

alteration in Loring's looks, but he could not speak of it.

She appreciated his reticence, but she shook her head. "It is partly that and partly something else. I must get away, and when I spoke to Miriam she suggested that perhaps Dr. Hoffman could help me. I am in great need, Henry, and if he is all you say he won't deny me. I should take a nurse so that I shouldn't be a great care, but I want the help I think he can give. Will you write to him?"

"I don't believe he's ever thought of taking women. It's a rough country." Gray could not see the reason for such a radical step.

"I don't believe he's ever thought of as you say, he won't deny comfort to any woman as wretched as I am." Her eyes filled with tears, and she seemed so utterly despondent that Gray was alarmed. A weeping woman frightened him. Miriam never wept, and he promised anything to avert the threatened storm. That night he wrote to Dr. Hoffman, making the letter, a personal appeal, though, as he told his wife afterward, Loring's case did not seem to require such desperate measures.

"You don't understand," Miriam said, but she would not explain.

"Well, it seems a pity that she is to have a child after all, but it will be a comfort to her in the end." He was a good man, but dull.

"Will it?" Miriam had no such faith. She tried to stifle the suspicion that would assert itself; she hoped that Loring would explain a matter that looked dubious; but when her friend still kept her own counsel she hid her disappointment, and made up in gentleness for her harsh thought. She gave sympathy, though she was sore troubled at this new turn affairs had taken.

Loring, when her condition was no longer a matter of conjecture, acted in the only way possible. And the world was led to believe that Percy Bryce would have a posthumous heir. At times her soul revolted against false position, but she saw that it was only by deception that she could preserve her secret. She divined Miriam's uneasiness, and she longed to tell her the truth, but in the end she decided to keep up the fiction with Miriam as well as with the outside world. She had not given the possibility that now existed a thought, but when she awoke to the consequences of her impulsive action she seemed to see in it a recompense. Gradually she realized she would be able

to bear Paul's loss when she cradled his child in her arms.

She had a desire to get away from the city, from the house filled with terrible memories. To her fevered imagination this David Hoffman, was nursing his own quivering nerves back again to a calm resumption of their duty, was the one person would could lay a quiet finger on her bruised spirit.

She arrived at Woodsmere at dusk, accompanied by Anne Worth. The little station was deserted except for an old man in a faded uniform, and Loring was about to question him when there was a sound of horses' hoofs, and a moment later an old hack came in view drawn by an ancient steed. As the driver drew up to the platform a man sprang out.

"Mrs. Bryce! This is the first day the train has been on time in a year. I apologize. Eben and I lingered on the way." His voice had a deep, resonant quality and Loring forgot that she had been chilled at her forlorn reception.

She looked up into his blue eyes, set far back in his head and overhung with shaggy gray brows, and she trusted him. He was a tall man, slightly stooped and white-haired, but he gave less the impression of age than one touched in his prime by advance frost.

"I am putting you up at my place," he said, as he led the way to the carriage. "We have no hotel accommodations, and everything is most primitive."

"I am not sure what that means, but the unknown cannot discourage me," Loring answered. "I camped out once in the Adirondacks."

"Over night?"

"For two days. We slept on pine boughs, and the guides cooked for us."

"Here you shall sleep in a house, and cook for yourselves—that is if you stay."

Miss Worth looked alarmed. She glanced involuntarily at Loring's fragile form, but Loring had no fears. They had vanished at the first touch of David Hoffman's hand.

"If you will let me stay, I should like a house of my own," she said.

"Wait till you see what we have to offer. Now look about you; I'm sure you have never seen a finer view."

They were climbing steadily, and he called their attention to the winding road, the river in the valley below, and the mountains rising on behind the other as far as the eye could reach. Loring drew

his of content, and felt as if even brief space of time she was absorbing. The carriage stopped before the one-story house, and Hoffman beckoned them to descend. Miss Worth uttered an exclamation of wonder, but had no words. She was awed into the grandeur of the scene. They stepped steadily till now they were on a plateau almost at the top of a mountain, a vista of hills rolling away in the distance. The autumn foliage was against a velvet sky, more brilliant than she had ever seen it.

A grass plot in front of the house was with a yellow stubble, for it was to the close of the year, and the that clambered up over the trellis the small arbour was leafless. A sturdy pines gave out their healthful. Loring sighed. Yes, here she found peace, if she were ever to know

David Hoffman watched his guest as she stepped in response to the welcome. He gave, but when he saw her put her to her eyes, he drew near. "You will let me stay?" she said, and of longing in her voice.

In answer he held out both hands.

"Why should I deny you? I, too, have been sick at heart, and I have found comfort. May you find it also, my friend." Then he led her across the threshold of his house.

The door opened into a living room, the width of the house. The walls were sealed with white pine; a huge fireplace of stones roughly put together with cement held logs which blazed brightly in welcome, and gave out a delicious perfume that savored of the north-woods. There were comfortable seats, a long pine table covered with books and magazines, and a couple of lamps giving acetylene gas lit up every nook and corner and banished shadows. Trophies of the chase adorned the walls, a moose head, antlers, mounted fish, a gunrack, and at one end, where a round table was prettily set for supper, there were a few etchings. Loring's eye took in one thing after another, but her host interrupted her long survey.

"Let me show you to your room; then you will have dinner."

The room which she was to share with Anne Worth was large and low-ceilinged. It was plainly furnished, but bright and cheerful. It was a white room; even the

rugs before the beds were woven of white wool.

She made a slight change in her toilet and then went back to the living room.

It was a simple meal, simply served, but Loring enjoyed every mouthful. It seemed more appetizing than anything she had tasted in months.

Hoffman addressed his remarks impartially to her and to Anne Worth, but Loring was too tired to do more than reply in monosyllables. She sat back in her chair and studied her host. Seen in a strong light, the ravages of disease were marked. The blue veins at his temples stood out plainly, and suffering had drawn a network of tiny lines about his eyes. His frame was spare, and his hands were long and slender, the hands of an idealist. They came to mean much to her in the days that followed; their touch seemed to pre-empt healing, and they fascinated her by their beauty, indicating the spirituality of the man's nature.

When she awoke next morning it was eight o'clock. Dr. Hoffman sent word to know if she preferred breakfasting in her room, but when she learned he had waited for her she dressed quickly to join him.

At breakfast Hoffman was the same solicitous host. At first he would not listen to her plan of going out at once to select her future dwelling, but in the end he gave in, and consented to show her the places nearby that were available. In the daylight the view from the doorstep was superb. It commanded a sweep of the broad valley, through which wound the silver stream of a little river; the mountain sides were red and yellow, for November had painted the trees with a lavish brush. A narrow footpath led from the Doctor's house to a cabin perched on a ledge several hundred feet higher up in the mountain. Loring espied it. It was built of logs with an overhanging roof and deep set windows.

"I want that house!" she cried excitedly, pointing it out.

"Look at it first. There may be another better suited to your needs. There was a colony of artists who came here once and started a cooperative settlement. That was in the days before the railroad came as far north as Woodsmere. To their minds the difficulties of getting supplies overbalanced the advantages of the place, so they abandoned it, and that is why you see several empty houses. The village lies below in the valley, and here