

II



It was afternoon of a mild October day. The open windows of a large room on the second floor of a house on Fourth Street, near to Spruce, in the city of Penn, looked out on a broad garden, which extended about one hundred and fifty feet westward and was now carpeted with the fallen red and gold of a wide-spreading maple. Here and there were a few late roses, amid a more seasonable growth of asters, scarlet sage, and marigolds. The room was empty. A wood fire blazed on the hearth. Presently a large, yellow Angora cat leaped into the window from the roof of the veranda. The miniature tiger trod with care over the account books and inkstand of a well-ordered table. Lightly moving, the cat reached a cushioned easy-chair, and, coiling herself into a mound of dark orange-tinted fur, went peacefully to sleep, undisturbed by the entrance of a girl of some twenty-three years of age.

Miss Fairthorne looked about her with an air of relief, pleased to find a place where she could be alone. She gently lifted the cat and took her place near the window, in the sunshine of the fading day.

"If," she murmured—"if ever I have a home of my own I shall have a hermit-room on the roof."