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CHAPTER II.

The other woman seemed not to have heard her. Her dark eyes were looking wistfully through the window towards the barn. "Richard favors father some, I think," she said, as if following out her own thought, "and lately, it seems to me, he's grown more like him than ever. I don't seem to understand him."

Aunt Jerusha nodded sagaciously. "Richard 'ud do well enough if he'd give up writing poetry and get married and settle down. He needs a woman to look after him."

Mrs. Derring's thin face flushed. This time it was not the heat of the fire. "I guess, Jerusha—"

The door of the kitchen was flung wide. The young man appeared, a pall in each hand. "Well, well, Aunt Jerusha, aren't you thawed out yet?" He crossed the room with the brimming pails and deposited them on the pantry floor.

There was little of the heart-broken lover about him as he turned to the wide wooden sink and, dipping water into the big tin basin, began to wash his face and hands. He performed his public toilet with the unconscious ease of habit, dashing the water over his brown face and neck and running his fingers far back into the thick hair. He emerged from the folds of the heavy crash towel, his face glowing and his eyes shining.

His presence lighted the dim room. Mrs. Derring's face lost its tired look; Uncle Eben limped cheerfully back from the sitting room; and as they seated themselves at the supper table the boy's exuberant vitality gave a touch of unity that had been lacking before. Aunt Jerusha softened a little towards Uncle Eben, merely keeping a watchful eye on him, as one might on an irresponsible child.

"You needn't pass him the sweet pickles," she said.

But it was too late. The dish was already in Uncle Eben's trembling fingers, and a brown drop had fallen on the spotless cloth.

"I knew he'd spill it." She spoke in an impersonal, detached tone.

Uncle Eben hastily adjusted a glass to cover the spot.

Richard watched the by-play with dancing eyes. Uncle Eben and Aunt



"If Only He'd Give Up Writing Poetry and Get Married."

Jerusha were always irresistible. But to-night, as he watched them, the smile faded. A thought had flashed across it. Would he and Emily—in 30 years—? Impossible. Emily's dimples deepened to heavy lines—her laughing eyes behind spectacles. Absurd! Yet Aunt Jerusha's manner to Uncle Eben was grotesquely like. It all passed in an undercurrent of thought, scarcely recognized as he laughed and talked and played the part of host.

Not until the good-bys had been said and the clumsy wagon had rattled down the road did he bring the thought to the light and face it. He was alone in his room, a small, bare room—like his life. No carpet on the floor, no curtain at the window, but spotlessly clean, from the blue and white homespun spread on the bed to the square stand beside it. He sat on the edge of the bed, one hand shading his eyes from the light of the small lamp, the other holding a picture on which his eyes rested eagerly. It was a small type—the face of a young girl—the eyes large, dark, and bright, the hair soft and curling, the forehead high, and the lips firmly closed.

It was like, yet curiously unlike, the face that was looking down at it with eager inquiry. These eyes, too, were large and dark, but they were dreamy instead of bright; the lips were full and flexible instead of thin and closely set; and the broad forehead, even when the shading hand pushed back

the hair impatiently, could not be called high. In both dark faces was a certain sturdiness of character. But the girl's face bore the stamp of fully developed powers, and the other that of powers yet unformed.

Something was struggling in it. The youth was striving blindly to hold to a belief in his love for the face before him. That she was lost to him he had accepted without struggle. But that his love for her should go, too, that he should not love her always—his poet nature shrank from the thought. It was sacrilege. She had been so long enthroned in his heart—she belonged there. She might become the wife of another man, let Edwards win her, she was still his. His ideal of her should not be torn from him. He could not bear it. It should not be.

And over his idealism, and around and under it, ran a conviction, a strange certainty, that love was already dead.

CHAPTER III.

Richard was deep in the heart of the woods. The sound of his ax rang sharp in the silence. Now and then a blue-jay, startled by a heavier blow or a falling limb, flew with a harsh cry to a more distant tree. Richard marked the blue and white flash, standing for a moment with ax suspended, then the blow fell again, always to the same bitter accompaniment. The sight of the bird only roused a new phase of the old thought. "Last year I shot a blue-jay and gave the wings to her. Edwards can give her store things prettier than that." The blows fell again, faster and stronger.

Presently he dropped his ax. Walking to a little distance, he knelt down and began brushing the snow lightly aside. Underneath the dark vines of partridge-berry—the bright berries shining red among the green lines. Swiftly he passed his hands across them. The finger-tips seemed alive. They raised a slender vine and held it a moment, as if to pick it; they laid it reluctantly again in its place. "No"—he was brushing back the snow with quick fingers—"I can't carry them to her, and mother wouldn't want them."

He stood looking up through the network of branches into the clear sky of the winter's day. His eyes dropped; they noted the straight, dark trunks, the straggling underbrush, through which the sun fell softly, the whiteness of the snow, broken only by shadows. Long he looked, as if he were bidding it all good-by; then he turned away and, shouldering his ax, walked swiftly down the snowy wood-road.

For a month past the neighbors had been discussing the engagement of Emily and Edwards. They were to be married in the spring. Every one said it was a good match for Emily. They felt sorry for Richard. He was a fine fellow—but too dreamy and fanciful. It was a good thing that Emily was off with him. He had queer notions. That poetry he wrote for the Lyceum meeting—about "the red fingers of the woodbine at the throat of the dying year"—it sounded pretty, but it was queer—too much like his Grandfather Crane. No, he would never get on.

He followed the wood-road for about half a mile. Then he left even this slight trail and struck into the unbroken wood, making his way through the underbrush and light snow with free, swinging step.

He had evidently a goal in view, and he emerged at last into a small clearing. A small, time-worn house stood a few rods away. Beyond the house a long, sloping hill rose to the horizon, and half-way up the hill an isolated pine lifted its branches against the sky. A barn stood a short distance from the house, a path connecting the two. If there was any way of approach except that by which Richard had come, it did not appear.

He struck across the open space, smiling as he looked up to the line of smoke rising from the chimney. "He's home, fast enough," he said to himself. He scarcely waited to hear the response to his knock before he lifted the latch and stood in the low doorway.

An old man was sitting by the stove. He had paused in the act of putting a stick of wood in the fire, and stood, with stove-lifter suspended, looking expectantly towards the door. "Hallo, Dick," he said, nodding as he saw his visitor. Turning once more to the stove, he rapped vigorously on the stick until it fell into place.

Richard seemed to expect no other welcome. He crossed the room and seated himself on a rough, home-made bench near the fire.

The old man looked at him keenly from under shaggy gray brows as he brushed the chips and dust from his hands. "Pretty cold," he said at last.

Richard nodded. He knew from experience that the less he said himself



Seth Shook His Head as He Watched the Listless Figure.

the more Seth Kinney would say. He picked up a pine splinter from the floor and began whittling it as if unconscious of the shrewd look bent upon him from the other side of the stove.

The figure that stood there was a curious one. A rough gray beard and a shock of gray hair above the blue smock that reached to the tops of heavy cowhide boots. Short, square, solid, his feet well apart, he formed a striking contrast to the younger man, who sat leaning heavily forward, one elbow resting negligently on his knee, whittling the soft pine splinter.

Seth shook his head as he watched the listless figure. He seated himself by the western window and took up a book that was lying, face down, on the broad sill. "How are you feeling, Dick?" he asked abruptly.

"All right," was the answer. Silence fell on the room. The old man ran his eye rapidly down the page, found the place where he had left off, settled himself comfortably in his chair, and was lost in the book. The fire blazed and crackled and shone through the chinks of the warped stove.

Richard watched the blaze and waited. The silence was broken by an inarticulate sound from the window. It might be assent or it might be the end of a train of thought.

"What is it?" asked Richard.

The old man looked up absently. "Oh—still there, Dick? Just listen to this." He began to read from the brown book in his hand.

"Oh, bother!" said Richard impatiently. "Translate it, won't you, Seth? What is it, anyway? I can't understand Greek."

The old man waited a moment as if searching for fit words, and then read in a clear, full voice that contrasted oddly with his uncouth appearance: "If thou art pained by any external thing, it is not this thing that disturbs thee, but thy own judgment about it; and it is in thy power to wipe out this judgment now. But if anything in thy own disposition gives thee pain, who hinders thee from correcting thy opinion? And even if thou art pained because thou art not doing some particular thing which seems to thee to be right, why dost thou not rather act than complain? But some insuperable obstacle is in the way? Do not be grieved then, for the cause of it not being done depends not on thee. Therefore the mind which is free from passions is a citadel, for man has nothing more secure to which he can fly for refuge, and for the future inexpugnable. He then who has not seen this is an ignorant man; but he who has seen it and does not fly to this refuge is unhappy."

"That's all bosh!" said Richard irritably. "The fellow that wrote it never had anything worse to bear than the toothache."

He stopped a minute and then began again abruptly, the words tumbling out. "What can I do?—I can't stand it—I thought I'd stay home and fight it out. But I can't. It's killing me—but I don't want to go away," he added.

He had sunk again into the listless attitude. "It isn't worth while—nothing is worth while."

His companion said nothing. He was watching the listless figure keenly, as a physician might watch a restless patient. "Have you thought of killing yourself?" he said at last.

The young man started and flushed. "Yes"—under his breath and half-shamed—"but somehow I don't dare. But I can't bear to live either," he went on. "Perhaps if I could get away from folks the way you have, I could stand it."

The other looked up quickly. He waited a minute. Then he spoke with slow emphasis. "You're not going to spoil your life. I've spoiled mine. That's enough."

"It isn't spoiled. You are contented. You believe all that stuff about philosophy and your mind being an impregnable citadel. Perhaps I should, too, after awhile."

"Resignation isn't living," said the old man bitterly. "I had power, I tell you." He was sitting erect and his eyes flashed. "I had a mind, and because a woman jilted me I threw it away. I buried myself. Don't do it, Dick," his voice had dropped, "no woman is worth it. Be a man. Show that you are made of better stuff."

Again his voice rang out as if he were addressing a jury. He was transfigured.

Richard, watching, understood for the first time what his grandfather, Geoffrey Crane, had meant when he used to speak of Seth Kinney's power and of his spoiled life.

In a flash the young man, looking into the future, saw himself in the older man's place. His figure straightened and his hand clenched. The teeth behind the square jaw came together with even firmness.

"What shall I do?"

The older man paused a moment

"You'd better go to college," he said at last. "You have Latin enough. I'll teach you Greek and you can work up the mathematics by yourself. Go to work. Work hard. Don't give yourself time to think. That's the way out."

The young man rose, shutting his knife with a snap. "All right, Seth."

"Wait a minute." The old man mounted a chair and searched among the worn volumes on a high shelf. He selected one and, slapping the covers together, handed it to Dick. "Learn the first 20 pages," he commanded. "When you are ready, come and recite."

When Richard was outside the door he looked at the title-page in the fading light. It was "The Elements of Greek Grammar—Taken Chiefly from the Grammar of Casper F. Sderick Haschenberg, 1820."

CHAPTER IV.

"You must get a man to work the farm on shares. He will make it pay you better than I have. I am no farmer." The tone had no note of discouragement; it had rather the ring of success.

Mrs. Derring looked up from her sewing. Richard had never said "must" to her before.

"What is the matter, Richard?" She looked at him searchingly.

"I want to go to college. I shall never do anything at farming, but I might at something else if I had the chance." He spoke impersonally, as if they were talking of some one else.

"Well, perhaps it is the best thing to do."

Mrs. Derring sewed on for a few minutes in silence; then she said slowly, as if the plan were forming itself: "I guess Tom Bishop would take the farm on shares and they could go to housekeeping in the L. part. The rent would bring in a little something. He and Mary have wanted to go to housekeeping ever since they were married." She ended with a questioning inflection, submitting the plan.

She was not a "capable" woman. The queerness of Geoffrey Crane had descended to the daughter, and she was conscious that her plans were often impracticable. But 24 years of farming life had taught her to adjust herself to the inevitable. Almost without volition her mind had begun to turn over ways and means to meet this new emergency.

"I could let them have the south chamber and the back storeroom. And perhaps we could pack up the things in father's room so they could have that."

The young man listened in surprise. He had expected remonstrance, even refusal. He was not prepared for such rapid furthering of his project. He



"Well, Perhaps it is the Best Thing to Do."

was almost inclined to make obstacles himself—so rapidly did she plan.

"Father Crane would be pleased, if he were alive, to know you wanted to go. He always wanted Eben to go to college. But he married Jerusha. They all said he ought to have been a scholar. But he was bright at his books. But he was possessed to marry Jerusha. So father had to give it up. He always wanted me to go to school more, too. It was a disappointment to him that I married so young."

She sat looking thoughtfully out of the narrow-paned window, lost in thought of that far-off time when she was courted and won by Marcus Derring.

Richard, the Greek grammar in his hand, stole softly out of the room and climbed the steep stairway. He went quickly down the long hall and opened a door at the end. The room thus disclosed was a curious one. Across one side ran a sloping shelf, broken at one end by a zinc-lined sink. The other sides of the room were filled with cabinets in which were arranged specimens of rock, chemicals, blowpipes, and many curious contrivances, the use of which Richard could not even guess. In this room Geoffrey Crane had lived and dreamed and died. Here, in the midst of his heritage, the boy sat down to begin the work that should make him what his grandfather would have wished.

But instead of opening the brown-covered book he sat with it in his hand, thinking of the new life its thinking of the new life its pages were to open up to him. Life crowded before him. College—new faces—new friends—study—success. And Emily would be—she would not know—or care. She would marry Edwards. She would not know whether he succeeded or failed. Was it worth while?

Something flashed upon him and startled him. If she had cared, he should not now be planning a new life.

Uncle Eben, he thought with a half smile.

To-day he did not resent the implied disloyalty to his idol. He was not thinking of her so much as of Love, the power that holds all men in its grasp and bends them to its will, till each soul longs for nothing so much as that Love shall take human shape and dwell beside him. Dimly it flitted before him—luminous but indefinable—filling him with wonder. Uncle Eben married the woman he loved and his life had been dwarfed. Seth Kinney lost the woman he loved, and his life was warped, distorted, and spoiled. Was it fate? Life without love was hard and cold. He opened the grammar and began to read. "Sixteen Greek letters—viz.:

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, u

were introduced into Phoenicia by Cadmus fifteen hundred years before Christ."

(To be continued.)

BAYARD ITEMS.

Miss Augusta Mack of Scottsbluff visited friends in town Monday.

Miss McKinney spent her Christmas vacation at Torrington, returning Saturday.

Prof. Ralph Marrs visited a few days last week with friends in Hemingford.

Roy O'Neal is the new teacher in Dist. No. 44.

Misses Grace and Luella Lipska, after visiting relatives here for a few days, departed for Sidney.

Miss Agnes Vanatta has returned home from the Lincoln Business College, having completed a course at that institution.

F. E. Stearns departed for Colorado on New Year's day to take charge of a stock of merchandise which he has recently purchased.

Mrs. C. R. Conover departed Wednesday to visit relatives at Ogalalla.

Tom Neighbors left Monday to resume his studies at Wesleyan.

Otto Johnston visited friends in Bridgeport from Thursday till Saturday.

The community was saddened last week by the death of Zella Wagner, the beautiful little daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Will Wagner of Reddington.

Elder Epley of York, with the assistance of the local pastor, is holding revival meetings at the U. B. church.

Mrs. A. Covington and children departed for their home in Wyoming after spending some weeks here with relatives.

A dance was given at Leach's hall New Year's eve. A very pleasant time is reported.

Carl Berkhauser spent the holidays in Denver.

Frank Ericson returned the last of the week from Bertrand and Loomis, Nebr.

Mr. Graham of the Commissary visited relatives in Denver last week.

Legal Blanks.

The following blanks are for sale at The Herald office:

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