

"Would I like her?"

"I—it might be; she is your mother and that might make a difference."

Stella questioned again relentlessly:

"Do you want me to go?"

Her father did not answer quickly. When he did speak his voice was perfectly steady.

"That need not make any difference. She says you can have anything you want. She married again, and she is rich. Why, Stella," he tried to put a flimsy enthusiasm into his tone, "don't you see that you can go to school. And music! Stella, your voice!"

Stella kept herself stubbornly to her questioning.

"Why does she want me, did she say why?"

He answered evasively.

"No—that is she is your mother and Lee is dead."

Stella's face softened.

"How did he die?" she asked gently.

"He had pneumonia," he would have stopped, but he could not lie to the eyes so near his own, "he died before they had a doctor. They did not think he was so sick."

He felt Stella shiver on his knee and he watched her with vague apprehension, as she rose and put the cat gently down on the steps outside the screen door. But she came back to him directly and bent down to kiss him full on the lips.

"You must go to bed now," she said with authority. "I will think and we can decide together."

He watched her go and stifled a sense of disappointment in her and himself. He could not expect her to feel as he did. And he was selfish enough to wish that she had not waited to decide.

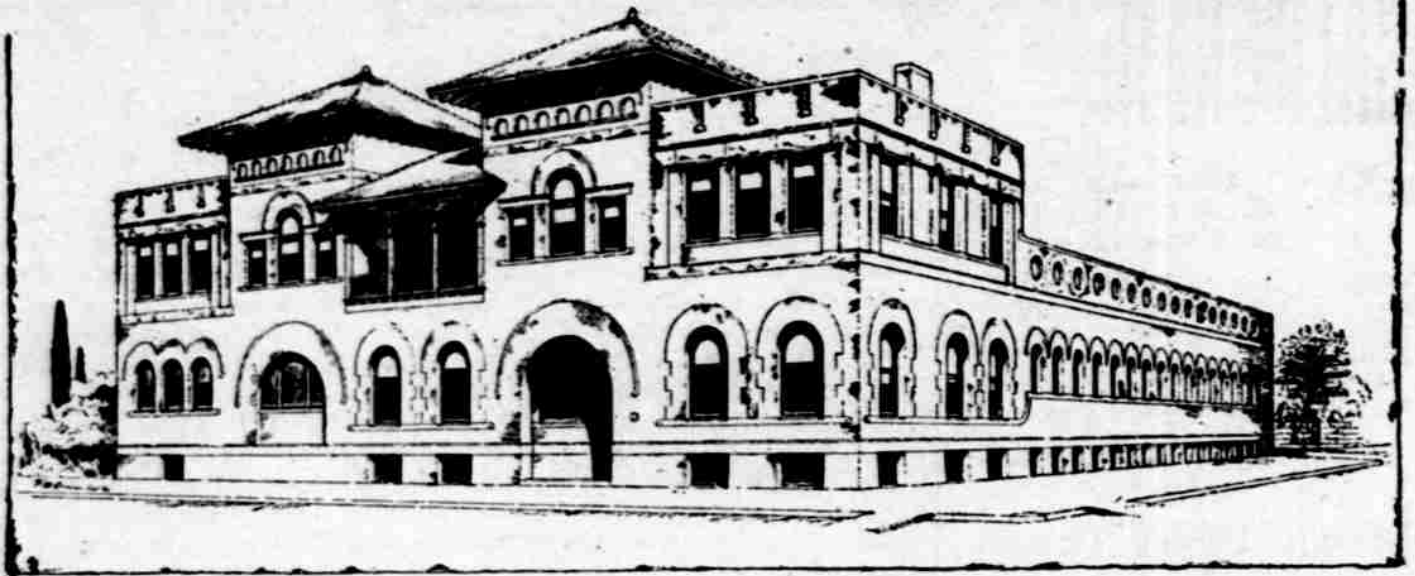
In the morning when he made the fire in the kitchen stove, he took the letter from his pocket and watched it burn.

"If she read it she would not go. She must decide for herself."

When Stella came out they both blushed a little. The clear dawn, the wide, open prairie, the cool air in the dim kitchen, the smell of fresh, ground coffee, seemed to put things on such a practical basis that they both felt awkward. Then Stella sang a little and her father tipped over his coffee at the breakfast table and she burned her fingers trying to wipe it up. They laughed and afterwards both felt as if there had been a tacit agreement to overlook any slight descent from the practical that may have happened under cover of the darkness.

After breakfast Stella went about her work without answering the wistful impatience in her father's eyes. He got his pony and drove the sheep slowly out of the corral. He felt irritated with them. He was nervous when his dinner bucket rasped against the saddle. He felt inclined to go back and make Stella tell him whether she was going to go or stay. It needn't take her a week to make up her mind even if she was a girl. He hadn't raised her that way. There wasn't a keener head in the country than here. Then all of a sudden he felt afraid of her very keenness. She would be sure to see that there would be advantages in going. She wouldn't stay with him for any sentimental reasons, and he needn't think it. It would be better for her to go. She had had a dull life, and she would not need to work any more. She would step into Lee's place and use his books and wear pretty things; he would see her sometimes anyway; he ought not to care. He would live on here.

He felt hopelessly miserable at the thought of the little house with all of Stella's belongings taken out. He saw himself moving around in it year in and year out, getting his own meals, washing the dishes that Stella had been so proud of when they were new, wearing out these things that she had handled and replacing them with others. And all



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the time Stella would be growing away from him and taking on the ways of her mother. He wouldn't let her. They had as good as killed Lee with their ways and they should not spoil Stella, too.

He struck the pony mercilessly with his rawhide and then jerked at the bit.

"There, there," he said aloud, "Stella's not a girl to be spoiled I guess. Perhaps she will come back. It's natural for her to go. She's her mother."

All day he argued back and forth with himself and came home at night hollow-eyed and gray-cheeked. Stella was bright-eyed and cheerful.

After supper she brought him pen and ink and a letter sealed and stamped ready for the address.

"I wrote it to her—all by myself," she answered playfully.

He took the pen and wrote the address. How could Stella be so—so heartless. She stood behind his chair and watched him write. Then she put her palms along his cheeks and turned his head back until she could see his eyes.

"Don't you want to know what's in it?" she asked tantalizingly.

She caught her breath when she saw a quick spasm pass over her father's face.

"Don't look like that," she said with quick remorse. "It's all right. I won't go. I can't. I told her that sometime I would, but not now, because of you."

Perhaps she cried a little after that. At least they kissed each other again although the lamp was burning on the table before them, and they had tacitly agreed to forget sentimentality.

ANNIE PREY.

AMEN.

He stays upon the threshold—there must dwell,

Who, in his thought, the Eternal reign divides,

Allowing that the ill for aye abides,
Or that God's rule is lost in lowest hell.

Prince of the-powers-of-air who now bestrides

Our world of fear and passion, all is well!
Thou hast some freedom, but Who grants it guides,

And service to salvation doth compel.
Thus is it graven on each stone of life;

Albeit present pain begetteth doubt,
Albeit nerveless arms drop in the strife,

Though faith be chill'd, and weak become the stout:

Why hast thou me forsaken?—from his cross

Sobbed forth the dying Christ, count men that death as loss?

—IDYLA.

Dick—I see that another large party of Greek patriots are off.

Harry—Yes, 'way off.

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- 1—BRUSH has about two hundred inhabitants.
- 2—A splendid, commodious school building, with all "high school" facilities.
- 3—Located in the Platte and Beaver valley, eighty miles east of Denver, in the midst of a large area of fine, arable land, covered by irrigation ditches, and only waiting judicious farming to develop wealth.
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- 5—Excellent water can be had at depth varying from 30 to 60 feet, the lower strata furnishing the purest mountain water attainable.
- 6—Fine building stone adjacent to the town, can be had at from \$3.75 to \$4.00 per cord, thus making it cheaper to build of stone than lumber.
- 7—Three crops of alfalfa are grown in the season, yielding as a rule six tons per acre as the product, while wild hay on the higher land grows well and always brings a big price. The rich yield of hay makes it pre-eminently a country in which to raise cattle and hogs to the feeding stage when it is easy to drive them to the cheap corn of Nebraska.
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- 9—Steam threshers in work of 1896 show average of wheat in this vicinity to be forty bushels per acre, oats fifty bushels.
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