

I do not understand it all, but that's no matter. Only, don't you see, it does n't make any difference? If she had been going to care, I should have known it long ago."

This was very vague to Helen; she wondered if Lois had refused him again. But Gifford began to talk quietly of his life in Mercer, and she did not venture to say anything more. "After all, they must work out their own salvation," she thought. "No one can help them, when they both know the facts."

She listened a little absently to Gifford, who was speaking of the lack of any chance for advancement in Mercer. "But really," he added, "I ought not to go too far away from my aunts, now; and I believe that the highest development of character can come from the most commonplace necessities of life." Helen sighed; she wondered if this commonplace of Ashurst were her necessity? For again she was searching for her place in the world.—the place that needed her, and was to give her the happiness of usefulness; and she had even thought vaguely that she might find some work in Lockhaven, among John's people, and for them. They both fell into the silence of their own thoughts, until the rector and his daughter came back from church, and Gifford went home.

That next week was a thoughtful one with Gifford Woodhouse; Helen's words had stirred those buried hopes, and it was hard to settle back into a life of renunciation. He was strangely absent-minded in his office. One day Willie Denner, who had come to read law, and was aspiring to be his clerk, found him staring out of the window, with a new client's papers lying untouched before him. After all, he thought, would it be wrong, would it trouble Lois (he had said he should never trouble her), if he just told her how the thought of her helped him, how she was a continual inspiration in his life? "If I saw it bothered her, I could stop," he argued.

And so, reasoning with himself, he rode over from Mercer late that Saturday night. The little ladies were, as usual, delighted to see him. These weekly visits were charming; their nephew could be admired and fussed over to their hearts' content, but was off again before they had time to feel their small resources at an end. The next morning he dutifully went to church with them. Sunday was a proud day for the Misses Woodhouse, each took an arm of the young