

at least. I will carry on the place a while longer."

The old man's face cleared, but he did not speak—only John Osgood's mother got up and silently kissed him. No young lips could have been more fond—could any be more dear?

Two weeks after that news came to him of Angeline Wilmarth's betrothal to her cousin—the city-bred young man whom he had seen riding beside her in the May twilight. This was an unexpected blow, something which, knowing the man was her cousin, he had never feared. The news sank into his heart with a dull, dumb pain. She never would have cared for him, then—never had. It was well he had not gone away and left those two who did love him to mourn. After all, perhaps this existence of plowing and planting was all he was good for. Fate had placed him rightly—gauged his capacities better than he could have done himself. So he settled back into the old grooves with a grim resignation which was not yet content. Still he felt himself at odds with the life which did not offer what he wanted.

When autumn came and it was time for him, if at all, to make the change he had planned in spring, he was surprised to find that the inclination to make it was gone. Some healing ministry, call it of nature or of grace, God knows, had been at work in his soul; and, unconsciously to himself, through the long summer days and swift, short summer nights, he had been learning the sweetness of duty pure and simple—duty done for its own sake. He had begun to ask himself, not what he wished, but what he ought, to do; and he felt that in the very fact of his being to those who loved him their all on earth, God had called him to certain duties on which he would never again feel tempted to turn his back. Reconciled at last to the appointment of Heaven, he was at peace also with his own soul; and a new light came into his eyes, a new vigor and manliness into his life.

He could think of Angeline Wilmarth in these days without pain. There would always be in his heart for her the tenderness a good man feels toward a woman once beloved; but whether she was his or another's, he could reckon her loss or gain among the "all things" he was content to leave with Heaven.

He had heard in the summer that she was to be married at Christmas, but he seldom saw her. He had never spoken with her for more than a passing good-day since her engagement.

One afternoon in November he brought home from the village post office a bundle of papers, his Boston daily among them. Sitting by the fire and turning them over, his eye was caught by the heading in large letters—"Another Case of Defalcation."

He began to read the article, with a kind of careless half interest people in the country feel in the excitements of the city which can not touch them personally; but suddenly he started up, clutching the paper tight and straining his eyes over it as if he doubted his own vision. The name of the defaulting and runaway bank-teller was that of Angie Wilmarth's cousin and betrothed lover. Thank Heaven that no mean selfishness stained his soul in that hour. He was honestly and heartily touched at the thought of Angie's sorrow. Poor girl! If there were only anything he could do to aid or comfort her. He took his hat and went out, with some vague purpose of offering his help, which the fall winds scattered, as they blew across his brow. Of course there was nothing he could do—he could not even speak to her on such a subject. Her grief would be too sacred—and he, had he not been used this many a month to the idea that he was nothing to her any more?

Still he went on, in a purposeless sort of way, toward her house; went on, until he saw a slender figure coming as if to meet him, under the leafless elm boughs, over the dead and rustling leaves which lay thick upon the foot-path. Like one in a dream he moved forward. He had meant to pass her with just a good-evening, but when she put out her hand to him, and he looked into her fair, still face, the words came before he knew it to his lips—

"I have seen it all in the paper, Angie, and I am so sorry."

"Yes," she said gently, "it will ruin him."

"And you? I thought most of you. You were to have been married so soon."

"Not to him," she said hurriedly, "not to him. That was done with two months ago. I had never loved him. It was vanity that made me consent to marry him. He was handsome and gallant, and he promised me all the good things of this life. But I found, after a while, that none of them would pay me for myself; and I told him the truth."

Something in her hurried, earnest tones, or the swift color that stained her cheek, or her shy, half-veiled eyes, or all together gave John Osgood courage, and he said, holding her hand still—

"It was because I had none of the good things of this life to promise you, Angie, that I dared not tell you how dearly I loved you and always should. You seem too bright and fair to settle down here, as the wife of a Ryefield farmer."

"But if I liked that best?" she said, softly, and her hand stayed in his.

And so John Osgood won his heart's desire.

There are some souls I like to think of, dear children of the Heavenly Father, who