrast to it; he wanted to play. And Alice thought of Fidelia and she tried to be "light."

She went to the theater with him and got up supper parties. She had him take her out to dine and dance. She tried to be very gay but it felt false to herself. She did not really want to be light with him; she preferred being serious and discussing and forming plans and talking over his work with him.

"And he doesn't need that now. He does it only to please me," she realized. "But it would be all right, if I had a baby."

There was no baby; there were only he and she and they were very much as they had been when Fidelia had come.

David did not need serious discussions; he wanted play; but he blamed himself, not Alice, for the dissatisfaction he felt. He wanted a child and he held himself guilty for his childlessness.

He recognized that there was no rational basis for blaming himself; but his father accused him. His father pronounced that God very likely was punishing him for his manner of life with Fidelia; since Fidelia and he had forbidden the children which God would have given, God was denying the child which David desired now.

The idea angered David for its outrageous injustice to Alice; yet he could not help wondering if it might be so. It made him even more gentle when Alice cried.

"You're so good to me, David," she whispered.

"I'm not good to you. You're the good one. You stuck to me throughout all that deadly training and never a complaint from you for boarding-school food or heat or the dust or the dullness of it all. A smile for me every time and such dearness, Alice!"

Alice and he went to her father's home for dinner on a Sunday. It was February and the lake was frozen as it had been seven years before; and up and down the shore rose white hummocks and hillocks of ice making miniature mountains and valleys like those which Fidelia had visited on the morning she rose to see the sunrise and he had followed her and they had become Titans together on the brink of Creation and they had played in the caves of the coast of Iceland fifty thousand years ago.

Beyond lay the floe and it drifted slowly as it had on that night when Fidelia and he left the world together, through the Seventh Gate, and on the Throne of Saturn sate.

He saw the hotel and he thought of the gay suite where breakfast was brought to Fidelia and him and she sat in the sun with her hair over her shoulders.

When they arrived at the house, they went up to her old room. In the next room, which now was called his, he found a letter which had been forwarded from the hotel where Fidelia and he had lived and at which he had registered Mr. Sothron's address for mail which might arrive when he was in service.

The postmark was White Falls, Iowa, and on the flap was engraved *The Drovers' Bank*. He tore it open and read:

MY DEAR MR. HERRICK:

A communication from Mrs. Fidelia Bolton, to-day received from England, bears information which may be of concern to you. Samuel Bolton, her husband, was wounded in an action near the Dendre in October and since has died in a hospital in London.

Very truly yours,
EDWARD JESSOP.

Looking up, David saw that Alice was in her own room, and he moved from sight of her.

So Bolton was dead; that tall, vaunting man who had first been Fidelia's husband and then, five years later, had drawn her to him again, was dead; he who had cooked that first camp supper with her, the best ever though it was burnt black, he was dead; he who boasted exultantly of his tremendous eleven days with her which "were days," he was dead; and it was impossible for David Herrick to slow his pulse of triumph over that. If he had won no more than mere survival itself, yet he was alive, Bolton was dead.

But Fidelia—Fidelia Bolton, Mrs. Fidelia Bolton? "A communication . . . which may be of concern to you." What did Edward Jessop mean by that; what had Fidelia written? "Of concern to you . . . Samuel Bolton, her husband . . . has died."

"No concern of mine," David whispered to himself. "No concern of mine. She went to him; she wanted to go."

Alice was moving about in her room and he heard her; he saw her slight figure pass the doorway and he thrust his hand with the letter into his pocket. "It's

going to bother her," he thought. "It's going to play the devil with her. She can't help it."

Through several moments, he considered whether he could hide it from her altogether; but the letter had come to her home with the White Falls postmark; there might easily be mention of it; besides he knew he should tell her.

He took his hand from his pocket and entered her room.

"Fidelias husband is dead," he said. "He was wounded near the Dendre and died in a hospital in London. Fidelias seems to have written Jessop, who used to be her guardian; he wrote me. Heres the letter, Alice."

She took it, staring at him, and with it she sat down. "Fidelias free, you mean. I knew all along it must be. She wants to come back to you."

CHAPTER XXXIII

HER CHILD

THE answer which David sent to White Falls stated that in case Mrs. Fidelia Bolton was without funds or otherwise needed assistance, he would be glad to communicate further with Mr. Jessop. In reply to this, Jessop wrote that Mrs. Bolton's principal in care of the Drovers' Bank was intact and she regularly received income which undoubtedly was ample for her requirements whether or not she later shared in her husband's estate.

This ended the correspondence. When it stopped, Fidelia apparently was still in England; but where was she the next week? And the week after that? And on the following days? The doubt hung over Alice, however David tried to drive it away.

He succeeded best by plunging into business with great energy and real interest. He went to work in a shippers' organization which handled the sales of many manufactured products by a method which considerably lowered costs to every one and consequently performed a valuable and satisfying service.

His work required not only selling ability but the exercise of judgment and the use of a sound knowledge of economics. Since he got into the work through a friend at Fort Sill, many of his companions in the office were from the School of Fire. He often brought a couple of them home for dinner and they all talked out their problems with Alice.

After she went with David to dine at the home of the president of the company, her husband told her: "The president says he ought to have you on salary. He says now he knows why I'm doing well."

Alice quivered with joy; but she was not undeceived to believe that business, however she shared it with him, was enough to make him happy.

What he wanted, she had never known; and it was not describable. It was, indeed, an unreality which he might never have learned, if Fidelity had not come.

It was no mere lightness or gayness or joyfulness; it was nothing less than escape from realities to the remotenesses and fastness of the crystal valley of the Titans, to the Throne of Saturn, through the Seventh Gate, and to the brink of Creation on the dawn of Day.

David said to himself, "There's a lot of pagan in me. Mother knew it when she came to see I should never have gone into the ministry. I want to get away from the world but not in father's way; he wants to lament and pray. I want to play."

The year had turned to February again, the month of opposite anniversaries; the month when Fidelity had appeared at college and when Alice had married David and when the news of Bolton's death had come. David, thinking of this and recollecting Fidelity's superstitions, held it in his mind as a month when something was likely to happen; and it was upon a morning in the second week of February that a boy brought to his desk the card of Edward Jessop.

David knew at once that he brought word of

Fidelia; and the word was that Fidelia lived no more. Her end had come in England and after a manner like her; she had searched for hours on the Devon moor, in a winter rain, for a child who was lost. When she found the child, she had carried her two miles and when she reached shelter exhausted, Fidelia had neglected to change her own wet clothes quickly and had died of influenza on the second day.

Mr. Jessop related this to David in his office where they were shut in alone. "Her child," Mr. Jessop seemed to say, although David did not hear it clearly. He asked,

"Whose child, did you say?"

Now Mr. Jessop said distinctly, "Her child."

Hers and Bolton's, that must mean! So she had borne a child to Bolton! But Mr. Jessop said, "Her child and yours, Herrick. The little girl was born in England on the twenty-ninth of May in the spring after she left you. There is no doubt whatever that she is your child for Fidelia never went back to Bolton. Her mother named her Sarah, after your mother, she says."

David could not follow the words. He had a child; there was a little girl, who was Fidelia's and his, who was born on May 29th. His mind reckoned for him, without his controlling it, "Yes; it was September that time we were still at the hotel and she'd written to Flora Bolton and got no answer so she thought it would be all right to have a child. Yes, that's what she told me that night before she left."

His child! He asked, "Did the child live?"

"Yes."

“Fidelia—her mother,” David repeated Jessop’s words and how strange it was to say, “named her Sarah after my mother, she says. That’s what you said, ‘She says.’ What did you mean by that ‘she says,’ if she is dead?”

“She said it in her diary. It appears that she kept since she was a child a most remarkably detailed diary. . . .”

The volumes of it were among the effects given to Jessop upon his arrival, after he had been sent for; he had read portions of it.

Fidelia not only had not gone back to Bolton but she had lost almost all impulse to return to him before she landed in England. “Except for a time when she must have been in tremendous upheaval on account of criticisms from your father and your family’s refusal to take money from you while she was your wife,” Jessop said, “and because of other agitations over ‘Alice’ and you, she undoubtedly remained in love with you. No one, reading her diary, could possibly doubt it.”

She had finally decided not to return to Bolton even before she discovered, as she did soon after reaching England, that she was to have a child. She did not know then what to do.

“It is evident,” said Jessop, “that she drifted, waiting for events; that was the sort of thing she always did.”

Jessop related, “When the child was born she was ecstatic. She thought it gave her right to go back to you . . . then she was afraid to.”

“Afraid?” said David.

"Her marriage to you was annulled; she was Bolton's wife; she had your child. . . . I knew nothing of this myself. I merely had attended to the annulment proceedings and since had been forwarding her income, addressing Mrs. Fidelia Bolton through a London bank. I supposed she was living with him when he was in England, though I might have suspected differently from the fact that often she acknowledged my letters from Devon. The baby was born at Torquay. . . . Fidelia was delighted with her; she seemed to have hoped for a boy but she was delighted with the little girl."

"What is she like?" asked David. "Where is she?"

"At my hotel with Mrs. Jessop."

"Here?" cried David. "Here?"

Alice heard from David that he was coming home at noon. Mr. Jessop was here with news that Fidelia had died in England, David had said and had added he had much more to tell her. Fidelia was dead. It was a statement which bore to Alice no reality. It was wholly different from the news which had come that Bolton was dead. Never had he been more than a name and a statement of fact when he lived; it required nothing more than another statement of fact to let you know that he was dead. But Fidelia bore the flower of life itself; to think of Fidelia was to think of color, warmth and stir; no one could think of Fidelia, dead.

There was a mistake, Alice was sure. There had been a mistake years ago about Bolton, who had had no such life as Fidelia, yet who was alive when people

said he was dead. There was a mistake; and when David drove to the door and came up from the car with a child of four years in his arms, Alice knew the mistake for what it was. Fidelia lived but she was a child again.

She had clear, white skin and dark, red hair and large brown eyes and red lips and a lovely, provoking nose like Fidelia's; and, her arm about David's neck, she clung as only a child of Fidelia's could. She was vivid and warm and she loved life.

He carried her into the house, and with her in his arms he turned to his wife. 'She's my child, Alice,' he said. 'I'm her father.'

'Of course, you're her father,' Alice said. 'Fidelia, she bore your child, too.'

Rays of the rising sun shone into the bedroom window and although Alice had lain awake nearly all the night, the light at once aroused her. Sunrise in winter; and as she lay, facing it, she remembered the winter sunrise when she lay in bed while Fidelia and David were on the shore alone. But now he was beside her; he was her husband.

She turned; he was not beside her; and at once she knew where he would be and she remembered what that was which weighted her heart. Fidelia's child and his was asleep in the next room where the first of her children, and his, was to sleep. He had gone there.

Alice rose and crossed to the door.

He was standing within the baby's room and near her bed; he did not hear his wife, as he gazed at his

baby, asleep. The little girl slept deeply with her hair tousled and her long lashes in dark, orderly line upon the clear, living pink of her cheek. One forearm was uncovered, a lovely, round perfect little arm and hand.

The sun stole into the room and now cast a bold shaft across the baby's bed and the child seemed to feel it, though it did not touch her till she turned her head so that the sun glowed bronze and gold red upon her hair, as upon that morning in class, it had made glorious the hair of her mother.

Alice caught her breath and David heard her. He stepped back to her and clasped her hand. "Did you see?" he whispered.

"Yes. She goes to sunshine like her mother."

"She loved the sun," David said. "Just sun and water and things like that made her happy. Sarah," he said, "she'll be the same."

"Sarah!" Alice repeated. "She's no Sarah, David. She's Fidelia, Fidelia! Every time you look at her, every time you hear her voice, you'll think it, and so will I. She's Fidelia! We'll say it, and call her Fidelia from now on."

"Alice, can you bear to?"

"Bear it, my boy!—Fidelia, the only Fidelia who ever could take you away from me, is gone, David; and Fidelia who will hold us together is come."

He closed his wife in his arms.

"No wife in the world could love her as you, Alice."

He released her and stepped to the bed again. "You pretty little pagan," he said within himself. "You and I, we'll play!"

He went with Alice to their room where was left a

trunk of Fidelia's clothes and the many volumes of her diary.

"We'll burn these to-day," David decided about the books. "She never wanted any one to read them."

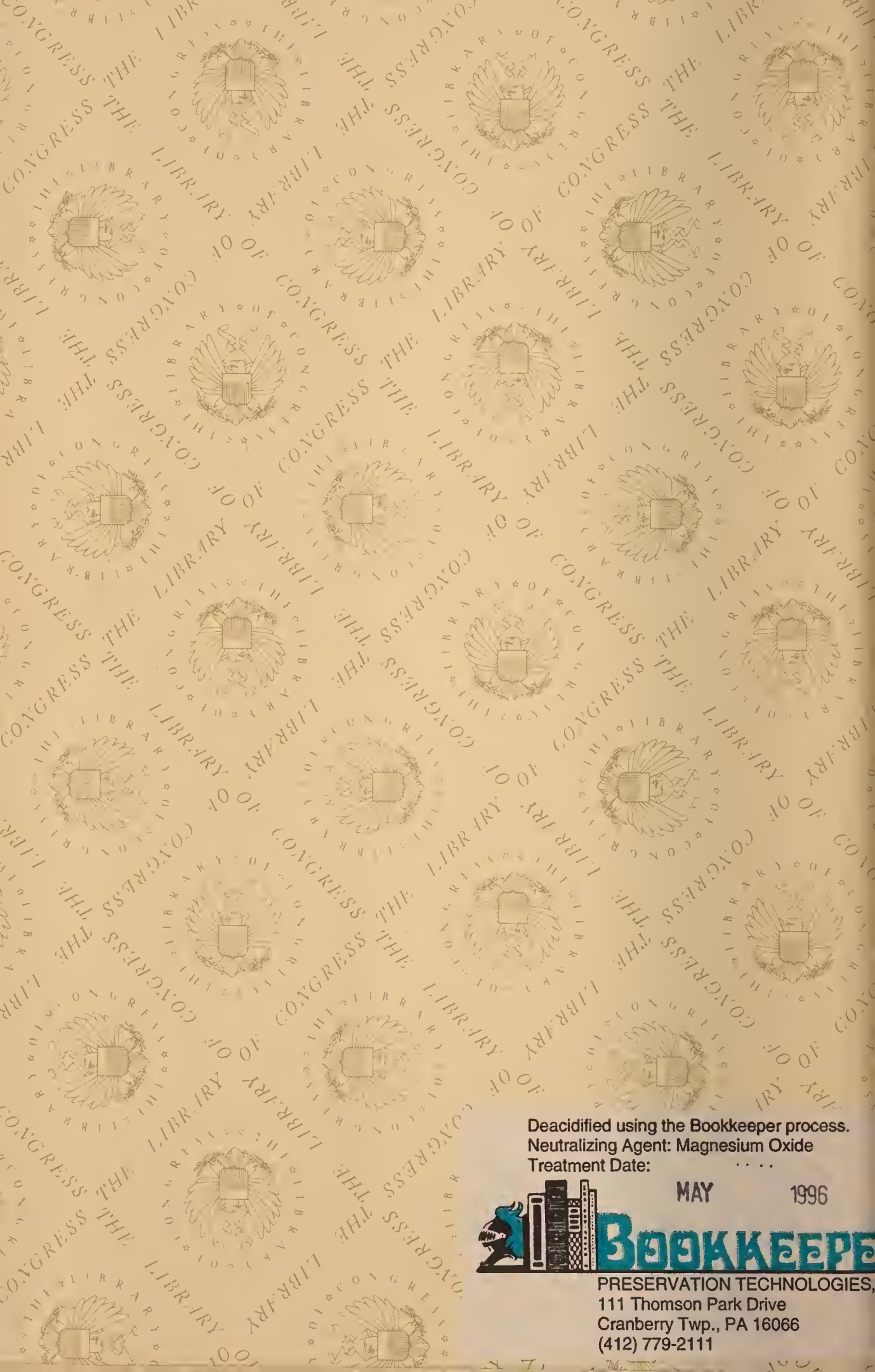
He had in his hand the first book which Fidelia had started, when she was ten, for the confiding of her thoughts.

"I'm glad I've seen them though," Alice said. "In a way, you see, she had to make them do for a mother. But *she'll* not have to, David!"

THE END

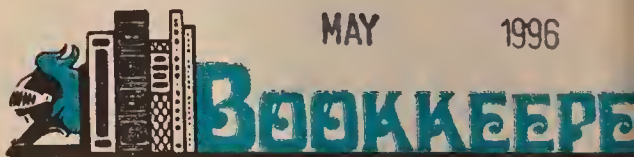
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