



WALDA

A Novel

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

For obvious reasons, the real name of the community described herein is withheld; but the scenes are pictured with almost photographic fidelity, and the life portrayed is the life actually led to-day by a religious co-operative community in a Western State.

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“SO that is Zanah there at the foot of the hill? It is a pretty village, Hans Peter. Step more quickly with my bag. You are slow, my boy. Remember there is a quarter of a dollar for you in my pocket.”

The tall, broad-shouldered man who spoke took a few strides along the plank walk that led from the railway station to the village of Zanah, half a mile away. Then he stopped to light a cigar while he waited for the fat, short-legged figure that was bending under the weight of a large valise to overtake him. The man was in the early prime of life. When he took off the soft felt travelling-hat he wore, a strongly modelled head was silhouetted against the sky. He looked across the field of purple cabbages to the village that lay in the hush of the summer evening. The gabled roofs of the houses were half

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hidden by trees, but on a rise of ground the porch and belfry of a little church were plainly visible.

Hans Peter dropped his burden and, imitating the stranger, removed from a shock of straw-colored hair a cap mended with red yarn. The boy wore baggy trousers of blue denim buttoned to a blouse of the same material. The man smiled as he looked at the odd figure.

“Do you hear me, Hans Peter? There is a quarter in my pocket for you. I will find two quarters if you walk faster. Do you know what I say to you?”

The boy replaced his cap, nodded his head, and answered, with a German accent:

“Thou art talking to the simple one, the village fool, sir. But Hans Peter knows thou wouldst give him silver.”

It was the first time that the boy had spoken since the station agent had called him by name and told him to show the stranger to the inn in the village of Zanah, just across the hill. The man gave his guide a sharp look. Hans Peter had a round face that was as blank as if no human emotion had ever been written upon it. His pale eyes had a sleepy look, and yet there was nothing in their expression to indicate lack of intelligence.

“The village fool—nonsense,” said the stranger. “Here is one piece of silver. See if it can’t loosen your tongue.”

“Thy money belongs to Zanah, where no man is richer than another,” said Hans Peter. “I will give it to the Herr Doktor.”

“For a fool you speak well,” said the stranger, casting a glance of curiosity at the boy. “Why are you called the simple one?”

Hans Peter put his hands in his pockets and answered:

“It may be because I talk too much to strangers.”

The man laughed. He had a clear-cut, clean-shaven face, which was almost stern in repose, but when he smiled it was plain that the spirit of youth still dwelt in him.

“Well, Hans Peter, we shall continue our march to Zanah,” he said. “One, two, three. There! We are off at a better pace.”

He took the valise from Hans Peter, who began to trot along at his side. The lad was not taller than a twelve-year old boy, but there was something so strange about him that the man asked him his age.

“One-and-twenty,” replied Hans Peter. “If the Lord had not made me a fool, thou wouldst know that I have a man’s years.”

There was a little quiver in the voice of the village fool, and it touched the heart of the stranger. He put his hand on the boy’s shoulder and said, gently:

“Of course, I knew you were not a child. You seemed small beside me; but I should have noticed

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that you are a man. I am glad to know you first of all in Zanah, for I want you to be my guide while I am among the people, who are said to be different from those I know out there in the world."

The boy raised his eyes to the western bluffs, which seemed to touch the crimson sky. Then he nodded his head.

"Hans Peter will do what he can," he promised, "but the colony elders forbid us to talk to those who come from the wicked cities, where people live not according to the ways of God."

They moved on through the cabbage-field, and the board walk presently led to a grass-grown lane that widened into the village street. The street wavered uncertainly between vine-covered fences which shut in old-fashioned gardens all a tangle of flowers. Back in the gardens were set stone houses with big chimneys and shut-in porches. On benches before the largest houses milk-pans and pewter plates were leaning against the weather-beaten walls. The diamond-paned windows reflected the gold of the sunset.

Up the street the stranger and the boy walked without meeting any one. They came to a straggling stone house with many wings that opened upon trellised verandas. It differed from the other stone buildings in not being surrounded by a fence. Its hinged windows were thrown open and white curtains flapped in the gentle breeze. Here the street broad-

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ened into a public square, the centre of which was occupied by a well. Hans Peter paused before the worn steps leading to the front door.

“Sir, this is the *gasthaus*,” he said.

The man looked up as if in search of a sign, but there was nothing to indicate that it was an inn.

“Where is the landlord?” he asked. “This seems to be a deserted village.”

Hans Peter stared at him.

“Where are the people who live in Zanah?” the stranger inquired, choosing words that the simple one would understand.

“I will go for Diedrich Werther,” the boy said. “It is the sunset hour, and the men and women of Zanah are busy getting all their work done before evening prayer.”

Hans Peter’s German accent reminded the stranger to ask whether it was true that few people in Zanah knew any tongue except the German. He had to make the question very plain, and then Hans Peter said: “It is only the fool of Zanah and the great men like the Herr Doktor that know English.” He appeared to be thinking hard for a moment, and after a pause he explained: “The English makes the wickedness of the world easy to learn. It is only the great men, who can put aside temptation, and the fool, whose soul is accursed, that cannot be harmed by it.”

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The man gave the simple one a glance of surprise. He looked into the boy's face for a moment.

"I am afraid the people of Zanah are not good Americans," he said. "English is the tongue of the United States, and all should speak it, Hans Peter."

Hans Peter shook his head.

"Some of our young men have learned the English and they have forsaken the ways of the colony to go out into the world. They have listened to Satan, and Zanah hath seen them no more. Two of our girls ran away. The elders worry much about the people, for it is hard to keep out evil things with the railway so near. We are forbidden to make images of anything on earth, but colored pictures are sometimes brought to Zanah."

"The elders must have a hard task, indeed, if they would keep out sin, Hans Peter." The stranger laughed. "I am afraid the great world will swallow up the colony some day."

"The elders will be guided, sir. Zanah is waiting for Walda Kellar to speak with the voice of prophecy. She will be the inspired one who will guide the people of the colony."

"Who is Walda Kellar?" asked the stranger. But the simple one was silent. The question was repeated.

"The fool hath talked too much," said Hans Peter.

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“Go call the landlord of the inn,” commanded the stranger, turning to seat himself in a splint-bottomed chair that stood in a corner of the veranda.

Diedrich Werther, the landlord, was slow in answering the summons of his chance guest. When he made his appearance he walked with deliberation. He was a short, stout man, with a red face, and he had a wisp of sandy hair in the middle of his forehead. His trousers, supported by knitted suspenders, were of such generous size that they reached nearly to his arm-pits. He wore a blue shirt and carpet slippers. He received his guest with a lack of hospitality which showed that visitors were of small importance in his estimation. After making a bow, which included the scraping of one of his carpet slippers as he bent his head, he looked at the stranger with un-winking eyes that revealed not the slightest sign of cordiality.

“Do you permit travellers to stay at your inn?” inquired the guest, first in English, but he received no response, and he had to resort to the German picked up in his student days at Heidelberg.

“Ja, ja,” said Werther, and he motioned to Hans Peter to carry the valise inside the inn.

“And can I have dinner here?” the stranger inquired.

The landlord shook his head. Dinner was at mid-day, but a special supper would be made ready after

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evening prayer. The stranger could rest in the big chair.

The church-bell rang out in solemn tones. It had not sounded twice before the street became alive. From every door issued men, women, and children. Gate latches clicked, and soon a silent, solemn line of villagers passed the inn. From his corner in the porch the stranger looked on unobserved. All the men were more or less like Diedrich Werther. They wore the baggy, ill-fitting trousers and the blue shirt which made the host of the inn of Zanah look like the figures on beer mugs. The women had on gowns of blue calico, straight and full in the skirts, and made with plain, gathered waists, over which were folded three-cornered kerchiefs. Black hoods, with untied strings, covered their hair. Most of the women of Zanah were stout of body and stolid of face. They walked on the opposite side of the street from the men. Among them were many young girls, with the beauty of face that health and innocence give. The church-bell ceased its ringing. Peering out between the vines, the stranger saw the meeting-house on the hill beyond a bridge on the other side of the square where the street began to climb the hill. One by one the villagers passed through its door.

The bell rang again. Into the little square before the inn came a man different from the others. He was tall and spare of figure. His oddly cut clothing

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fitted his body with snugness. A broad-brimmed, gray felt hat shaded a sensitive face marked with strong lines. Long hair, which fell over the wide collar of his coat, gave him the look of one who belonged to a past generation. Not old, and yet not young, this man of Zanah had an unusual beauty of countenance that bespoke patience and gentleness. At his heels trooped a dozen boys who quickly surrounded the well. Standing on moss-covered stones, they took turns dipping water from a gourd fastened to the curb.

The man of Zanah stood with his face turned in the direction whence he had come. Suddenly he doffed the gray felt hat and waited with uncovered head while three women approached the well. Two were like the many who had gone by within the quarter-hour. The third was young, and her beauty was of such rare quality that the stranger stepped out to the edge of the porch that he might better see her features. She was of more than medium height, and she walked with a majestic bearing. Her face, uplifted to the sky, was lighted by the sunset glow. Over her fair hair, which fell in two long braids below her waist, she wore a cap of white lawn, and the kerchief crossed upon her bosom was white. She appeared to be unconscious of the presence of the man of Zanah until her gown touched him. She turned her head and smiled with such sweetness and such friendliness that

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the stranger, watching her, felt a pang of envy. The man bent his head reverently, and the children stopped their play to make obeisance to her. When she had passed, the man of Zanah stood motionless for a moment. He was suddenly startled from his reverie by the simple one, who ran from the inn and grasped his hand.

For a third time the bell rang. The man of Zanah patted the fool on the head and turned towards the meeting-house. After he had gone over the bridge, the stranger hastened across the little square to the place where Hans Peter was left standing alone.

“Who is the man that has just gone up the street?” he inquired.

The village fool said it was Gerson Brandt, the school-master.

“And who was the girl—the one with the white cap?”

Hans Peter pretended not to hear.

“Was that the one who is to be your prophetess?”

Hans Peter was silent. There was a look of cunning in his eyes.

“Answer my question, Hans Peter,” said the stranger, with some impatience.

“The elders say wise men ask questions that fools may not answer,” replied the simple one, and then he ran away across the bridge.

II

THE village of Zanah awoke at sunrise. Looking from the front window of the inn, the stranger, Stephen Everett, saw the quaint folk moving up and down the little street. In the porches of a near-by kitchen women were preparing breakfast. There was a strange quiet that at first oppressed the visitor from the outside world. The men and women were silent; the children walked with decorous steps; there was no unseemly laughter.

It was a perfect morning of late summer. Beyond flat breadths of fertile fields the bluffs rose gently, and hill-side and plain were dotted with vineyards. Winding roads led through interlocking trees from which birds were taking flight. The flowers, heavily laden with dew, gave out a delightful fragrance. In the sky was the pink flush of dawn, and the morning star still kept watch over the hamlet from which the bustling, every-day world was shut out.

The stranger in Zanah went in to breakfast, which was served in a long, low room that had a sanded floor. While he was standing at the table, upon which the blue-gowned women waited, Adolph

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Schneider, the head of the colony, came to him. Adolph Schneider showed that he was a man of importance. He was stout and bald. A grizzled fringe of beard encircled his chin, which, on account of his short neck, rested upon his black cravat. He had small eyes, set close together, and he gave the impression that shrewdness was the key-note of his character.

“I am president of the Society of Zanah,” he said, in good English, “and I am come to inquire wherefore thou hast visited the colony in which the Lord’s people try to do his will in all humbleness and meekness.”

The broad-rimmed straw hat that he wore set well down upon his ears: he had the appearance of retiring into it and his black cravat for the purpose of watching the stranger. Everett rose to meet him.

“Chance brought me here,” he said, looking down upon the Herr Doktor. “I am something of a student, and I want to see the books printed in Zanah. Perhaps you will sell some of them to me?”

Adolph Schneider leaned on the stout cane he carried to aid him in the difficult process of walking, for he had gout, which was the result of a long diet of fat meats, sauerkraut, and hot breads. He glanced at Everett with a look of suspicion.

“We have many strangers from the outside world,” he said, “but all come here to buy the blankets and

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printed cloths of Zanah. We have none who would look into our books.”

His small eyes rested upon the fine face of the stranger, and there was much in it to give any man confidence. The dark eyes had a frank expression, and the lips and chin told that they belonged to one who had command of himself while he was fitted to rule others.

“I have heard that your German books are good specimens of hand-work, and I coveted some of them because I am a collector,” said Everett.

Schneider looked puzzled and repeated the word “collector.” Everett explained about his library, and he was soon talking in the most friendly manner to the Herr Doktor, whom he persuaded to sit at the table and to drink coffee with him. When Everett had finished breakfast, they went into the front room of the inn, where Mother Werther, the landlord’s wife, sat behind a high counter keeping an eye on the dog-eared register and the blue china match-safe. Everett offered cigars to the Herr Doktor, who declined them, but was easily persuaded to try the tobacco that was produced from the pocket of the stranger’s coat. After they had smoked together Everett knew more about Zanah than he had expected to learn, although his direct questions had been parried, and it had required adroitness to obtain any information concerning the colony. The prospect of a sale of books

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melted the heart of the village president, who explained that he managed the money of the people.

“If thou wouldst see the books, come with me to the school-master,” said Schneider. “Gerson Brandt was an artist before he came into the colony, fifteen years ago. He hath a rare gift in the laying on of colors, and he hath made some of the books of Zannah good to look at.”

They walked along the quiet street, crossed the rustic bridge, and climbed the little hill to the meeting-house, which was a low stone building covered with vines. In place of the steeple a modest little belfry rose above the peaked roof. Beyond the meeting-house, and separated from it by a stone wall, was the school-house, such a rambling, weather-beaten wooden building as any artist would delight in. It was entered from a latticed porch with long seats on either side of the door. There was a garden in front of it—a well-kept garden, with trim walks and well-weeded flower-beds. Over the porch a sturdy rose-bush climbed. The hinged windows were thrown open and the buzz of children’s voices could be heard. Suddenly all sounds were hushed. Everett and the Herr Doktor ascended the wide steps, and as they were about to push open the door a woman’s voice rose in a hymn. It was a voice clear and sweet, and its minor cadence was sustained with wonderful power. The words were German, and the tune was monotonous,

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but the man from the outside world was strangely moved by the melody. Everett uncovered his head and listened reverently. Adolph Schneider leaned against the door-frame, smoking, as if he did not hear. When the hymn was ended Everett asked, in a low tone:

“Who is the woman that sang?”

“Walda Kellar,” answered the old man. He took several puffs of his pipe and then he added, “She is one called of God.”

The Herr Doktor lifted the latch and stepped into the long school-room, while Everett paused on the threshold. It was a strange scene that met his gaze. Seated in orderly rows, more than one hundred boys faced the school-master, who stood beside his high desk, but Gerson Brandt's face was turned away from his charges; his eyes were fixed upon a figure that chained Everett's attention. On the platform stood Walda Kellar. She was turning the leaves of a big Bible which was held before her by the village fool. The girl was as tall and straight as a sapling. The ample folds of her blue print gown did not hide the slender grace of her figure. The white kerchief crossed over her bosom revealed a rounded neck, upon which her beautiful head was well set. Her cap was white instead of black, like the head-coverings worn by the other women, and beneath it her shining hair curled about a broad, low forehead. The face was

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nobly moulded. Everett could not see each feature, but he knew that a pair of wonderful eyes were the glory of her countenance, which had an expression of exaltation he had never seen before on any face.

Back of the girl, knitting as if all Zanah were dependent upon her for winter mittens, sat a woman of sour visage. As her needles moved she watched the school-master and the girl. When Adolph Schneider entered the room Walda Kellar looked past him, and her eyes met those of the stranger with a look that betrayed no consciousness of his presence, although he blushed like a school-boy. Walda greeted the Herr Doktor with a slight inclination of her head. Then she whispered to the simple one, who closed the Bible, gave it to the school-master, and took his place on a stool near the teacher's platform.

"Mother Kaufmann, we will go back to the *kinderhaus*," said Walda Kellar. She spoke the German so that it seemed the most musical tongue Everett had ever heard. The elder woman rolled up her knitting and put it into the capacious pocket of her gingham apron.

"Gerson Brandt, thy boys are truly well behaved; thou hast done much with them."

Walda spoke to the school-master, who bestowed upon her a look of gratitude and tenderness.

"It is thou who tamest all that is unruly in the children of Zanah," he said. And then he walked

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down the narrow aisle between the rows of tow-headed urchins and flung open the door that she might pass out.

“Come hither, friend Everett,” said Adolph Schneider, advancing to the platform, where he met the school-master. “I want to make you acquainted with Brother Brandt. Brother Brandt might have had that bubble men call fame if he had continued to disobey the law of the Lord, for he made images of the earth and sky, which is forbidden in the commandments. But he forsook his idols before he was one-and-twenty and came into the safe refuge of Zanah.”

“Yet even now I long to behold great pictures,” declared Gerson Brandt, as if he were confessing some secret vice. “It is a quarter of a century since I have looked on one.”

“Tut, tut, Brother Brandt,” said Schneider; “if thou wilt talk of forbidden things, dismiss thy pupils.”

The school-master lifted his hand, and with a benediction sent the tow-headed boys homeward. The village fool alone of all the school remained in his place. With his head bent forward he appeared to be asleep.

“We have come to see thy books,” said Adolph Schneider, when he had taken the only chair in the room and placed his cane against the black-board. “Is that thy Bible that thou hast put so much work

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upon?" He pointed to the big volume from which Walda had been reading. It had a linen cover neatly sewn upon it, and might have been the word-book so much thumbed by the pupils.

Gerson Brandt went to the desk, and, putting his hand on the book, answered:

"This is my Bible, and I have been making the letters that begin the chapters. I learned the secret of the colors long ago from a monk. It is no sin to make the Holy Book beautiful, for I have put in it no images, only the letters in colors that are symbolic."

He spoke as if he were making excuse for some transgression, but the Herr Doktor laughed leniently.

"Surely Zanah hath no fault to find with thy book," Adolph Schneider said. "I want the stranger to see the letters in it."

Gerson Brandt opened the Bible, and as he turned the pages Everett, who stood beside him, felt an overwhelming desire to possess the volume. The old German text was printed upon parchment. The pages had broad margins, and the letters beginning the chapters were illuminated with designs so delicate and so minutely worked out that each repaid long study. The coloring was exquisite, and gold, of a brilliancy equalled in few books Everett had ever seen, was applied with a generous hand.

"How long have you worked on it?" he asked.

"Five years," the school-master said, "and it is not

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finished yet." Gerson Brandt loosened the linen that he might display the binding of calfskin. On the front cover was a monogram, but before Everett could decipher the letters the linen was replaced.

"This is a beautiful book," said Everett, taking it in his hand and turning the pages. "I would give much for it. Will you sell it to me?"

Gerson Brandt's thin face paled. He stretched out a trembling hand and seized the Bible as he answered, coldly:

"This book was not made to be bartered to any man. It is mine. If there is aught in it that commands thy favor it is because the making of the letters has been a pleasant labor done with all my heart."

The school-master held the volume close to his breast. The simple one, who had not left his place on the stool, opened his eyes. The Herr Doktor glanced from beneath his bushy brows with a look of surprise.

"Brother Brandt, thou speakest without proper forethought," said Schneider; "thou knowest that in Zanah all things belong to the Lord and that thou hast not the right to say 'my' or 'mine.'"

A dull red swept over the face of the school-master, and in his eyes was a look that told of rebellion in his soul.

"For the good of Zanah we might be persuaded to

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sell this Bible," the Herr Doktor continued. "It is worth a great deal of money, for Brother Brandt hath spent upon it much of the time that belonged to the colony. How much wouldst thou give for it?"

"I should not think of buying the Bible if the artist who illuminated it is unwilling to give it up," Everett declared. The fear in the school-master's face touched his heart. For the moment Gerson Brandt had lost the look of youth which strangely sat on features that told of suffering. There was a new dignity in the gaunt figure, clad in its queer garments. Gerson Brandt's head was thrown back and his lips were tightly closed. The habit of repression, learned in the long years of colony life, was not easily thrown off, and he stood motionless while Adolph Schneider scowled at him.

"Wouldst thou think one hundred dollars too much for the Bible?" the village president inquired. He had risen and was leaning on his cane. "Zanah needs money, for the harvests have been poor. Brother Brandt will sell the book if thou canst pay the price."

"One hundred dollars is little enough for the Bible," said Everett; "but we shall not discuss its purchase now."

"Yet thou wilt buy it if it is offered to thee by Brother Brandt?" Adolph Schneider asked, persistently pressing the subject of the sale.

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Everett looked straight at the school-master, and his friendly eyes gave Gerson Brandt confidence.

"I would buy it if it was cheerfully offered by Mr. Brandt," he replied.

The village fool aroused himself and stretched lazily. Then, taking from his pocket a little yellow gourd, he marked upon it with a big pocket-knife.

As Schneider and Everett left the school-house they saw that something unusual had happened, for a crowd was moving up the street. Women were leaning over fences. Children followed the crowd at a distance.

The Herr Doktor stood for a moment as if uncertain what to do. It was quite impossible for him to hasten, and he was of a phlegmatic nature not easily excited.

"Some one must be hurt," Everett remarked. "I think they are carrying a man."

In an instant Hans Peter had run down the hill. The school-master, who had remained in the school-house to put away the precious Bible, came to the door to look out. The crowd had crossed the rustic bridge.

"They are coming here," Gerson Brandt exclaimed. "Can it be that aught hath happened to Wilhelm Kellar?"

He hastened down the street, and Schneider stepped out on the sidewalk.

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“Wilhelm Kellar hath charge of our flannel-mill. He liveth with Brother Brandt,” explained the Herr Doktor. “I trust that no accident hath befallen him.”

It was plain that Adolph Schneider’s anxiety was twofold, and that he thought of the loss which might be unavoidable in case the mill superintendent became incapacitated.

When Everett and the Herr Doktor met the villagers, Gerson Brandt had stopped the crowd and was bending over the rude stretcher upon which lay the unconscious form of an old man.

“Wilhelm Kellar hath been stricken with a sudden illness,” said the school-master. “The apothecary hath worked over him and cannot restore him. Will not the Herr Doktor send for a physician?”

“The nearest chirurgeon is eight miles away,” replied Adolph Schneider. “Let the apothecary bleed Brother Kellar as soon as he is taken to his bed.”

Seeing that the man was emaciated and had no blood to lose, Everett stepped forward.

“I am a physician,” he said. “I will do what I can.”

He directed the crowd to fall back so that the sick man could have more air, and helped to carry the stretcher into an upper room of the school-house.

III

IN an upper room of the school-house Wilhelm Kellar lay upon a high-post bedstead that was screened by chintz curtains drawn back so that the air could reach him. His thin, wan face looked old and drawn as it rested on a feather pillow. He was comfortable, he let Everett know, when the physician went to visit him early in the morning after the seizure. His tongue refused to frame the words he tried to utter, but his eyes showed his gratitude. Everett took a seat in the heavy wooden chair at the foot of the bed, which stood in a little alcove. Beyond the alcove the main room stretched out beneath the roof, which gave it many queer corners. Rows of books partially hid one wall. In one corner a high chest of drawers held a pair of massive silver candlesticks. An old desk with a sloping top occupied a little nook lighted by a diamond window; here were quill-pens and bottles of colored ink. This upper room, occupied jointly by Wilhelm Kellar and Gerson Brandt, bore the impress of the school-master, who waited now, leaning on the back of an old wooden arm-chair polished with much use.

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“He will be much better,” said Everett. “He may recover from the paralysis, but it will be a long time before he leaves his room.”

Behind the curtains there was something like a groan. The sick man tried to say something, but neither Everett nor Brandt could understand him. Suddenly his eyes looked past them, and there was a smile on his face. Walda entered the outer room and came to her father, kneeling down beside him, apparently unaware that there was any one except themselves present.

“Art thou better, father?” she asked, in the softest tone, and then, burying her white-capped head in the pillow beside him, she murmured something in a low voice. Everett and Gerson Brandt left the two together and went into the larger room, where the physician began to prepare some medicine. Presently Walda’s voice was heard in prayer. The two men waited reverently until the last petition, uttered with the fervency of great faith, had died away.

“The daughter loveth her father; she hath a true heart,” said the school-master. He turned to the little window and looked out. Everett, who was distributing powders among a lot of little papers, went on with his work without making reply. The old hour-glass on the high chest of drawers had measured several minutes before any word was spoken. Then it was Mother Kaufmann who broke the silence.

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She entered the room with a heavy step, and with a "Good-day, Brother Brandt," stood for a few moments studying Everett.

"Where is Walda?" she asked. Gerson Brandt made a little gesture towards the alcove.

"She hath no right to come here alone," the woman replied, with a frown. "She is my care, and she hath done a foolish act. I shall forbid her to leave the House of the Women without me."

"Walda was drawn hither by anxiety concerning her father," said Gerson Brandt. "Thou wilt not wound her by a reprimand, Sister Kaufmann?"

The woman went near to him and spoke in guttural German some words that Everett could not catch, but from her furtive looks and glances he knew she was talking of him.

Walda passed through the room. Everett raised his eyes and they met the girl's glance. Then he bent his head in deferential recognition of her presence. It was only a second that each had gazed at the other, but the man from the outside world felt a heart-throb. He spilled the powder on the tablecloth, and after he had brushed it off he hastily took up his hat. He went down-stairs, Gerson Brandt and Mother Kaufmann following him to ask about his patient. The three stood in the little porch talking of Wilhelm Kellar. From the garden, Walda, who stood among the flowers, watched them as if she

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would hear every word. Involuntarily she was drawn to the little group.

“Thou wilt tell me the truth about my father,” she said, addressing Everett. She spoke in precise English, with a soft accent and full tone.

“He is seriously ill, but he will recover from this attack,” Everett answered.

The girl folded her hands on her breast in the manner common to Zanah.

“It is my duty to rejoice when death freeth the soul, and yet I cannot think of my father’s illness with aught but sadness,” she said, as a tear trickled down her cheek.

“Thou art showing weakness,” admonished Mother Kaufmann.

“Be not so stern,” said Gerson Brandt. “She hath not yet faced the mystery of death. She is young, and she loveth her father.”

“Always thou dost find excuse for Walda Kellar,” said the woman. “She is near to the day of inspiration, and the things of this world should not touch her.”

Walda Kellar appeared not to hear Mother Kaufmann’s words. Her eyes were fastened upon Everett’s face.

“Thou art not going away from Zanah soon, art thou?” she asked. “Nay, stay to watch my father until he shall be out of danger.” There was such

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pleading in her tone that it touched the heart of the man of the world. Her beauty cast a spell over him.

“Thou forgettest that the stranger hath much to call him away,” interposed Gerson Brandt. “Thou wouldst not be selfish?”

“Oh, I would not think first of self, and yet I would pray that the stranger might find it in his heart to remain in Zanah to aid him whom I love above all, for, strive as I may, I cannot forget that he is my father.”

She stepped nearer to Everett; her lips quivered.

“It may be many days before your father is entirely well. It will be a privilege to be of service to you,” said Everett, remembering how seldom he had been of any real use in the world. “I will remain until your father is out of danger.”

Mother Kaufmann took Walda by the arm and led her down the hill towards the House of the Women. Everett felt a resentment towards the unsympathetic colony “mother.” For a moment he was angry, and then he tried to make himself believe that he was a fool to waste a thought upon Walda Kellar or any of the villagers. Still he could not stifle his curiosity. A dozen questions rose to his lips, but there was something in the look of the school-master that forbade any inquiries.

The man who belonged to the outside world walked down to the bridge, and, turning, followed the turbu-

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lent little creek to a place where there was a deserted windmill beside a broken dam. Here he sat upon a log, for he suddenly made the discovery that it was a warm day. From the mill he could look back into the village and out upon the vineyards and the broad fields that surrounded the picturesque little settlement.

The peaceful scene soothed him. He fell to wondering whether, after all, the colonists might not be wise to bar out the world, but although his thoughts travelled far away to the busy scenes in which he usually moved, they always came back to Walda Kellar.

The novelty of his position rather amused him. He had meant to spend only a day or two in Zanah, and now he had made a promise that meant a sojourn of several weeks, perhaps a month or two. He lighted a fresh cigar and let his thoughts wander back to the friends who were waiting for him in the Berkshire Hills, where he had intended to spend the autumn weeks. He knew that they would concern themselves but little about his absence, for he had always been erratic since, when a school-boy, he was left, long ago, with an ample fortune and an indulgent guardian.

His reflections were suddenly interrupted, for he heard a soft footstep inside the mill. In an instant the fool had darted out, and, running to a tree that formed a foot-bridge across the little stream, he

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stooped to conceal something in the roots. Everett was interested. It was clear that Hans Peter was executing some commission that would not find favor with the elders. Lest he might excite suspicion, Everett turned his back and looked down the dusty road. The simple one ran lightly past him.

Everett was still facing the road when he saw a girl come towards the mill. She passed the stranger, who was almost hidden by the wild clematis-vine that covered a bush near him. She was pretty, after the flaxen-haired, pink-cheeked type. She went to the tree and took something that looked like a letter from its roots. She opened it, read it hastily, and concealed it beneath the black kerchief crossed upon her breast. With quickened steps she turned back towards the village. Half-way to the bridge she met the fool, who was returning to the mill. They spoke a few words, and the simple one continued on his way.

“So you are back?” said Everett, handing a coin to Hans Peter, who put it in one of his bulging pockets.

“What wouldst thou have me do?” asked the simple one.

“I would have you sit there on the grass and answer my questions, Hans Peter. First, who is the girl?”

“She is Frieda Bergen, a village maid.”

“What was it you put in the tree for her?”

Hans Peter looked aghast. He thrust both hands

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into his pockets and appeared to be thinking. He was a strange figure, for there was a curious blending of shrewdness and foolishness in his expression as he furtively glanced up at Everett.

“Thou wouldst not tell the elders,” he pleaded, presently, “if I trusted thee? I fear nothing, but I would not make the maid unhappy.”

“Was it a love-letter that you put there for her?”

Everett could not repress a smile. He was beginning to believe that he might find some amusement in watching the people of Zanah. When the fool remained silent he repeated his question.

“I know not what was in the packet, as I carried it for another,” said Hans Peter. “Thou forgettest that thou art talking to the fool of Zanah.”

“Your wisdom makes me lose sight of that fact, Hans Peter. Is not love against the law of the colony?”

“Yea, all except Hans Peter, the fool, hold it a sin to put their affections on the things of this world. The simple one cannot understand aught but that which is of the earth; he cannot reach up to heaven, and so he seeth nothing wrong in love that maketh men and women happy.”

Everett rose and paced up and down the little footpath. “I suppose the elders are always above temptation?” he remarked, stopping before Hans Peter.

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The simple one looked almost wise, and, apparently forgetting all prudence, said:

“Karl Weisel, head of the thirteen elders, hath been tempted for many years. He loveth Gretchen Schneider, the daughter of the Herr Doktor President, but he would have to give up his high place in Zanah if he were to marry, and so he preacheth much against the wickedness of loving.”

“And what of Gretchen Schneider?”

“She hath always a bad temper; she spieth on all the youths and maids. Frieda Bergen and Joseph Hoff, who loveth her, fear Gretchen Schneider most of all in Zanah.”

“And what will be the punishment of Frieda Bergen and Joseph Hoff when it is discovered that they love each other?” }

“Marriage,” said the simple one, solemnly. “The elders will rebuke them, and if still they love not God above themselves they will be put in the third, or lowest, grade in the colony.”

“And will they ever be forgiven? Will the elders ever restore them to a high place in Zanah?”

Hans Peter made an awkward little gesture.

“When they have found out each other’s faults they may repent; the Lord’s hand may be heavy on them. Then, when they see that love bringeth pain and grief, they may go before the elders, confess that they have erred, and when they have proved that they

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can serve God with singleness of purpose they will be put in the foremost rank."

Hans Peter spoke as if he were repeating a lesson often conned, and Everett said:

"You talk not like the simple one, my boy. If I closed my eyes I should think the Herr Doktor himself were speaking to me. But tell me, Hans Peter, among all the married people of the village, how many have failed to repent?"

"Diedrich Werther and Mother Werther alone love much. They are still in the lowest grade, and it is fifteen years since they were married. Most of the men and women of Zanah are in the second grade, but the Herr Doktor and Mother Schneider are among the highest. It is said they hate each other."

"This has been a half-hour well spent," said Everett. "You shall have another piece of silver, Hans Peter, and to-morrow you will tell me more about the people of Zanah."

The simple one rose from his place on the grass, took the coin into his square, fat hand, and slouched away with it. As he disappeared, Everett thought of a hundred things he would have liked to ask about Walda Kellar. Yet, strangely enough, he could not bring himself to speak her name to the village fool.

IV

AFTER giving his promise to stay in Zanah, Everett found that the day dragged. Having finished questioning the fool, he went to the inn, where he ate his noonday dinner in silence. Then he wandered among the lanes and winding roads until it was time for the evening meal, at which two taciturn women waited on him. He made an effort to talk to the women, but they pretended not to understand his German, and insisted upon offering him hot biscuits and honey. He found that he had no appetite, and soon left the table. As he passed through the big room which served as an office, he noticed that Diedrich Werther was not in his usual seat beside a little, round table where at all hours the innkeeper was to be seen smoking his pipe and drinking huge cupfuls of black coffee. Hans Peter occupied his favorite nook on the settle near the fireplace.

Everett went out on the porch, where he took possession of his host's arm-chair. Naturally his thoughts wandered to Walda. The girl was a mystery to him. Although he was slow to acknowledge it, he knew that she aroused in him an insistent inter-

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est. He who cared little for women suddenly found his attention fixed upon a girl who belonged to a class different from any other with which he had ever come in contact. He usually classified all women he met. He found that they were easily divided into comparatively few types. Here was one whose education and whose traditions isolated her. He hoped she would pass by the inn. Impatiently he looked at his watch; the hour for evening prayer was slow in coming. He had risen with the intention of strolling about the square, when he heard the meeting-house bell ring. In a moment the long street again became alive. As the men and women went by on opposite sides, many of them glanced at him. Even the demure, quiet girls allowed their eyes to rest upon him for half a second. One, however, was unconscious of his presence. Frieda Bergen, the village maid who had taken the letter from the tree-trunk at the mill, looked across the grass-grown road to a youth who kept his eyes upon her until the blood mounted to her cheeks and her glance was cast upon the ground.

The school-master walked with his head bowed, as if he were deep in thought, and behind him followed the boys, who forgot to romp and play. He stopped on the rustic bridge. When all the villagers had passed, Walda Kellar came. Her hands were crossed upon her breast, and instead of keeping her eyes upon the ground she had them fixed on the clouds, where the

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crimson light was turning to purple and gray. On either side of her walked women whom Everett had never seen before. One of them was stout, and had passed her first youth. As Walda walked by Gerson Brandt on the bridge, the school-master and his charges doffed their caps to her. Everett could see that Walda smiled on the man of Zanah, and that she spoke to him. The school-master waited in reverent attitude until the future prophetess disappeared within the church porch. Then he motioned to his pupils to go on, while he turned back towards the inn. With lagging step he came into the village square.

“Hast thou half an hour to spend with one who would speak to thee?” he asked, addressing Everett.

The stranger in Zanah hastened to assure the school-master that he wanted companionship. Without being summoned, Hans Peter appeared with a chair. Gerson Brandt dropped into it as if he were weary, and Everett had a chance to notice that the delicate face was worn and haggard. There was something extraordinarily impressive in the personality of this man of Zanah. His gaunt form was well knit. Meekness and gentleness sat upon a face that denoted an intense nature. The curve of the lip told of unusual will-power, but the eyes revealed the fact that the soul of a dreamer dwelt within the school-master.

“I would talk to thee about Brother Kellar,” he

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said. "Walda Kellar is concerned lest she hath been selfish in asking thee to stay in the village. The women of Zanah have told her that thou hast much to do in the world and that thou canst ill afford to waste thy time here in the colony."

Everett forgot his reflections of the previous hour and replied:

"I shall be glad to stay here. It is a privilege to be useful once in a while."

"Dost thou work much?" asked the school-master.

Gerson Brandt folded his thin hands that bore the marks of toil and turned to scrutinize the stranger. "It is long since I left the world," he added. "I know little of it as it is to-day, but I remember that it was a very busy place."

Everett could not repress a smile.

"You speak as if the whole world were one great village, and Zanah's only rival," he said.

Gerson Brandt laughed, and for an instant his face was young.

"We colonists live shut up in our little valley so closely that we can hardly be called a part of the changing life of America," he said. "Once I loved the things of the world, and even now I sometimes long for what were once my idols."

"Your idols?"

"Once I dreamed of being a great artist," confessed the school-master. "That was when I was a youth

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in Munich. There came to me a disappointment. Then it was shown to my soul that I must not fix my hopes on the things of earth. I drifted to America. The world was cruel to me. Somehow I found Zanah. My art was a help to the people of the colony. They took me in."

He spoke simply, but there was a little quaver in his voice, and he turned his head away.

Everett rose and began to pace up and down the porch. The humble tragedy in the life of the man of Zanah touched him and made him feel ashamed of his own paltry aims.

"Do you mean that you illuminated their books?" he asked.

Gerson Brandt shook his head.

"Not at first. I still loved beauty. I yet had ambition, and it was long before I could trust myself to use the colors. I had a hard discipline. For years I have made the designs for the blue calicoes that the mills turn out."

"By Jove! I don't know how a man can surrender all his ambitions. I cannot make it out," Everett exclaimed, pausing before the gentle school-master. "How long have you been in Zanah?"

"Fifteen years. I was two-and-twenty when I came. Some day, before I die, I mean to go out to see what changes have taken place. I know that men are doing marvellous things, for sometimes I talk to

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strangers. But it is better not to know the world, for it gives a man so many interests he forgets his God." Gerson Brandt hesitated a moment. "Even under the protection of Zanah it is hard for a man to subdue all the human forces within him," he added.

"All human forces are not wicked. Such a creed as that is not taught in the New Testament," said Everett. He felt irresistibly drawn towards the school-master. All the vigorous manhood in him resented the restrictions that Zanah placed upon its disciples.

"There are many that seem not so to me," assented the school-master, "but Zanah teaches that it is best to fix all one's thoughts on heaven. Of course we have our restless hours. We who have been touched by the world find it hard to forget. Those whose thoughts have been centred always in Zanah are the happy ones."

"Walda Kellar is one of the happy ones, is she not?"

Everett felt that the question would be parried, and he hesitated to ask it; but his impulse to speak of the girl who occupied his thoughts gained the mastery. Gerson Brandt's face reddened.

"There is peace and faith in the heart of her whom the Lord hath chosen to be his instrument," said the school-master, and, rising, he turned as if to leave the presence of the stranger. He paused and added:

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“I came here to talk with thee of Brother Wilhelm Kellar. He is the closest to me of all Zanah, and I would ask thee to tell me the truth concerning him. Hath the Lord called him, or will he be spared to go on with his work in the colony?”

“If no great shock and no unusual strain of work is put on him he may live many years,” said Everett. “He appears to have much vitality, and I expect to see him able to resume his duties within a month.”

“The *Untersuchung* is but a month off,” said Gerson Brandt, “and it will be a sore trial to him if he is not able to see his daughter anointed prophetess of Zanah.”

Gerson Brandt did not listen to Everett's reply; he rose and stood upon the steps of the inn with his face turned towards the meeting-house. Down the street came Mother Werther and Walda. The wife of the host of the inn walked with the girl's hand clasped in hers, and, entering the square, she drew Walda to the place where the school-master stood.

After the manner of the men of Zanah, Gerson Brandt made no sign until Walda had spoken to him.

“Thou wert missed at prayers, Gerson Brandt,” she said, “and because I asked thee to do a service for me. Thou hast talked about my father to the stranger?”

The school-master nodded his head.

“It hath been shown to me that I was selfish in begging thee to stay in Zanah,” Walda said, address-

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ing Everett. "Thou wilt forgive a girl who hath not yet subdued her soul?"

In her presence Everett felt abashed. He saw in her a mysterious mingling of the child, the woman, and the prophetess. As she waited for him to answer her, he had a chance to notice the noble outlines of her face and the perfect poise of her lithe body.

"Do not concern yourself about me," he said. "I assure you I am glad to stay in Zanah." As he spoke the rare beauty of the girl again cast a spell over him, and he meant what he said. Mother Werther put her arm about Walda's waist and would have drawn her inside the door of the inn had not Everett stopped them.

"One moment," he said. "There is a condition that I should like to make. Your father needs faithful nursing—the watchfulness that only love can give him. If you will take care of him I shall feel that I have the right help and that I shall not have cause to regret that I remained in Zanah."

"That is a matter thou shouldst put before the Herr Doktor," said Mother Werther. "Brother Schneider is coming now; speak to him."

"Is it not customary for members of families here in the colony to nurse one another?" Everett asked the school-master.

"Not unless they are especially appointed to the task," answered Gerson Brandt.

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Adolph Schneider had reached the inn. He greeted Everett with a show of cordiality, and, taking possession of the big arm-chair, lighted his pipe. He began to talk of Wilhelm Kellar's illness, and to lament the loss of the elder's aid in carrying on the business of the colony. Then Everett found his chance to request Walda's attendance at the bedside of her father.

"The *Untersuchung* is at hand," said the Herr Doktor, "and it is the time for prayer and meditation. Thou knowest that we believe she will be made the instrument of the Lord, and therefore she should live much alone until the hour when she shall speak with a new tongue."

Adolph Schneider looked at Everett suspiciously. The man of the world showed that he could outwit the man of Zanah. With an assumption of indifference Everett replied:

"Of course it makes little difference to me. I shall do the best I can to help Wilhelm Kellar back to health, but if you send his daughter to nurse him he is likely to recover twice as rapidly as he would otherwise."

He resumed his promenade on the porch. As he walked back and forth the president of the colony saw that he was a man of magnificent physique, erect and athletic. With some misgiving he noticed that the stranger had more than the ordinary share of

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physical beauty, and that he had the indefinable air which belongs to those accustomed to command the best the world has to give.

“It is important that Wilhelm Kellar should be well as soon as it is God’s will to restore him,” said Adolph Schneider. “His sickness is a stroke of Providence we may not question. Still, it behooveth us to aid in his speedy recovery. Walda Kellar shall be sent to nurse her father.”

Everett put his hands behind him and turned his back as if he had not heard. When the Herr Doktor repeated his decision the man of the world said, in a quiet tone:

“Very well. I shall expect to see the new nurse in the sick-room to-morrow.”

V

WHEN Everett went to see his patient the next morning he had a new interest in the case. Mother Kaufmann met him at the door and took him into the queer room under the eaves where, in his little alcove, lay Wilhelm Kellar. The room was exquisitely neat. The little, hinged window at the foot of the sick man's bed was open, and it let in the fragrance wafted from the garden.

Everett looked around for Walda, but she was not in the room. He was too wise to make any inquiry for her. He went to the bedside, and while Mother Kaufmann leaned upon the foot-board he felt the pulse of the sick man. Wilhelm Kellar cast a questioning look at the physician.

"You are better," Everett said, in German. "You will be out in a week or two if nothing unforeseen happens."

He stepped out of the alcove to prepare his medicines in the larger apartment. "Are you the nurse?" he inquired of the woman.

"The Herr Doktor told me to help Walda Kellar,

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who will come after her hour of prayer," Mother Kaufmann replied.

Everett left a few directions, and said he would call again. He returned at sundown. The school-master was out on the little porch poring over a yellow-paged book. He let Everett pass him without salutation. The younger man hastened up the narrow stairs. The sick-room appeared quite changed when he entered it. Flowers were arranged in a great blue bowl on the table. In a clumsy-looking cage that hung by the window a chaffinch fluttered back and forth. Plants bloomed in the bow-window at which sat Walda Kellar. The girl's long, slender hands were busy with her knitting. The folds of her blue gown swept the sanded floor. The kerchief folded on her breast was not whiter than her neck. One of her braids fell over her bosom. She did not hear Everett, as she was looking out upon the western bluffs even while her hands kept the needles flying. He stepped into the room. Walda rose and, putting her finger on her lips, said:

"My father sleepeth." In rising she dropped her ball of yarn. Everett picked it up, and, slowly winding it, advanced until he was very close to her. As he put the ball in her hand their fingers touched, but the prophetess of Zanah appeared unconscious of the contact. Motioning him to a chair she again took her place at the window. There was a long silence, during

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which her knitting-needles flashed back and forth. The girl showed no embarrassment; indeed, she seemed to have forgotten him. In Zanah small talk was unknown. Walda Kellar, who was to be inspired of the Lord, had been taught to speak only when she had something to say.

Everett suddenly found himself dumb. He sat opposite Walda, and was as uneasy as a school-boy who has not the courage to bestow the red apple in his pocket upon his pretty neighbor across the aisle. As the minutes went by he began to feel her presence restful. She sat immovable except for her untiring hands. Once or twice she raised her calm eyes and caught the stranger's gaze resting on her. She appeared not to notice it, and continued her knitting. At last the silence became unendurable, and Everett said:

“It will be a great help to me to have you here to nurse your father.” The girl looked up and did not answer.

“Much depends upon you,” he continued. “It is only with your aid that I can do my best.”

Walda Kellar again raised her eyes. Then, in her soft, deep voice, she said:

“The Lord hath sent thee to Zanah. Thou shalt have all my help. Thou hast already won my gratitude.”

Again a silence fell. Everett leaned back in the

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splint-bottomed chair and resolved to make the most of his opportunities of being alone with the prophetess. Upon his perch the chaffinch looked out through the bars at the quiet room.

Outside the crimson sky was turning to purple, the fields had become a tender brown, and the bluffs made a dark line to the west. Everett, who gazed at the distant hills, compared the surging world to which he belonged with the peaceful colony of Zanah, the dwelling-place of Walda Kellar. The contrast between his own life and that of the strange girl impressed itself upon him. Now and then he brought his glance back from the far bluffs to look at the fair woman who was oblivious of his presence.

The chaffinch chirped his drowsy notes, and Walda Kellar, looking up at the bird, said:

“What disturbeth thee, Piepmatz?”

The bird turned his restless head back and forth, and Everett imagined that the chaffinch might object to his presence.

“Is that your bird?” he asked, relieved at even the paltriest excuse for again starting a conversation.

Walda stopped her knitting and, smiling, said:

“Piepmatz is my *liebchen*; he hath a voice as clear as that of a lark. He can whistle tunes; he knows a bar of the doxology.”

Everett went to the cage and whistled softly. The bird chirped his silvery note, and, thus encouraged,

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the man whistled the strain of a love-song. The bird imitated three notes.

“That is a noble hymn thou art whistling,” said Walda Kellar. “I have heard that there is wonderful music out there in the world, and that they play on strange instruments.”

“And have you never heard an organ or a violin?” asked Everett.

Walda Kellar shook her head.

“And is even the piano barred out of Zanah?”

“Zanah permits no musical instrument. Gerson Brandt keepeth yet a flute that he brought with him from the world, but it is always silent here.”

“Perhaps you will let me sing you the tune you seemed to like?” said Everett. “Some day when I am not afraid of disturbing your father you shall hear it all.”

Wilhelm Kellar stirred in his bed; Walda was at his side in a moment. Everett followed her. Wilhelm Kellar would have spoken, but his tongue still refused to do his bidding. While he was looking up at his daughter and the physician, Mother Kaufmann bustled in.

“How comes it that thou art here alone with the stranger?” she asked, casting an ugly look upon Walda.

“I am here to serve my father,” said the girl, with a sweet dignity. “Dost thou not know that the Herr Doktor hath assigned me here?”

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"He is foolish," snapped Mother Kaufmann.

"What art thou saying, woman?" asked the school-master, who had just passed through the doorway. "Walda is in her father's care and in my care. It is not thy concern to ask questions."

The woman scowled and drew her thin lips tightly over her hideous teeth.

"And thou art a second father to Walda, I suppose?" she sneered.

"Yea, and more," said the school-master.

"Gerson Brandt hath spoken the truth. He is more than father to me in that he is my teacher and my safe counsellor," said Walda, stepping back towards him.

The school-master's pale face flushed.

"Thou art always my sacred charge for whom I pray," said Gerson Brandt, in a soft voice. "For thee and for thy happiness I would do all things in my power." There was that in his face which told the man of the world all emotion had not died in the heart beating beneath the queer coat of the school-master.

"Ah, and I pray for thee every night when I ask a blessing for my father," spoke Walda. "I entreat wisdom and strength for thee."

Gerson Brandt looked into her eyes and a sudden light illumined his face.

"Thou needest much of divine aid for thy work with little children," the girl added.

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“Yea, yea,” the school-master said, as he turned away.

“Yea, yea, didst thou say?” repeated the shrill voice of Mother Kaufmann. “Just remember that thy conversation should be yea, yea and nay, nay.”

Ignoring the elder woman, Everett gave a few directions to Walda. Then he passed out into the darkening evening.

VI

THERE was labor for all in Zanah. Early in the morning the villagers took their hasty breakfasts in the kitchens and then went out to work in the mills and fields. The children over six years of age were gathered into the school-houses, the boys being accorded more privileges in the way of learning than the girls, who were not permitted to enjoy the instructions of Gerson Brandt. The future "mothers" of the colony were kept many hours in a rambling building, where they were taught all the domestic arts, with but now and then a lesson from the books borrowed from the school-master. In the very centre of the village stood the *kinderhaus*, where the babes of the colony were tended during the working-hours of their mothers. A wide porch surrounded the *kinderhaus* on four sides, and a tangled garden of bloom divided it from the street. In a vine-covered arbor, set among the flowers, Walda Kellar was accustomed to spend her hours of meditation during her last month before the *Untersuchung*. It was not long before Everett discovered this fact; and when Mother Kaufmann relieved the girl in the sick-room he often made

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excuse to speak to her as she went through the little wicket gate. Outside the sick-room, however, she was always the prophetess of Zanah, aloof in manner and difficult to reach by word.

One day as he wandered down the street, after having assured himself that Walda was poring over a book in the little arbor, he happened to meet Adolph Schneider. Since the day when the stranger had shown a willingness to pay a generous price for any book he might wish to buy from the colony, the Herr Doktor had treated him with a perceptible deference. Adolph Schneider stopped now, and, leaning on his cane, said:

“If thou hast a mind to buy that Bible shown thee by Gerson Brandt, the people of Zanah are willing to sell it to thee. Many times have I meant to speak to thee concerning the barter, but thou knowest that the sickness of Wilhelm Kellar hath interfered with all the business of the colony.”

Everett waited half a moment before he replied. He read in the face of the Herr Doktor craftiness and greed, and he knew he must use tact if he would spare Gerson Brandt the pang of parting with his precious book.

“The Bible is not what I want,” he said. “Some smaller book will do as well for me.”

Adolph Schneider was too shrewd to be easily put off.

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“We have found that there is no writing for sale in Zanah. Of all our books there is none that we can part with except the Bible. Zanah is loath to part with that, but the colony hath need of money.”

Again Everett said that he did not wish to make the purchase.

Adolph Schneider was not to be balked. “I will send to the school-master for the book,” he said, “and thou shalt examine it at thy leisure. I will have it taken to the inn.”

Everett walked away towards one of the large vineyards, which was situated on a sunny slope of a hill just beyond the village. Here men and women were silently picking the early grapes. Elders and village mothers kept strict watch of the younger members of the colony. No one appeared to take any notice of the stranger, and he went over to a place where a pile of stones offered him a seat. It was a glorious summer day with a premature promise of the autumn in its golden haziness. Along the edges of the fences stalks of golden-rod here and there stood out among the tall grasses. The fields stretched away in patches of brown and green and yellow. He felt sure that there was no more tranquil spot in all the earth. As the quiet colonists worked among the vines, Everett asked himself if they were really reconciled to the barrenness of their lives. The world, with its delights, its pains, its passions, was barred out, but he won-

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dered whether the men and women found it possible to close their hearts to all human emotion. With heads bowed low the women kept their faithful hands busy, each doing the work allotted to her. Apparently the chagrins of coquetry, the pangs of aspiration, the restlessness of unfulfilled ambition did not touch them; yet, now and then, he caught the girls casting sly glances at the youths who labored near them.

When the afternoon had advanced until the long shadows began to fall upon the fields, Mother Werther appeared, carrying two steaming tin pails fastened to a bar that she balanced deftly. Her appearance was the signal for every one to stop work. She put the pails down in an open space, and, smiling kindly on men and maids alike, said:

“Every man and woman here will be glad of a cup of coffee, I am sure, and this to-day is stronger than any I have boiled for many a week. It is from the Herr Doktor’s own bag.”

There was a merry twinkle in her eye, and Everett was sure he saw her wink at one of the village “mothers” who leaned against a near post that supported a well-stripped vine.

“Didst thou steal from Brother Schneider’s store?” inquired a fat old man who was leisurely sorting the great bunches of grapes. “Fie, fie, Sister Werther! I thought thou couldst be trusted, even though thou art still in the lowest grade of Zanah’s colonists.”

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Several of the older women laughed, and Mother Werther made haste to reply:

“It was right that I should take the coffee, since my stock was gone. Surely it should not be better than that we all drink, for here in Zanah no one is entitled to more than another.”

One or two of the men sneered perceptibly.

“Hasten to serve us,” urged an impatient girl.

“There are no cups,” said Joseph Hoff, who had drawn near to where Frieda Bergen stood.

“Ach! Where is that boy Hans Peter?” asked Mother Werther. “He was to follow in my very footsteps.” She looked back across the field, and in the distance the form of the simple one appeared. On his head Hans Peter carried an immense basket. He walked slowly in his usual listless way, and appeared unmindful of the numerous urgent calls to him. When he finally reached Mother Werther he put the basket, which was heaped high with tin cups, down upon the ground, and stood staring vacantly ahead of him.

“Thou art tardy, foolish one,” said a man who scowled down upon the boy and took the topmost cup, which he dipped into one of the buckets of coffee. Hans Peter made no reply.

“Where is Gerson Brandt?” asked the overseer, who had been too closely engaged in examining some of the vines to pay attention to anything that was going on

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around him. "I need his advice, and he and all his troop of boys should have been here a quarter-hour ago."

"The Herr Doktor hath kept him in the school-house. They are speaking together," explained the village fool.

"Go tell him that the work cannot go on until he comes," said the overseer.

Hans Peter turned and went back with lagging steps. The vineyard workers paid little attention to him, however, for they were all intent upon helping themselves to Mother Werther's clear coffee. Joseph Hoff dipped a cup into one of the buckets. Calling to Everett, he said:

"Wilt thou not join the men of Zanah in drinking good luck to the wine-presses?"

Everett rose from his seat to take the proffered cup. He saw that Joseph Hoff managed to pass by where Frieda Bergen sat upon the ground. They spoke a word to each other, but no one noticed them. Under the cheering influence of the coffee, more talking was permitted than the stranger in Zanah had heard at any other time since he came to the colony. Now and then the elder men and women exchanged a word. The young girls laughed in low tones, and there was even something like playfulness among the youths, some of whom wrestled, and some of whom cuffed one another in rough play.

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“The quarter-hour is past,” said the overseer, and all the cups were thrown upon the ground in a pile, while men and women, youths and maidens, turned again to their work. Everett had half a mind to ask for a knife with which to cut the great clusters of heavy fruit from the vines. He felt that he would know how to do it quite as expertly as the men whom he watched; but while he was hesitating about taking upon himself anything that was like real work his attention was attracted by the appearance of Hans Peter, accompanied by the school-master, who was followed by his pupils. As the school-master came near, Everett saw that he had a troubled look.

“What hath detained thee, Brother Brandt?” inquired the overseer, who was superintending the loading of the grapes upon heavy wagons.

“I had mislaid a book,” the school-master said, simply. “I spent half an hour searching for it.”

“Thou wert ever absent in thy mind,” said Mother Werther, with a laugh. “Thou wilt find it in some odd place where it ought not to be.”

“I was sure I put it safely in my chest of drawers,” said the school-master. “I recall the very day on which I laid it in the topmost place.”

“Now recall the day thou didst take it from the drawer,” said the overseer.

“Nay, I know it hath lain there undisturbed by my hand,” said Gerson Brandt.

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“Was it a book of much worth?” inquired Mother Werther.

“Yea, one most precious to me—the Bible that I have been illuminating these many months.”

“The Bible that the stranger coveted?” inquired the overseer, pointing towards Everett, who stood by, listening to the conversation.

The school-master nodded.

It was not five minutes before every one working in the vineyard knew that Gerson Brandt had lost his Bible, and there were some, Everett noticed, among both men and women, who muttered to one another as if they accused the school-master of some sinister design concerning the book the colony claimed. Everett walked up and down among the rows of vines, until he noticed that Adolph Schneider had come to the place where Gerson Brandt had busied himself. He could see that the Herr Doktor spoke emphatically and waved his cane, and that the school-master replied with quiet dignity.

“The Bible that thou wouldst buy hath disappeared in a strange manner,” said Adolph Schneider, addressing Everett. “It will be found in the space of a day or two, for we have no thieves in Zanah. The overseer and I both believe Brother Brandt hath forgotten where he put it, and that he will find it when he maketh a more thorough search.”

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There was something like insinuation in his tone, and Gerson Brandt's face flushed.

"The book hath been taken from my room," he said. "It is where I cannot find it."

"Thou speakest as if thou wert brother to the simple one," said Herr Schneider.

"I speak the truth," said Gerson Brandt.

"Yea, he telleth the truth," declared Hans Peter, pulling himself up on his knees and looking at the Herr Doktor.

"The truth! What dost thou know about it—thou of little mind and less judgment?" said Adolph Schneider.

"I may know much, and I may know little," said Hans Peter, swaying himself back and forth on his knees.

"Surely thou hast not taken my Bible?" said the school-master, with a look of mingled hope and fear on his face.

"Nay, I have not said that I took it," replied the fool.

"Yet thou hast knowledge of it, Hans Peter?" asked Gerson Brandt, his eyes scanning the dull face of the simple one.

"It is said I have knowledge of naught," said Hans Peter, who rose to his feet and, folding his arms across his ragged, blue blouse, confronted the school-master and the Herr Doktor with fearless eyes.

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“Why bandy words with a fool?” said the overseer. “There is much to be done.”

The men and women of Zanah returned to their tasks. Some of the men piled the grapes into large tubs, which were lifted on wagons drawn by fat, sleek horses. The women, scattered among the vines, industriously cut off the bunches of luscious fruit, and the boys who had accompanied Gerson Brandt into the vineyard were sent back and forth, bearing pails and baskets on their heads. Mother Werther gave Hans Peter the tin cups to carry back to the village, and he went away unnoticed except by Everett, who had the feeling that the simple one might be able to tell what had become of Gerson Brandt's treasured volume.

The close of the summer day began to be noticed. The sun sank behind the bluffs. Everett idly watched the workers in the vineyard prepare to go home. The women were first to leave their tasks, and, with Mother Werther at the head of the procession, they walked two and two towards the road. As they walked they sang a dismal strain. The wagons creaked as the wheels sank deeply into the soil, and marching beside them went the men, carrying upon their shoulders scythes and rakes, which they had used in an adjoining hay-field. The vineyard toilers wound down the hill-side. All had apparently forgotten Everett, who had found a place where he

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could lie upon the ground with his head pillowed upon a smooth rock. The peace and quiet of the evening soothed him, and again, for the hundredth time in the day, he thought of Walda Kellar. As if his thoughts were suggested by her proximity, he saw, coming from the hay-field, the prophetess of Zannah. She was leading a little child by the hand, and behind her silently followed several of the "mothers" of the colony. The women carried upon their heads great bundles of hay, while back of them moved the harvest wagons, piled high with heavy loads taken from the great stacks that dotted the broad fields. Walda appeared not to notice the stranger, who lay quietly watching her. She was talking in a low, soothing tone to the child, which apparently had been crying for its mother. When Walda was within a few feet of him, Everett quickly rose, but he hesitated to address her. With uncovered head, he waited until she might see him. When she was very near him she raised her eyes and started, as if surprised to find the stranger in the vineyard. She would have passed on, but he detained her by seizing upon the pretext that she must be interested in hearing about her father, whom he had seen after she left the sick-room. He said:

"Miss Kellar, your father is fast regaining strength. To-day I find that he will soon be able to leave his bed."

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The girl stopped, and, looking at him, answered:

“Thou hast my prayers and my thanks, thou stranger in Zanah.”

“If I have done anything to deserve your thanks, I am grateful, Miss Kellar.”

The women had stopped at a little distance from them, and he could see that they were muttering something among themselves. Presently one of them spoke:

“Sir, thou art addressing the prophetess of Zanah with the vain title used in the world outside. If thou must speak to her, thou shouldst call her Walda Kellar.”

Everett was embarrassed. He stood gazing at the girl, who smiled upon him quite naturally.

“Yea, thou shouldst call me Walda,” she said. “Thou knowest that in the Bible the men and women addressed one another by their simple names.”

“Then, if I am to follow the custom of Zanah, you must call me not stranger, but Stephen,” he said. And she answered:

“Yea, Stephen, already thou seemest scarcely a stranger.”

He felt a sudden quickening of the pulses when the girl spoke to him by his given name, so seldom used, for he was little burdened by kinsmen and the intimacies of ordinary companionship. Stephen Everett had always been a man who forbade those with whom

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he came in contact to take liberties with him, yet he had the quiet friendliness that kept for him the constancy and devotion of all who knew him. His name, spoken by the prophetess of Zanah, had, however, a sound that suddenly glorified it. As he stood there he could think of nothing to say, and she passed on, leaving him to look after her, and to feel in a new and peculiar manner that the world had changed for him. He saw that she walked with a firm step and a light freedom of movement that gave her a rare grace. She moved slowly, so that the little child could keep pace with her, and he was grateful for the chance duty that gave him a longer glimpse of her. She passed through the wooden gate which cut off the vineyard. Presently he saw her disappear among the trees at the end of the village street, and a sense of loneliness swept over him. He who had always been glad of the opportunity to enjoy his own society felt something of the homesickness of the soul.

VII

GERSON BRANDT sat alone in his school-room. His elbows were propped on the worn lid of his black, oaken desk, and his chin was supported in the palms of his hands. His face had a worried look. The lines about his mouth had deepened within the last few days, and his heavy brows were drawn together. He was wondering what could have happened to the precious Bible. Now that he had become accustomed to the changes brought about in the routine of his daily life by the illness of Wilhelm Kellar, he sorely missed the pleasant task of each day making a letter or two upon the pages of the Sacred Word. It had been his joy and his recreation, after the long school sessions, to turn to his pens and his colored inks. Line by line he had wrought the delicate traceries with many a thought of Walda and many a prayer for her well-being. He had dwelt so long in the faith that inspired Zanah that he had felt in the hope of her inspiration a peculiar satisfaction and contentment. He was a poet and a dreamer, so he found it not hard to believe that this girl of Zanah would be given a special

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power not vouchsafed to many souls that come into the great domain of sin.

It was a week since the loss of the Bible had been discovered. It was apparent to him, whose nature was sensitive to every suggestion, that the people of Zanah for some reason distrusted him, and imputed blame to him because of the mysterious disappearance of the volume that might have brought the colony the price of many rolls of flannel and many bottles of wine. The Herr Doktor that very day had been to see him about devising some means by which more effective search could be made for the Bible. Notwithstanding Wilhelm Kellar's illness, the room up-stairs had been thoroughly searched. With Schneider standing by, he had been obliged to submit to the humiliation of unlocking each drawer and turning out upon the floor all his few personal possessions. From his bed in the alcove Wilhelm Kellar had anxiously watched every movement, and had shown keen disappointment when the big volume could not be found. Mother Werther had been present, and had scrutinized each article as it was put back in its accustomed place in the old-fashioned chest of drawers. One thing alone she failed to examine, and that was his old leather portfolio, much worn with long years of constant use. In this portfolio was concealed his one forbidden possession—the sketch of Walda made years before, when she was

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scarcely more than a child. Zannah permitted not the image of anything on earth to be kept by a faithful colonist; but he had treasured this, made in a moment of weakness and loneliness. He had eased his conscience with the thought that he had drawn not the woman of the future, but the prophetess who would some day guide his people.

Adolph Schneider had gone on his way but a few moments before. The school-master still felt the sting of his last words—an injunction to find the Bible within the next fortnight. Gerson Brandt had spent all his unemployed waking moments in trying to account for the disappearance of the big book. He felt sure that there was no boy in the village mischievous enough to steal it, and no outsider except Everett had been within the boundaries of Zannah for many a week. Instinctively he knew that the colonists were judging him unkindly, for even in Zannah jealousies and rivalries were not unknown. In all his years of colony life he had escaped criticism, because he had been the one elder untouched by personal ambition. His gentleness and sweetness of nature had made even the most selfish and disagreeable person his friend, for no one in all Zannah had performed the friendly services that belonged to the record made by the school-master of the colony.

Presently he turned his face towards the window and looked out upon the summer landscape. The

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day seemed strangely silent. The late summer already presaged the coming autumn. The birds had long ceased their singing. There was not even the hum of a lazy insect. A sense of loneliness crept over this man, accustomed to the peculiar isolation of life in Zanah. He half realized that the loss of the Bible meant to him, in a certain sense, a cutting off of a daily association of thought that bound him to Walda. His mind had hardly turned towards the girl before he heard her light footstep as she crossed the threshold. When he saw her framed in the doorway that opened out on the little porch, he felt foolishly glad, but although he rose to his feet he did not advance to meet her.

“Ah, Gerson Brandt, something is troubling thee,” said Walda. “For fully two minutes I have been watching thee from the porch. What is in thy mind to rob thee thus of peace?”

“Nay, Walda, my peace is not gone, I trust,” said the school-master; but he paused, as if the assertion made him cognizant that he might not be speaking the whole truth. “I have been thinking much about the loss of my Bible.”

“Yea, that is very strange,” said Walda, standing before his desk, and looking up into his eyes with an inquiring glance. “I cannot understand what could befall it.”

“If it cannot be found, my honor is touched,” said

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Gerson Brandt, and there was something like a quiver on his sensitive lips. "There are those in Zanah who will count it against me, because I put overmuch work upon the book and grew to hold it as my best possession."

"Nay, nay, Gerson Brandt, the people love thee, and they will remember the injunction that they must not judge one another."

Gerson Brandt stepped from the high platform. Motioning towards a bench in front of the window, he said:

"Sit here near me, Walda; I would speak to thee now alone, since there may not come another chance before thy day of inspiration."

The girl took her place on the bench and Gerson Brandt stood before her. For a moment he was silent. With hands folded across his spare chest, and with his head bent, he gazed down upon the beautiful girl. He noticed a change in her face. It had lost something of the childishness of its expression. It had a graver look. The eyes bespoke a seriousness he thought foretold the coming spiritual inspiration for which the colony had waited so many years.

"It is well, Walda, that thou hast reached this time in thy life without being touched by worldly emotions. Zanah hath watched over thee with a care that hath kept thee pure for thy consecration to the Lord's work."

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“To Zanah I owe all my service,” said Walda. “I trust that great things may be revealed through me.”

She spoke as if she thought of herself from an objective point of view.

“This is an age when men should walk near God. There are strange things going on in the great world, and every year Zanah’s safety is jeopardized. Untoward manners and customs are already becoming known among the young people. There is in my heart much gratitude that thou hast escaped the temptations to fathom earthly love.”

“Gerson Brandt, is love the greatest of all the sins?” asked Walda, looking up into the face of the school-master, who bestowed upon her a look searching and withal tender.

“It is not given to me to judge what is the greatest sin a woman can commit,” Gerson Brandt answered, slowly. “I have heard that love bringeth pain and sorrow and disappointment.”

“Yet there are many who do not seem afraid to risk sorrow for love. Truly there must be some compensation for it,” said Walda.

“There is, there is,” replied the school-master. “At first it intoxicates; it bringeth fair dreams, high hopes, and a courage strong enough to face all the ills that earth can bring to men and women.”

“Surely thou speakest with authority, Gerson Brandt.” As Walda spoke there was a little smile

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upon her lips. "I might almost think that thou hadst known the joy and pain of loving."

"In books I have read of the love of men and women. There is one named Shakespeare, who long ago wrote much of the history of the human heart."

"In the Bible are many stories of the love of men and women," said Walda, "and sometimes I have wondered why, in this late day, it should have become so wrong a thing to find on earth a dear companionship."

Gerson Brandt turned away and walked across the room. When he came back he spoke in a steady voice.

"When the soul findeth on earth peace and happiness, it is easy to forget there is a heaven that lasts through eternity, and that these little years shall be swallowed up in the vast expanse of time. It were better to deny one's self joy here in order to be sure of happiness hereafter."

"But even to me earth often seems so near and dear, and heaven so far off, that now and then I can understand why the soul should reach out towards some one who could share all the little every-day happinesses and troubles," said Walda.

"It hath been given to man always to be lonely in the world," answered Gerson Brandt. "Each soul must travel like a stray pilgrim who can only greet other wayfarers and pass on."

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“Nay, Gerson Brandt, we need not be lonely here. In Zanah all are friends and brothers. So long as thou livest I can never feel that I am a solitary traveller.”

A crimson flush swept over the face of the school-master, and when the wave receded he was deathly pale.

“All these years my care hath been over thee, Walda. My prayers have been for thee; my hopes have been set on thee. When thou hast become, indeed, the prophetess of Zanah, I shall know that thou art safe forever. Then shall I find peace indeed.”

“Safe, Gerson Brandt! What dost thou mean? Safe from what? I cannot be safer than I am now.”

Gerson Brandt made no reply. He walked to the window and looked out upon the little garden.

Walda was lost in thought for a moment or two. Presently she said:

“Oh, Gerson Brandt, I know that I am like unto Eve, for when thou and the elders warn me so much about love there comes to me the desire to understand it.”

“None can understand love, Walda. It is revealed to every man and every woman in a different form. It is the all-compassing emotion that moveth the world.”

Walda rose to her feet. Stepping close to the school-master, she said:

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“Why, Gerson Brandt, there is that in thy voice that maketh me feel thou dost know much concerning love, which thou sayest is sinful and unworthy. Hast thou been tempted?”

“Mayhap I have. Here in Zanah we who keep the precepts of the colony close to our hearts are safe indeed. By much praying and constant vigilance we can escape all danger.”

“Surely earthly love could never touch thee or me, and why shouldst we waste time talking about the pitfalls that will never come in the way of our footsteps as we traverse the quiet paths of Zanah?”

“It is well to remember, Walda, that even in Zanah, our Garden of Eden, there is a tree of knowledge; but so long as we taste not the forbidden fruit we need have no fears.”

“Fears? My heart is so lifted up in these days there falleth upon me not the smallest shadow of the smallest fear to disturb me. I am full of gratitude and humility in the knowledge that I have been chosen to be the prophetess of Zanah, and each day there comes to me a broader faith and a surer conviction concerning the things revealed to us through the Great Book.”

Gerson Brandt was again silent for a long time. Once he took a step towards the girl, who was still standing before the bench from which she had risen. He hesitated a moment. Then he said, slowly:

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“Walda, when thou art given the tongue of the Spirit, thou wilt be separated from all Zanah. Thou wilt then live close to thy Creator, and, even though I am an elder, I shall be denied the privilege of speaking to thee. Lest there be no opportunity to talk again to thee alone, I will tell thee now that always my thoughts will dwell close to thee. In my heart the memory of the little girl that I have known so many years will remain forever.”

The tremor in his voice and the solemnity of his manner cast a feeling of awe upon Walda. Moved by an irresistible impulse, she dropped on her knees at his feet.

“Give me thy blessing, Gerson Brandt,” she said; and the man held his hands high above her bent head as he said, simply:

“God bless thee and keep thee, Walda Kellar.”

The girl rose and slowly passed out of the door.

Gerson Brandt went back to his desk. Again he put his elbows on the worn lid. Again he rested his chin in his hands. He sat thus for half an hour. Hans Peter, coming in on tiptoe, walked up a side aisle without being noticed. He climbed upon the stool, and the school-master roused himself to ask:

“Dost thou want me?”

“Thou wast thinking about thy lost Bible,” said the simple one, ignoring the question. “Thou hast no cause to borrow trouble.”

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“What dost thou know about it?” demanded the school-master.

“I know that it is where the Herr Doktor seems not to be able to find it,” said the simple one, twirling his thumbs. “I know that it is lost. I know thou canst not find it.”

“Hush, hush, Hans Peter. The Bible is not a subject by which thou canst display thy talent for speaking foolish words.”

VIII

IT was the beginning of spinning-time in Zanah. The grape crop had been gathered, the bare fields had been raked, and nothing remained to be done outside that could not be accomplished by the men and boys. Therefore the women of the colony were assigned the task of making the linen used in the households at Zanah. Although the very latest machinery had been installed in the mills, it was still the custom among the women to spin the colony sheets and table napery. The large dining-room in the inn had been cleared, and twenty wheels had been distributed here and there for the use of the favored "mothers" privileged to enjoy what was really an annual week of gossip. Gathered in the great dining-room were Mother Schneider, Mother Kaufmann, Mother Werther, and their nearest cronies. It was a bright afternoon, and the sun came in through the vine-covered windows. The door on the wide porch was open, and near it, in the choicest place in the room, sat Mother Schneider busy at her wheel. She paused to put back one of the strings of her black cap and asked:

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“What say they up at the school-house concerning the lost Bible, Sister Kaufmann?”

“They speak naught of it,” replied the sour-visaged woman, as she broke her thread. “Many times have I tried to make Brother Brandt tell me what he really thinks, but thou knowest he hath a way of holding his tongue.”

“Walda Kellar hath made a good nurse,” said Mother Werther, who was busy sorting the flax. “Anything that she undertaketh she doeth well.”

“She hath too much freedom in that sick-room,” declared Mother Schneider.

“Yea, she hath,” agreed Mother Kaufmann. “There are many hours that I cannot be there to watch her.”

“Thou forgettest that Walda Kellar needeth not watching as do other girls. She who hath been chosen to speak for the Lord surely can be trusted. And then thou knowest she is with her own father.”

Mother Werther cast an indignant glance at the wife of the Herr Doktor, who had started the conversation.

“I trust not that physician from the outside world,” said Mother Kaufmann. “He hath queer ways that are not like those of the men of Zanah.”

“He is always most kind and thoughtful; he treats women with much reverence,” said Mother Werther.

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“I know him best of all persons in Zanah, for doth he not stay here at the *gasthaus*?”

“Since when didst thou become a good judge of men?” asked Mother Kaufmann, with a taunting laugh that showed her ugly tusks. “The wife who after fifteen years hath not discovered the faults of her husband is not fitted to pass judgment on any man. I do not like that Stephen Everett.”

“He is helping Wilhelm Kellar to regain his health,” said a meek, middle-aged woman who sat in a far corner.

“It is a fortnight since Brother Kellar was taken ill, and he is still in bed,” said Mother Kaufmann.

“Thou forgettest that Brother Kellar hath been nigh unto death,” said Mother Werther.

“That doctor from the world is a handsome man,” remarked Gretchen Schneider, who had come in and taken her seat near her mother.

“Tut, tut; I am ashamed of thee,” said Mother Schneider, in a tone of reproof. “Thou forgettest that the maidens of Zanah must not look upon men, and must not care whether they be handsome or hideous.”

“Dost thou find him more comely than Karl Weisel, our respected elder?” inquired Mother Werther; and, despite the scowl of the wife of the Herr Doktor, smothered laughs were heard from various parts of the room. Gretchen Schneider’s pale face flushed. Before she could reply her mother retorted:

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“Thy words are unseemly, Sister Werther. I bid thee keep silence.”

“I have the right of free speech,” the innkeeper’s wife answered; “and there is none in Zanah who doth not know there would have been a wedding long ago if the head of the thirteen elders had not loved his place of authority better than the daughter of the Herr Doktor.”

In a moment Mother Schneider flew into a rage, quite inconsistent with the religious principles of Zanah.

“Hold thou thy clattering tongue,” she commanded; and for the space of two minutes not a word was spoken in the room. The whirring of the busy wheels alone disturbed the quiet.

The entrance of Frieda Bergen fortunately relieved the situation of its tensity. The girl came into the room bearing on her head a bundle of flax, which she deposited before Mother Werther.

“This I brought from the station, whither I went with Mother Schmidt,” she said.

“Thou shouldst not have been allowed to go to the railroad,” said Mother Kaufmann. “But what didst thou see there?”

“A train came by while I stood on the platform. I looked through one of the windows and saw silken-cushioned seats, and mirrors that showed gayly dressed men and women. There was also a car in which were dining-tables. Black men waited on women,

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who laughed and talked with men. Some of the women wore on their fingers jewels that looked like sparkling glass."

The wheels had all stopped. Every "mother" in the room was listening.

"The sparkling glass that thou sawest was what is called a diamond," said Gretchen Schneider. "Jewels are worn by those who have vanity in their souls."

"Truly, the rings were very beautiful," said Frieda Bergen.

"Thou wert ever a foolish maid," said Mother Schneider, in a tone of severe reproof. "Put out of thy thoughts what thou hast seen to-day. I shall have the Herr Doktor forbid thee from going to the station."

"Nay, Sister Schneider, scold not Frieda. She hath done no harm," said Mother Werther. "It should not hurt her to get a glimpse of the vanities of the world, for she is well grounded in the faith of Zanah. She knoweth that the costly gauds are but the playthings of sin-ridden women."

Standing in the middle of the room, Frieda Bergen shook her head doubtfully.

"Truly, those worldly ones appeared happy," she said. "There were some that read books and leaned back on velvet cushions. They looked as if they never worked. Some of the women were beautiful.

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They wore no caps upon their hair. Their frocks were not all alike, as they are here in Zanah."

"See, the daughter of Zanah is touched by the temptations of the world," said Mother Schneider. "We have heard enough. Begin thy work, Frieda Bergen."

"If what I hear is true, the elders should discipline Frieda," said Mother Kaufmann, with a sneer. "It hath come to my ears that she hath often spoken with Joseph Hoff."

Frieda Bergen bent her head over her work. A tell-tale blush overspread her delicate skin, and her hand trembled as she took up her distaff.

"Frieda Bergen hath the right to love Joseph Hoff if she chooseth," said Mother Werther, rising from her chair and walking the length of the room to the place where the girl sat. "Love may be a foolish thing in the eyes of Zanah, but it bringeth its reward."

"Thou art teaching heresy, Sister Werther," said Mother Schneider. "If the elders knew of thy herodoxy thou wouldst have to do penance through some hard task."

Mother Werther smiled in a tantalizing way. She drew in a long breath as she were about to retort, and then, thinking better of it, went back to her work.

"If Frieda is wise she will follow the example of some of us who have served God faithfully all unmindful of man," said Mother Kaufmann. Her re-

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mark was too much for Mother Werther. Dropping her flax, the innkeeper's wife put her hands upon her hips and laughed.

"And hast thou always been unmindful of Gerson Brandt?" she inquired.

"Mother, thou shouldst put an end to this unseemly talk," said Gretchen Schneider.

"Yea, thou hast something to fear lest it be remembered how narrowly *thou* hast escaped love," said Mother Werther.

"Stop thine unruly tongue," admonished Mother Schneider.

"Thou forgettest that in Zanah all men and women are equal," said Mother Werther. "Thy husband, the Herr Doktor, is enjoying but a brief authority. Thou art not greater than any other woman in the colony."

Mother Schneider gasped in anger, but before she could reply a shadow was cast upon the floor and Walda Kellar entered. Her sweet face wore an untroubled look. She smiled upon all the women gathered in the room.

"Something brought me here among you," she said. "I have but just come from my father's sick-room, and as I walked long, thinking of the coming *Untersuchung*, I felt that I wanted once more to spin with the women of Zanah."

"Thou bringest peace with thee," said Mother Werther.

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Frieda Bergen rose from her little, low-backed chair, and Walda Kellar seated herself before the girl's wheel.

Silence fell upon the room. The girl's presence commanded reverence. In her eyes was a peculiar light, and her face was radiant. Slowly she began to turn her wheel.

"It is very good to be here," she said, presently. "If the Lord giveth me the tongue of inspiration there will be other tasks for me, and now and then, when I am not quite so strong in the faith as I ought to be, I wonder whether I shall not sometimes be an unworthy instrument of the Lord, because the little things of life, it seemeth, will always have a charm for me. While the great, leather-bound books of Zanah have much to teach me, there are days when my inclinations draw me towards the labors which belong to the women of the colony."

No one answered. For a few moments the wheels whirred again, and not a word disturbed the pleasant hum of industry. Presently Walda's voice rose in a minor hymn. The deep, rich cadences swelled above the sound of the wheels. It was a weird, plaintive tune to which she sang German words which breathed a prayer for light upon the way that led through the sin-encompassed world. She paused after the first verse. Appearing to forget her work, she clasped her hands in her lap and sang again with such sweetness

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and such pathos that Mother Werther wiped her eyes. The singing had brought some one to the porch outside, but Walda appeared not to hear the footstep. She sang on and on, and when the last verse died upon her lips she sat very still, as if her soul had gone out with the strange melody.

Everett, who had come to the window, looking through the blinds, beheld the prophetess. For the moment the woman was lost, and he felt an overwhelming sense of her aloofness from him. There came to him a full realization of the gulf between him and this woman of Zanah, who belonged so little to the world and so much to heaven. For several minutes he stood fascinated as he gazed upon her, but, summoning all his will-power, he turned away lest he should be discovered spying upon the women of Zanah. As he walked towards the bluffs he met Hans Peter moving along in a leisurely manner. The witchery of Walda's song was still upon him, and he would have passed the simple one without a greeting, but Hans Peter stepped directly in his path.

"Thou hast made trouble in Zanah," said the simple one, staring at him with unblinking eyes and doubling up one fat fist. "The day that thou goest hence to the wicked world where thou belongest will be a happy one."

"You speak with but scant respect for the stranger

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within your gates," said Everett, who was amused by the vehemence of the village fool.

Hans Peter removed his ragged cap. "Thou hast brought sorrow to Gerson Brandt," he continued, "for thou wouldst have taken the Bible that he was making beautiful for Walda Kellar."

Everett studied the odd little figure before him for a moment. It was the first time that Hans Peter had betrayed, in manner or countenance, the least trace of emotion. Even now, as the simple one stood blinking his eyes, the man of the world could not comprehend his motive in making the unexpected accusation.

"You seem almost excited, Hans Peter," said Everett, presently, when the boy had begun to show that the silence was uncomfortable. "And why are you concerned about the Bible?"

"The school-master setteth great store on the Sacred Book," replied the simple one. "He hath been kind to me, and I like not to see him troubled."

"And is not every one kind to you, Hans Peter?"

The simple one thrust his hand into his deep pocket and hung his head.

"The people of Zanah are many times vexed with the fool," he said. "They have scant patience with one who believes not as they do. In all the colony there are only three who seem to forget that Hans Peter is the village fool."

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“And who are they? Gerson Brandt is one, I know. Who are the others?”

“The prophetess of Zanah and Mother Werther.”

“And do you not believe in the prophetess of Zanah? Have you not faith that she will be the inspired one?”

“Why do you question the village fool?” asked Hans Peter, suddenly, wary lest he should tell something that he wished to conceal. “Thou knowest that to all the colony Walda Kellar is the revered one. Truly, she walketh near to God.”

“Then perhaps some day she will lead you into the full faith of Zanah?” said Everett. But the fool shook his head.

“Hans Peter loveth earth, not heaven. He would not be wise as the men of Zanah are wise, for verily their wisdom bringeth them no joy.”

“Hans Peter, you speak as one who has much knowledge, after all. I am beginning to think that you are the wisest man in the colony.”

“If there is wisdom in knowing one is a fool and being content in his own folly, then am I wise. They say that the fool is often given the power of prophecy; and when I was carving the day of the month upon one of the gourds I keep to help my memory, there came to me the fear that something was coming to Zanah through thee. I ran to seek thee that I might give warning of the trouble thou art bringing to the colony.”

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Everett reached into the pocket of his coat, took out a cigar, and lighted it. "Perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me in just what way I am to bring more trouble to Zanah," he said, with a smile. "I had nothing to do with the loss of the Bible, for I have refused to buy it, and I give you my word now, Hans Peter, that I will never take it away from Gerson Brandt."

"Thy word is not needed now," answered the fool. "The Bible is where thou canst not get it."

"And you know where it is," said Everett, so quickly that the fool was taken off his guard.

"And if I do, no one shall find it," the simple one declared, with a gesture of his arm and a stamp of his bare foot.

"Don't you think it would be wise for you to take back the Bible to Gerson Brandt?" Everett inquired, walking a few steps to his right, where there was a great tree against which he leaned.

"If the Bible could be found it would not again be put in Gerson Brandt's hands. It is better that it should be lost forever than that he should see it owned by another man."

"Why is this Bible so precious to the school-master? Can't you tell me, Hans Peter? Perhaps I may help you to restore it to him. You see, I might buy it and give it back to Gerson Brandt."

"No man in Zanah can own anything. If the

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Bible should be given to Gerson Brandt it would still belong to the colony, and it could be sold again." The simple one had thrown himself upon the ground, and, with chin in his hands and elbows dug deeply in the earth, he appeared to be thinking.

"Tell me about the Bible," urged Everett, and he waited as impatiently for the village fool to speak as if some matter of tremendous importance to him, the man of affairs out in the great world, hung in the balance. There was something almost absurd in the contrast between the two who talked there in the summer afternoon. Stephen Everett was a man to be noticed anywhere. It was not altogether his physical beauty that invariably commanded attention; he had an unusual charm of personality.

Hans Peter, with his long, straight tow hair tangled upon his big, round head, kicked his earth-stained feet in the air as he lay at length upon the ground. His blue cotton shirt, torn down the back, revealed a strip of white skin, and his baggy trousers were held by the one button which attached them to a knitted suspender. The pocket in the back of his trousers bulged with one of the gourds that he carried with him wherever he went.

"I am waiting for you to tell me about the Bible," Everett remarked, when he had smoked half of his cigar.

Hans Peter reached back and removed the gourd

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from his pocket. Then, sitting up, he began to examine it carefully.

“It was long ago that it came to Hans Peter one day, as he watched Gerson Brandt at work with his bright inks, that the school-master’s thoughts were on Walda Kellar as he made the gay letters in the great book. Lest the fool might forget, he marked on his gourd some lines to make him remember. Many times after that he saw that the school-master was praying for her who would be inspired. Hans Peter knew that the Bible was for Walda Kellar, and that the school-master meant it for her to read every day when she should become an instrument of the Lord. That is why Gerson Brandt loved the Bible. That is why no other man should have it.”

Everett left his place at the tree, and, pacing back and forth, pondered for a few moments upon the information that the simple one had given him.

“Ah, the school-master is a second father to Walda Kellar, I suppose?” he said, presently, casting a furtive glance at the fool.

“Nay, he hath not years enough to make it right he should love her as a father,” declared Hans Peter, nodding his head. “The simple one hath been taught that love is a wicked thing, but there is in Gerson Brandt’s heart something that may be love, like that with which he worships angels.”

“Again I tell you, Hans Peter, you are the wisest

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of all the colonists in Zanah," said Everett. "There, go about your errands."

"But thou wilt promise not to buy the Bible, even if it is ever found?" said Hans Peter, coming close to Everett and lowering his voice.

"Yes, yes; you have my word for it. I shall not buy it unless it is to aid Gerson Brandt," Everett replied. "And, Hans Peter, give me your hand. I pledge my word."

The fool hesitatingly put out his fat, work-hardened hand, and Everett gave it a hearty clasp.

IX

WILHELM KELLAR lay propped up in the four-posted bedstead that stood in his little alcove. His thin face showed the effect of his illness, and the hand that played with the flowered coverlet was thin to the point of translucency. His long, white hair was brushed straight back from his high forehead; his eyes, which had sunk deep into their sockets, wandered restlessly.

“Walda, where art thou?” he said, in a thick, indistinct voice. Walda pushed back the chintz curtains that divided the alcove from the larger room, and, kneeling beside her father, took one of his hands in hers.

“I have been thinking of the *Untersuchung*, daughter,” said the sick man, “and I pray that I may be able to be present when the spirit descends upon thee.”

“Thou wilt be well in another month,” said Walda, soothingly, as she stroked the white hair. “The physician hath said that thou canst soon leave thy bed.”

“But the *Untersuchung* is only two weeks off,” said Wilhelm Kellar, “It may be that if strength is not

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vouchsafed me so that I may walk again a litter can be made for me. I would be carried to the place if I cannot go there myself.”

“There is some talk that the *Untersuchung* may be delayed for a month,” said Walda, “and then thou wilt surely be able to take thy place among the elders.”

“It would be well, indeed, to postpone the *Untersuchung*, for thou hast been much distracted from thy meditations by my illness.”

“Nay, nay, father. Strange thoughts have come to me since I have been sitting here many hours a day in this room. Never hath heaven seemed so near to me.”

“It is well, indeed, that thou hast never been touched by earthly love,” said the old man, scanning the face of his daughter. “It was to keep thee free from it that I brought thee here when thou wast a little child, for it putteth waywardness and frowardness into the heart of a woman. Since I have been near to death it hath been shown to me that I must warn thee again lest thou some time feel its evil influence. Thy mother forgot all duty. She forfeited her soul for love.”

The old man spoke with intense feeling; he trembled as a long-controlled emotion swept over him. It was as if he had unlocked the flood-gates of a passion barred for many years within his heart.

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“What dost thou mean, father?” asked Walda, rising to her feet. A deathly pallor overspread her face, but the habit of repression, taught so persistently in Zanah, prevented her from showing the terror with which his words smote her.

“I mean,” said Wilhelm Kellar, drawing a quick breath—“I mean—” But suddenly his tongue stiffened and refused to frame the words he would have spoken.

“Thou wilt make thyself more ill,” said Walda. “Think not of the past.” Taking a pewter cup of water from the table, she moistened his lips. The old man clinched his fists and closed his eyes. He lay as if he were dead. The frightened girl ran to the door of the room to summon help. Stephen Everett was coming up the stairs.

“Oh, hasten to my father!” Walda implored. “I fear greatly for him.”

Everett went to the bedside, felt the old man’s pulse, listened to his heart, and discovered that his patient had, indeed, some serious symptoms.

“Has anything happened to disturb your father?” he asked, turning to Walda, who stood with hands clasped around one of the head-posts of the bed while she watched him with breathless interest.

“He began to talk to me of the past,” said the girl, with hesitation, and Everett [★]saw tears in her eyes.

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“And he recalled some memory that troubled him?” asked Everett.

“Yea, yea; he would have told me something of my mother,” said the girl, as she turned to go into the outer room.

Everett administered a soothing-potion, and went out of the alcove to find that Walda was sitting by the old carven table with her head bowed upon her hands.

“Do not be alarmed,” he said, “your father will recover from this temporary relapse.” His voice and manner were so sympathetic that the girl began to weep.

“Be blind to my weakness, O stranger in Zanah,” she said, presently lifting her head proudly and biting her trembling lips. “My faith teacheth me that nothing which belongeth to earth is worth a tear. The people of Zanah are trained to accept the decrees of God. For an hour I have been thinking of self. Strength will be given me to put these rebellious impulses from me.” She went to the window, where the chaffinch was hanging in his wicker cage.

“Piepmatz, thou hast no foolish tears; thou canst teach me a lesson that I need; thou art undisturbed by any distrust in thy nature.” Piepmatz, thrusting his head forward, looked out between the bars of his little prison. Then he chirped a cheery note. Ev-

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erett went close to the cage and whistled to the bird, which paid no attention to him.

“If I can be of service to you, you must command me,” he said to Walda Kellar. “You must not think of me as the stranger in Zanah. Have I not earned the right to be called a friend?” He did not look at her as he spoke lest she might be awakened to the fact that he took more than a passing interest in her.

“We use not the word friend in Zanah,” said Walda. “Here we are all brothers and sisters. And what dost thou mean by being a friend?”

Out in the world Everett had the reputation of being ever ready with words, but when the future prophethess of Zanah looked up at him with questioning eyes he was abashed.

“I mean,” he began—“I mean that I want you to feel you can trust me even more than if I were a brother of Zanah,” he replied, rather lamely.

Walda looked puzzled.

“There is none whom I could trust more than the men of Zanah,” she said. “I have been taught by Adolph Schneider and the elders that there is no such thing as friendship between men and women. The Bible telleth that David and Jonathan were friends, but truly I cannot remember that there were men and women in Holy Writ who called each other by that word thou wouldst have me give to thee in my thoughts.”

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Everett now sought in vain for an argument that he would dare make bold to use. Suddenly he regretted that he had neglected to study the Bible since his Sunday-school days had ended. He tried to think of all the Scripture stories he knew, dimly hoping that somewhere he could recall one that would be a fit illustration. He felt a disgust with himself when he discovered how lamentably ignorant he was. If he could only have commanded a text that would be convincing, he felt that he might be able to win something more than an impersonal gratitude from the future prophetess of Zannah, who had almost ignored him during the fortnight that had passed since he had been serving her father for her sake.

“Out in the world there are many friendships between men and women,” he declared.

“Then, indeed, must they be sinful,” said Walda, “for I have heard that there be few who serve the Lord with singleness of purpose out there beyond the bluffs.”

“Do not condemn the world too severely. Surely you do not think that I am such a wicked man?” His effort to draw attention to himself failed, however, for Walda was gazing out upon the bluffs as if she had forgotten him in thinking of the great world that Zannah barred out.

“Still thou hast not told me the true meaning of a friend.” she said, presently, and again Everett be-

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came aware that somehow he had lost the gift of speech.

“Perhaps I cannot find words to make the meaning of friendship plain,” he said, finally, “but I will try to teach you what the word implies.”

“Nay, Stephen Everett, it is not right that thou shouldst teach me anything, since thou art of the world, to which thou wilt soon return.”

“The world will never be the same to me after I leave Zanah,” said Everett.

“Hast thine eyes been opened to its wickedness?”

“No. Since I came to the colony I have thought little of the world, but my eyes have been opened to some things to which they were blind before—things that do not belong to the every-day world.”

Again he was afraid to let himself look at Walda, and he appeared to be addressing Piepmatz. Walda did not reply to him. She was thinking again of the life beyond the bluffs.

“Often have I tried to imagine what life must be outside of Zanah,” Walda remarked, by-and-by, after a long silence. “Now and then stray memories come back to me, for thou knowest I was born in the world, and that I was a little child who brought to the colony recollections of another existence. It is these memories that compel me oftentimes to pray that I may be spared temptation which should never assail a woman of Zanah.”

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“Surely no temptation could come to you,” said Everett.

“Thou knowest little of a woman’s heart. The seeds of vanity are here,” she said, folding her hands upon her breast. “I find pleasure in the flowers and the pretty things that God hath made.”

“It seems to me a sin for the colonists to deny its members the highest joys that have been given to men and women,” said Everett. “I have often wondered whether you had any idea of all that you miss here in Zanah.”

“I miss nothing that is best for my well-being,” said Walda. “Thou wouldst not plant discontent in my heart, wouldst thou, Stephen Everett?”

“I would have you enjoy all that is most to be desired in life,” said Everett; and as he spoke he felt for the hundredth time an overwhelming impatience with the creed of the colony which denied to the young and beautiful all that made living worth while.

Walda went to the chest of drawers, and, taking her knitting from a little basket, sank upon a low chair, from which she could get a glimpse of her sleeping father. Everett felt that she had dismissed him. He took up his hat and said:

“You told me I might call you Walda, so I shall say, Good-night, Walda.”

“Good-night,” said the girl.

Everett hesitated.

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“Will you not say, ‘Good-night, Stephen?’” he asked.

Walda stopped knitting.

“Why wouldst thou have me say thy name again?” she inquired.

For the twentieth time Everett was embarrassed.

“Because it is the custom of friends to speak one another’s names,” he explained.

“But we are not friends,” said Walda.

“At least you will repay me for my long stay here in the colony by speaking my name now and then,” he insisted, hypocritically.

There was the barest shadow of a smile on the lips of the future prophetess of Zanah. “Good-night, Stephen,” she said; and because he could find no excuse for lingering longer in the quaint room under the eaves, he went away.

X

WILHELM KELLAR'S health mended slowly. Some days he felt strong enough to be lifted out upon the chintz-covered lounge in the large room, but every attempt to hasten convalescence appeared futile, and after a morning spent out of bed he always felt a reaction. On one of his best days he lay on the lounge, which had been pushed into the bay-window. Above his head hung Piepmatz. When Everett came to make the first call of the day, the bird was trilling his one bar of the doxology, with long breaks now and then between the notes. Walda was trimming a plant that stood on the table near which sat Gerson Brandt. The school-master watched the future prophetess intently, and at first he did not notice Everett's entrance.

"My patient must be better," said Everett, passing to the window, and Walda, turning from the table, answered:

"We are happy, indeed, to-day. My father hath already begun to think about his work in the colony."

"You must not be too ambitious," said Everett,

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drawing a stool to the foot of the lounge and placing himself where he could study the old man's face.

"I have declared a half-holiday that I may celebrate the return of health to Brother Kellar," said Gerson Brandt, smiling upon his old friend, who lay, weak and prostrated, among the pillows. At this point Piepmatz abandoned the doxology and burst into a flood of song.

"Hush, thou saucy bird," Walda commanded. She went to the cage and playfully shook her finger at the chaffinch. "See, he knoweth there is reason to be glad," she declared. "Verily he hath much wisdom."

"Piepmatz is something of a philosopher," remarked Everett. "He makes the best of his imprisonment. Like the people of Zanah, he appears to care little for the great world."

"He hath taught me many a lesson of submission," said Walda.

"Still, his tiny heart is easily touched by worldly things," said the school-master. "He hath shown a dangerous inclination to take up the song the stranger hath whistled."

"Let me see whether you have forgotten the worldly song." It was Everett who spoke. Going to the cage he whistled the minor strain of the love-song. Piepmatz proudly imitated him.

"You see, I might have been a good school-master

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if fate had not decreed otherwise," said Everett, addressing Gerson Brandt.

"What is thy work in the world?" asked Walda. "Since my thoughtless plea kept thee here I have often wondered about thy daily labors. At first I thought thou didst tend the sick, but once I heard thee say that thou hadst not yet begun that labor."

"So far I have not done any one thing," Everett confessed, with a feeling of shame.

"How dost thou spend thy days?" the school-master inquired.

Everett hesitated before answering. In all his life it had never occurred to him to think how his days were spent.

"Since I left college I have travelled a great deal," he replied, evasively.

"And hast thou seen the whole world?" asked Walda. Wonder was written on her face.

"I have seen much of it."

Wilhelm Kellar made an inarticulate sound.

"Perhaps it disturbeth Brother Kellar to hear thee speak of the wicked world which he left long ago," said Gerson Brandt. "Like thee, he hath seen it all; he hath wandered over land and sea."

"Knowing the world, my father hath kept me safe from it." Walda had drawn the stool first occupied by Everett close to the head of the lounge, and, sitting near to the sick man, she clasped one of his hands.

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“Thou knowest, dear, that I have put away from me all vain longings to know aught of life outside of Zanah.”

Wilhelm Kellar closed his eyes with a look of contentment.

“Didst thou mean me to understand that thou art that abomination of the Lord, an idle and slothful man?” he asked Everett, after a moment of reflection.

“I confess that I have not done half my duty,” said Everett, humbly; “but I have spent many years in study; I have dipped into science.”

“Science? Zanah hath naught to do with science,” said Gerson Brandt. “Science would reveal the mysteries of nature that the Lord hath hidden from his people.”

“Don’t you think that the man who inquires just how the tiny body of Piepmatz has had its origin in the egg, how the bones and muscles that form the wing give him the power of flight, and how his mite of a brain is made to be the home of at least a fragment of intelligence has a wider conception of the omnipotence of God than he who knows nothing of what you call the secrets of nature?” asked Everett.

“I would not place my judgment against the judgment of Zanah,” said Gerson Brandt. “And yet when I was a boy I learned about the growth of a flower,

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and my soul was quickened with a new impulse towards worship.

“They tell me there is a magic force called electricity that is now performing what would once have been called miracles,” said Walda.

It seemed incredible to Everett that, notwithstanding all the barriers placed between Zanah and the outside world, it could be possible so completely to shut out all that was modern.

“Yes; electricity propels cars; it gives men the power to talk when they are hundreds of miles apart; it sends words across the continent, literally, with lightning rapidity. You know the latest achievement of science is the discovery of the x-ray, by which it is possible to look through a man’s body so that the bones are visible.”

“How strange it all is!” exclaimed Walda, who was still stroking her father’s hand.

“The wisdom of the world is so great that no one man can understand more than the smallest fragment of it,” averred Gerson Brandt.

Walda was lost in thought for another moment or two.

“Thou makest it clear to me that we people of Zanah must seem strange, indeed, to thee.” She spoke slowly. “According to thy standard, I, who am thought wise enough to be chosen prophetic of the colony, must be ignorant and childish. Out

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in the world they would jeer at me, would they not?"

"Thou wilt have a wisdom that the world cannot give," said Gerson Brandt. "Thou shalt be spared from contact with the mammon of unrighteousness."

"Nay, Gerson, it seemeth to me there must be good men in the world. Stephen Everett, the stranger who hath come to us, belongeth not to those who are bound to the idols of sin."

Everett, who had been sitting in one of the splint-bottomed arm-chairs, was touched by the girl's artless words. He rose to his feet and responded quickly:

"According to Zanah's standard I may not be a good man, but out in the world I am not singled out as one of the profligates. I hold honor dear. You people of Zanah may trust me."

"We have trusted thee," said Gerson Brandt. "We have prayed much over thee, and it hath been revealed to us that thou wert sent from the Lord. We trust thee so much that we have let thee speak to Walda Kellar, who hath never known any one belonging to the world."

Gerson Brandt stood up and faced Everett. An intensity in his tone gave his words strong emphasis. Wilhelm Kellar turned his head on his pillow, and his sunken eyes stared at Everett as if they would read his uttermost thoughts. A deep flush overspread Everett's face, and the realization swept over him

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that perhaps he might have it in his power to disturb all the plans of Zanah by turning Walda Kellar's thoughts away from what he regarded as the superstition of the colony. Human nature is contradictory, and Gerson Brandt's words presented clearly a temptation that had but vaguely suggested itself to him. He could appear not to recognize the insinuation conveyed by the school-master, and therefore he replied, evasively:

"My intentions are good. It was an unselfish motive that prompted me to remain in the colony. When Wilhelm Kellar has recovered I shall go away, and you will all forget that I ever came to Zanah."

"Nay, we shall not forget thee," said Walda. "We shall always be grateful to thee."

The conversation was interrupted at this point by the appearance of Karl Weisel. He had scarcely finished his greetings when Mother Kaufmann and Gretchen Schneider came into the room.

"How is it that the prophetess of Zanah hath time to spend in the company of men?" asked Mother Kaufmann. "It might be better to pass the days alone, praying and reading the Bible."

"How is it that Mother Kaufmann dares to speak thus sharply in the presence of the woman chosen to guide the colony of Zanah?" retorted Gerson Brandt.

"I like not this dispensation which permits Walda

Kellar to be brought under the influence of a sinful man of the world."

Mother Kaufmann spoke in her guttural German. She had advanced close to Gerson Brandt.

"The colony is not ruled by old women, and thy likes weigh little in Zanah," declared Karl Weisel, whose chair had been drawn near to the one chosen by Gretchen Schneider.

"If Zanah were ruled by old women the head of the thirteen elders would not be coveting the daughter of the Herr Doktor," said Mother Kaufmann, losing all caution in her anger.

Gretchen Schneider's thin face turned a livid yellow, and Karl Weisel sprang forward as if he would like to grasp the woman by the throat.

"Peace, children of Zanah," commanded Walda, rising in majestic indignation. "Your words are shameful. Put away from you the spirit of contention."

Wilhelm Kellar had made an effort to speak, but in the excitement of the moment his tongue refused to frame the words. Everett, looking at him, saw that there were beads of perspiration on his brow and that he looked exhausted.

"Send these people out of the room," he said to Gerson Brandt. "Wilhelm Kellar must be kept quiet." He went to the table, where he began to mix a soothing draught, while Gerson Brandt dismissed the three visitors. The school-master pre-

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ceded them out of the room, leaving Walda and Everett to soothe the sick man, who showed signs of extreme exhaustion. When the medicine had been administered, Walda drew together the white curtains and placed a chintz screen before the window.

“He looketh almost as if death were near,” she whispered to Everett.

“Do not be alarmed,” he replied; “he will soon fall asleep, and when he awakens he will be as well as he was this morning.”

The girl bent over her father to watch the faint breathing. The old man’s face was ghastly in its emaciation and pallor.

“Thou wilt not leave me yet?” she said, entreatingly. “Sit here with me until I am sure he is slumbering peacefully.”

Walda took her place on an old oaken bench above which hung Gerson Brandt’s book-shelves, and Everett drew one of the chairs close to the table, near to the place where Walda sat. Instead of taking up her knitting the girl leaned on the oaken arm of the bench, and with her chin in her hands she became lost in thought.

“Through thee it hath become plain to me that I am different from the women out there in the world,” she said, presently. “Sometimes there hath come over me a great fear lest one day I shall be sorely tempted to go forth among men and women of the

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earth. In the days of my rebellion, when I turned a deaf ear to the calling of the spirit, I dreamed of going away from Zanah. Since I have known thee I have sometimes faltered, even as my steps were being led near to the place of peace which will be revealed to me when the inspiration cometh." She spoke as if she were thinking aloud, and Everett made no response, for he dared not say the words that came to his lips.

"Thou knowest the world," she continued. "Dost thou think that I could ever be tempted to forget my duty to the people of Zanah? Shall I be able always to walk near to God?"

"It is said that there is a supreme temptation for every man and for every woman," said Everett, not daring to look at her. "You may be spared that, or, if it comes to you, you may be strong enough to resist it."

"There are strange, earthly impulses in my heart that none but Gerson Brandt can understand," she said. "But even he will not let me speak of them."

"What are your besetting sins?" Everett asked, gently. "Can't you confess them to me? Perhaps I can judge more fairly than any one in Zanah, because mine must be the broader view."

Walda cast upon him a look of such trustfulness that his conscience smote him.

"Stephen, my faith in the devil is not strong. I

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like not to think of the power of evil, for truly the world seemeth good to me. When I walk forth into the fields something in me maketh me to love the beauty of the sky, the vast stretches of rolling prairie, and the shining water of the distant lake. The bird-voices seem human to me, and yet the meadow-lark and the robin, the little creatures that God hath made, appear not to know of Satan's rule."

"Walda, you are not sinning. The Creator of all things is speaking to you through nature."

"Dost thou believe that, Stephen?"

"Yes; science teaches that. Have you not been taught that the wood which burns so brightly on your hearth is giving out the sunshine stored for years, so that in time man might use it?"

Walda listened with parted lips.

"Ah, that is good," she said. "Perhaps thou couldst unlock many of the mysteries that disturb me. Canst thou tell how the grain of wheat groweth when it is put into the ground? Dost thou know how the egg is changed into the nestling?"

"Science has probed the secrets of the seed and the egg, and it has discovered much. If it is permitted, I will send you books when I have returned to the world."

"Nay, I am but a child in my ignorance. Canst thou not tell me about the mysteries when thou comest here to this room?"

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“It would be a privilege to teach you,” said Everett. “We might have our first lesson to-morrow.”

“I have not told thee half my wayward impulses,” Walda declared, presently. “When strangers have driven to the village I have caught glimpses of women who wore gay clothes, and I have coveted the gowns of exquisite color.” She hesitated for a moment, with something like embarrassment. “And, Stephen,” she added, “I like thy garb better than that of the men of Zanah. Thou hast a ring on thy finger that I think is pretty, and when thou takest from thy pocket thy gold watch I have a curiosity to look at it. This shows how easily I am tempted by earthly gauds.”

Everett could not repress a little laugh, but seeing how much in earnest she was, he said, quite solemnly:

“Walda, these are not sins. Your confessions show that you are a woman with a woman’s impulses. Even a prophetess cannot help being a little human.”

He took his watch from his pocket and placed it in her lap. Drawing from his finger a ring of beautifully wrought gold, he put it into her hand. Walda’s face crimsoned.

“Thou must not persuade me to put it on,” she half pleaded, as she looked at the ring; and then, as if to prevent herself from succumbing to temptation, she passed it back to Everett. The watch she examined carefully. “This will mark the seconds, the mo-

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ments, and the hours of all thy life. It should remind one to make good account of his time."

"It has marked some very pleasant moments since I came to Zanah," said Everett, and his tones conveyed to Walda a dim impression that made her suddenly shy.

Some one knocked twice on the door, lifted the latch, and entered. It was Hans Peter, who carried in his hand a package of books, letters, and papers.

"These have I brought from the post-office," said the simple one, his pale eyes wandering from Walda to Everett as they sat close together. It was plain, even to a fool, that their conversation had been of a sort interesting only to themselves.

"The elders ordered that thy mail be given into thy hands, and I have followed thee here that I might deliver the chronicles of the wicked world into thy keeping."

Everett thanked the simple one, who made no move to leave the room. Hans Peter still stood playing with his queer cap and balancing himself first on one foot and then on the other.

"Wouldst thou give me the newspaper when thou hast read it?" he asked, with something like eagerness in his tone.

"No, no, Hans Peter, I cannot disregard the rules of the colony," Everett said, carelessly.

"Dost thou not know that the fool cannot be hurt?"

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asked the simple one. "He hath so little knowledge that he knoweth not folly from wisdom. To him the wicked appear good and the good wicked."

Everett's mail was scattered on the table where the simple one had put it. Among the envelopes the man of the world saw one that enclosed a photograph.

"This may be a picture that will interest you," he said. "Will you pardon me if I open it?" He tore off the envelope, and the photograph of a young and beautiful girl was disclosed. The hair was dressed in rather an elaborate fashion, and the gown was slightly décolleté.

"This is my young cousin Beatrice," he remarked. "She is one of my favorite relatives. I want you to tell me what you think of her, Walda."

"It is forbidden in Zanah that we should make the image of anything on earth," declared Walda, turning her eyes away when Everett held the photograph towards her.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

The fool had come close to Everett's chair, and he now looked over the stranger's shoulder.

"Is she called beautiful?" he asked.

"I believe she is," said Everett. "Don't you think she is a pretty girl?"

"I like her hair and her necklace," the simple one said. "She hath no cap or kerchief. Yea, she is like an angel." He hesitated for a moment, looking from

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the picture to Walda, as if he were comparing the two faces, and he added: "She is not so fair as the prophetess of Zannah. Dost thou think her more comely than Walda Kellar?"

"Hush, Hans Peter; thou knowest it is a sin to see that a woman is fair or comely," warned Walda.

The simple one shook his head of tangled, straw-colored hair, and answered:

"Thou forgettest the fool knoweth not right from wrong; he is the only free man in the whole colony." He threw his cap into the air, but his stolid face betrayed no sign that he might be exulting over his emancipation from the laws of Zannah.

"Here, gather up these letters and papers and come with me to the inn," said Everett. He thrust the photograph into the outside pocket of his coat.

"Now, indeed, do I know that I am a daughter of Eve," said Walda, rising. "To-day it hath been made plain to me that I am not like unto the women of the world. I—I—I would have one glimpse of thy cousin. Dost thou think it would be very sinful if I looked at the image of thy kinswoman?"

"Sinful! I think it is your right to know something of the women outside the colony," Everett declared. He took the picture from his pocket and put it into her hand.

Walda studied the face for a few moments.

"Thy cousin Beatrice is fair indeed." As she spoke

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the faintest sigh accompanied her words. "Wilt thou not tell me something of her?" she asked. "Doth she wear this gown and this necklace when she worketh?"

The picture of his cousin Beatrice working was so absurd that Everett smiled.

"This is the sort of a gown my cousin wears when she goes to a ball," he explained.

"A ball! What is a ball?" asked Walda.

"Oh, it is a party—an assembly of men and women where there are music and flowers and brilliant lights."

"And what do the people do? Do they sing hymns and pray as we do at our meetings?"

Again Everett smiled. The spectacle of the guests at a modern ball joining in hymns and prayers would be entertaining indeed, he thought.

"They talk and dance, Walda."

"There is dancing spoken of in the Bible," said Walda; "but the elders of Zanah have told the people how the rite hath been degraded by the men and women of the world. I have heard that dancing is no longer a religious ceremony."

"That is true, indeed," said Everett, and the memory of some of the stage-dancing flashed across his brain.

"What is thy cousin's work?" Walda inquired, again studying the photograph.

"Work?" repeated Everett. "Why, she has no work."

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“And doth all thy family belong to the drones?” Walda asked. “How is it that out in the world some men and women are permitted to be idle while others labor?”

“Now, Walda, you have hit upon one of the great social problems. Out in the world the people do not work for the common good. Selfishness rules. Some men and some women are born to wealth, and some are born to poverty.”

“Thou meanest that some men are like Solomon and others are like the beggars that lay outside the gates of Jerusalem?”

“Yes, that is what I mean,” said Everett.

“Art thou like Solomon? Hast thou gold that thou keepest from the poor and hungry?” Walda placed the picture upon the table and withdrew several steps from Everett.

“I am not like Solomon, Walda,” Everett replied, with an uncomfortable feeling that he belonged to a useless class.

“But you have money so that you live without work?”

“Yes,” admitted Everett, with some reluctance.

“He carrieth much silver with him,” said Hans Peter, who had listened intently to the conversation. “He hath tossed me many a piece when I have run errands for him.”

“Oh, thou dost give away thy money?” Walda’s

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tone betrayed her relief at the thought that, after all, Everett might not be altogether selfish.

“Yes, I give away some of my money,” Stephen answered; “but I have not done half the good with it that I should. Perhaps I may learn here in Zanah how to employ my time and my money to better advantage.”

“Now, indeed, I know that the Lord hath sent thee here for thine own good.”

“Sometimes I am not so sure of it, Walda,” said Everett, and, turning quickly, he took up his hat. He pushed open the door, motioned to the simple one to pass out first, hesitated a moment, and then returned to Walda’s side.

“Don’t think of me as such a bad man,” he said.

“Nay, there is something in my heart that maketh me believe only that thou art wise and true.”

Quickly he left the room, and as he went down the stairs he reflected that one of the first steps in wisdom is that which takes a man away from a great temptation. Walda, standing alone by the table, thought of many things, and then, strangely enough, Piepmatz, looking from his little cage, whistled the notes of the love-song that Everett had taught him.

XI

AFTER leaving Walda, Stephen Everett walked far out into the country. At first he did not try to analyze his thoughts. He felt an unwonted buoyancy and hope. Between him and the brilliant sky he saw the face of the future prophetess of Zanah. He felt her sweet presence, and gradually he came into a knowledge that the girl was gaining a mastering power over him. Because he was more or less of a trifler in the great world of action, he had been willing to stay in the colony long enough to gain some new impressions. At first the girl had been only a central figure in a quaint picture that seemed to belong to another time and to another country. There had been days that had bored him, and a hundred times he had repented of his rash pledge that held him in Zanah for an indefinite period. Now he knew that Walda Kellar had become to him more than a passing acquaintance. As he hastened away from the village, his first exultation in having gained from her something of a personal recognition led him to think of his own motives in attempting to win what he called the friendship of this woman of Zanah.

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Beneath all his aimlessness and indifference, Everett held high ideals of womanhood. He was a man who cherished chivalrous traditions, and when his footsteps finally brought him back from the foot of the bluff to the edge of the little lake, that now reflected a purple sky, he threw himself upon the ground to think seriously of his intentions. It was plain to him that the prophetess of Zanah never could belong wholly to his world. The memory of his associations in New York and Newport made him almost doubt his own identity. Visions of the fashionable and frivolous women who were part of what is known as American society presented themselves to him. He saw the gorgeous gowns and flashing jewels of matrons and maids whom he knew. He recalled their rather brilliant conversation. In his mind's eye he pictured an autumn ball at Tuxedo—he had just received a letter mentioning a great entertainment that was to take place that very evening—and he tried to imagine how Walda Kellar would appear as one of those whom the colony condemned. There were girls belonging to the gayest circles of Eastern cities who were pleased to call him friend, and yet he valued their favors as nothing compared with the esteem that he coveted from the woman of Zanah. In thinking of Walda he soothed his conscience by telling himself that esteem was the word which described the interest he wished the girl to feel for him. And then the

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thought came to him, insistently, that he was playing the part of a contemptible egotist, and that he was secretly longing to awaken in the heart of the prophetess of Zanah earthly love that was forbidden to her.

It is a human trait to desire what is beyond one's reach, and Everett acknowledged to himself that part of the charm which the girl of the colony cast upon him was due to her elusiveness and to her ignorance of all that pertained to what were the every-day experiences of ordinary women. She was the one woman that he might claim unsullied and untouched by love for any other man, and yet with a sudden sensation of shame he realized that he was presumptuous to feel himself entitled to a love that would, indeed, be sent from heaven.

Everett took from his pocket some of the letters that he had received during the week. All of them told of events that formerly had interested him. The letters took him back to his own place in the broad life of America. He reasoned with himself that he might leave Zanah within a week. He would go away without striving further to probe the mysterious nature of the prophetess of Zanah, and he would remember his sojourn in the colony as one of the many pleasant incidents in his varied life. Having settled the question to his own satisfaction, he experienced a sensation of relief. He strolled back to the village. Entering the inn, he found Diedrich Werther smoking

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a pipe behind the dog-eared register, which had not recorded a name since his own had been written there. He asked some questions about the hunting, and the innkeeper told him of a distant pond where ducks were plentiful. Everett announced that he meant to take his gun out early the next morning, and he asked whether Hans Peter might accompany him. Incidentally he dropped the remark that he expected to leave the colony within a few days. Then he borrowed the old-fashioned ink-horn and a quill-pen, which he took to one of the tables in a far corner of the main room of the inn. Selecting a dozen sheets of yellow paper from Diedrich Werther's store of stationery, he began to write letters to the friends he had almost forgotten for a fortnight.

There was a woman in Newport to whom he had meant to send a note. He thought of her amusement when she would receive a sample of Diedrich Werther's yellow stationery. He wrote the date line, and then he found it difficult to frame a graceful and conventional greeting to one whom he had quite forgotten for many days. He leaned back in his chair and tried to imagine how this woman and Walda would appear if he saw them together. The one was a typical product of American civilization, that educates its women broadly, giving them the liberty to mingle freely with the greatest of many lands—a woman born to wealth and station, one who knew how to value her extraor-

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dinary advantages, and how to make the most of them. She was still young, but she had learned much of the world, for she had travelled widely and had read books of every class. She had few illusions. He remembered that her broad grasp of life had sometimes shocked him. She had studied much of philosophy, and had but desultory connection with a fashionable church. She was witty, brilliant, fascinating. She was an aristocrat, in the best sense of the word. Her gowns were artistic masterpieces. A picture of her as he had seen her at an Easter ball came back to him. He recalled the shimmering satin and the frost of lace that set off her imperious beauty. That night he had been almost persuaded that she was the one woman in the world. For a moment he quite forgot Zanah. He was impatient to go back to the gay world that held so much of beauty and brightness. It was a strange vagary, this sojourn in the colony. He dipped the quill-pen into the ink-horn again. He drew the ugly sheet of yellow paper towards him, and then he heard the heavy step of Mother Werther as she hastened across the great kitchen to the porch.

“Walda, where art thou going?” she said.

Before he knew what he was doing, Everett had dropped his pen and sauntered out-of-doors into the little square where Walda had paused at the well. She was giving a cup of water to a child, and at first she did not see Everett. She was standing so that he

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could see only her profile, and its purity of outline made him say to himself that he had never beheld a face so clear-cut. The delicate line of the lips, which were always firmly closed, denoted a strength of character that the chin rather contradicted in its full curve. He went to her, and, taking the cup from her hand, hung it in its accustomed place.

“I am glad to have met you, Walda,” he said, with a little hesitation as he spoke her name, “for I am thinking of going away this week—”

The girl gave him a startled look.

“Nay, tell me not that, Stephen Everett,” she answered. “Truly, thou dost not mean thou wilt leave Zanah before the *Untersuchung*?”

“Surely, you do not care whether I go or stay?” he said.

The prophetess of Zanah knew no arts of coquetry. She did not understand the significance of his words, and she looked into his face with clear, untroubled eyes.

“Ah, but I do care,” she exclaimed. “My father needs thee yet; he is not so strong to-day.”

She turned away from the well and began to walk towards the bridge. Everett followed her.

“Your father will get on without me,” he declared, with some coldness, for the girl’s unconscious rebuff irritated him.

“Nay, thou seemest to hold the power which keep-

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eth him alive. I mean, that although it is the Lord that hath vouchsafed to spare him, thou art his instrument. My faith is not steadfast. I am weak, indeed; but thou hast seemed to me a stay, a strong staff upon which I lean."

"It is good to know that you count me even a little help." An intonation in his voice told her that he felt himself aggrieved.

"Thou must count me a selfish woman of Zanah," she made haste to say. "Thou hast stayed many days here in the colony, and neglected thine own work that thou mightst minister to my father."

"I have but kept my pledge to you."

"Thou hast my gratitude, Stephen." She paused on the bridge. "I cannot estimate what sacrifice thou hast made to keep thy word, but thou hast caused me to know that all who belong to the great world are not wicked. Verily, Stephen, thou dost serve the Lord."

Everett did not reply immediately. He had a guilty sense of misleading the prophetess of Zanah. He knew that of all his life but the smallest fragments had been given to service of any sort. A sense of regret for the futile years he had spent made him turn away, for the girl was looking at him with a searching gaze that made him uncomfortable.

"The darkness is falling; I must hasten on," said Walda, but she did not move.

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“Where were you going?” asked Everett. “Let me walk with you?”

“It is not the custom for the men of Zanah to talk with the women, or to walk with them,” said Walda. “It hath been decreed by the elders that I shall go alone at this hour every night to pray at the grave of Marta Bachmann.”

“I am not a man of Zanah. The cemetery is half a mile from here, along a lonely road. Let me go with you?” he pleaded, and, without waiting for an answer, he took her permission for granted. It was the hour for the evening meeting, and the street was quite deserted, so he knew that they ran little risk of being seen together in the dusk of the late summer day.

They walked slowly up the hill beyond the bridge. They passed the school-house, and Walda paused to look up at the little window of her father’s room, whence shone a candle-beam.

“When I think that through thy help I still have my father, there is so much of gratitude in my heart that I cannot speak it,” she said. “Surely, it will not be long before he is again able to mingle with the colony?”

“Not very long, if all goes well,” said Everett. “I hear that he is much needed by the elders of Zanah.”

“Bad luck hath come to the mills and the crops. I fear that we have not looked steadfastly to the Lord

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for guidance. I pray that it may be revealed through me what we shall do to increase the prosperity of Zanah."

They were on the brow of the hill now, and had entered the wavering road, arched with oak and maple trees. Everett was silent for a few minutes while he pondered upon some method by which he could lead the conversation away from general topics. While the girl betrayed no uneasiness in his companionship, he knew that he must use the utmost tact if he would appeal to the woman instead of the prophetess.

"And when you are inspired, will you live apart from the people of Zanah?" he said. "You will pardon me, but I have often wondered just what your life will be. Are you never to know the duties and the joys that belong to other women?"

"I am to walk close to God. I am to forget self. I am to serve Zanah all my life."

Walda spoke in a solemn tone, and her absolute resignation to the lot that appeared to the man of the world a needless and ridiculous sacrifice awoke a spirit of revolt in Everett's heart.

"Temptations have assailed me," she confessed, after a pause. "Now and then there hath been a restlessness within me. Thou hast sometimes appeared to me as one sent from Satan, for thou hast painted the great world most alluringly."

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Walda drew away from Everett, and he could feel that she was looking at him with fear and distrust.

“You misunderstand me,” said Everett. “I know that you live near to heaven, that you are better than the women I know. I reverence you, I—I—”

Although Everett made an effort to speak calmly, the intensity of his voice and manner disturbed the unfathomed depths of Walda’s soul. After the manner of Zannah she instinctively folded her hands over her bosom with a gesture that signified to the colonists the warding off of all worldly influences.

“Hush!” she said. “Speak not thus to the prophetess of Zannah.”

“I am not speaking to the prophetess now,” said Everett, taking a quick step in front of her. “Walda, listen to me. Don’t you know that you are choosing for your life loneliness and isolation? I think of you here in Zannah in the years that are coming, and I cannot bear to feel that one day will be just like another until the end.”

“A man thou art who hath set his thoughts on earth. Stephen, dost thou not know sorrow and trouble cannot touch me when I walk near to God? Hast thy spirit never been lifted up above all that belongs to self? Hast thou never been near to heaven in thy thoughts?”

“Never until now,” said Everett.

Into Walda’s face came a new light.

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“Dost thou mean that thou hast learned in Zanah to think less of the world and to long for heaven?”

The man looked down at the girl. She was so near him that the light breeze blew her gown against him. He stifled a longing to put out his hand to touch her.

“Yes, Walda, I can say with all truthfulness that the world has become as nothing to me, and that I long for heaven.”

“Thou hast made me very happy, Stephen. It hath been a sorrow to me to know that thou wert not numbered with those who strive to earn eternal life.”

“Then you have been troubled about me?” Everett questioned.

The girl hesitated a moment.

“I have hoped that I might meet thee in the other life, where there are none of the barriers that divide men and women who would serve the Lord.”

Everett felt the blood pour out of his heart. The girl had made a strange admission. For a brief moment he was glad with all the joy of an unexpected victory. Exultant words came to his lips, but when he looked at Walda he felt anew the awe that her innocence and her spirituality cast upon him. She appeared absolutely unconscious of what her admission meant to the man of the world. She moved onward. They emerged from the wooded road and came to the shore of the placid little lake. The distant bluffs beyond the lake were dimly outlined in the

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evening shadows, and above them the last lingering purple of the sunset was fading in the sky. In the trees behind them a bird trilled the fragment of a dream-song. The beauty of the scene, the quiet of the night, and the nearness of Walda stirred in Everett warring impulses, yet he was dumb before the prophetess of Zanah. The girl's attitude of perfect trust in him forbade him to take advantage of the opportunity to tell her that his heaven was not the one for which she lived and worked, and yet he felt almost cowardly in letting her believe that his sudden aspiration was a religious experience.

“Stephen, I would have thee know what is in my heart,” she said, fixing her clear eyes on him. “I would have thee understand that I am but a weak woman of Zanah, called to do the Lord's will. There have been times when Satan tempted me with longing for the things forever denied to the people of Zanah. There have been days when I begged that I might not be compelled to be the prophetess. Often have I prayed to escape this work of the Master, but since thou camest to Zanah there hath been a new strength in me. Thou hast made me see many things unto which mine eyes were closed; thou hast helped me to wisdom not vouchsafed to the colony of Zanah. Since one day, when thou didst teach me to look from the window of my father's room, and behold the beauties of earth and sky, peace hath come to me from

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the woods and fields whenever there was unrest in my soul. Now that thou hast aspirations for heaven, I am assured that thou art one sent from God to help the least of his children."

"I am unworthy to be your teacher," Everett faltered.

They walked on until they came to the high, arched gate of the graveyard. Everett unlatched the gate and they went in among the sunken mounds, each of which was marked by a flat stone bearing the simple name of some colonist who had passed out of the narrow life of Zanah. On a little knoll, separated from the other graves, was one over which a willow-tree trailed its low branches. Towards this Walda led the way, and when they had come to it she said to Everett:

"Thou must leave me now."

"I was thinking of going away from Zanah," said Everett, with a sudden memory of his letters. "When I took the liberty of walking with you to-night it was my intention to say good-bye to you, Walda."

The girl turned on him a glance of such frank regret that he asked again:

"Will you miss me, Walda?"

"Miss thee?" she repeated. "Yea, for I have come to count thee as one who maketh each day better for me. Thou hast become like unto Gerson Brandt in thy brotherly care."

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Everett winced.

“But I don’t want you to think of me as your brother,” he said. “I would have you call me friend.”

“Nay, friendship is denied between men and women in Zanah. Have I not told thee that before? But surely thou wilt not go away before the *Untersuchung*?”

There was a tone of pleading in the girl’s voice.

“Since I have to leave Zanah, since I have to go out into the world, where I shall be lost to you, I may as well go now as at any future time.”

“Nay, wait in Zanah until after the spirit of strength hath taken possession of me. When I am, indeed, the instrument of the Lord, then can I see thee turn again to the world. Then can I know, indeed, it will be well with me. Stephen, thou hast just said thou art near to heaven, and I would send thee forth with a firm faith. From now until the day of the *Untersuchung* I will pray for thee.”

“Your wishes shall be commands to me, Walda. But if I decide to stay in Zanah, it will mean much to me. There may be days when I shall repent that I changed my mind.” He stood looking at her for a moment. “I will pledge myself to wait in Zanah until the day on which the colonists expect to recognize you as their prophetess.”

“Thou hast made me glad, Stephen. Since it is for

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thy good to stay here, I can no longer feel that I am selfish."

"Inasmuch as you have accepted my pledge, you must let me take your hand as a token of my promise," said Everett. In the intensity of his longing there was such a compelling force that Walda made no objection when, without waiting for her permission, he took both her hands in his, and held them for a moment. A deep flush suffused her pure face, and for the first time in all their acquaintance her eyes refused to meet his. Her hands trembled, and with a sudden awakening to something of the consciousness that first comes to every woman who is loved, she suddenly freed herself.

"Peace be with thee to-night, Stephen," she said. She turned quickly, and took a few slow steps towards the grave of Marta Bachmann. Everett, looking after her, beheld a strange shape rise above the tomb. He strode forward to see what it might be, and in the dim light recognized Hans Peter.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, in a stern voice.

The fool leisurely seated himself upon the flat stone and answered:

"The simple one doth not have to account to any man concerning himself. The fool can do no harm. It is the man from the wicked world that should be under watch among the people of Zanah."

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Hans Peter swung his short legs over the edge of the gravestone; and if his words had a sinister meaning, his round, immobile face betrayed not the slightest expression of intelligence. He took from his pocket one of his treasured gourds, calmly opened his knife, and made a few marks.

“Hans Peter, thou shouldst remember to treat the stranger within our gates with respect,” said Walda, reprovingly; but the fool seemed not to hear her.

Everett lingered beside the girl, as if he could not summon courage to go away.

“Leave me here alone,” Walda commanded, gently. “Hans Peter will take me back to the village.”

As Everett latched the gate to the cemetery he looked back to see Walda kneeling at the grave, while Hans Peter, who had withdrawn to a little distance, lay flat upon a sunken stone.

XII

GERSON BRANDT went about his duties with a listless air. The boys who gathered every morning in the learning-school noticed that he was less exacting about their lessons, and that often his thoughts appeared far away. When he ascended to the little platform, after returning from morning prayers in the meeting-house, he looked down upon them with compassion in his glance. It was noticed that his thin face was pinched and that his eyes were sunken. When they opened their word-books for the spelling-class he showed slight interest. During recess he sat with his head resting on his hands and his eyes fixed on the old desk. One day, when he was even more preoccupied than usual, Adolph Schneider and Karl Weisel visited the school in order to inquire into the progress of the boys of Zanah. Gerson Brandt called his pupils to order.

“The Herr Doktor would speak with you,” he said.

“Yea, I would know whether you are diligent in your lessons,” announced Adolph Schneider. He pounded on the floor with his cane, and spoke in a tone that frightened the more timid of the children.

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“Why was Adam cast out of the Garden of Eden?”

There was a moment of silence. All the tow-headed boys, with arms folded across their breasts, stared straight ahead of them. Karl Weisel, who had taken the school-master's chair, tipped it back against the black-board, twirled his thumbs, and stared at the rows of benches with something like a sneer on his heavy features. The school-master, standing on the floor beside the platform, looked out of the nearest window and waited patiently for the tardy answer.

“Can any one tell me why Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden?”

The Herr Doktor repeated his question in a thundering tone.

“Because he ate an apple,” piped a small voice from a far corner of the room. •

“And art thou taught that it is wicked to eat an apple?”

A dozen tow-heads were shaken emphatically.

“The apple grew on the tree of knowledge.” It was a pale, red-haired child who spoke.

“It is Johann Werther who knows about the tree of knowledge,” said the Herr Doktor. “At the *gasthaus* Johann sometimes hath a glimpse of forbidden things.”

Scores of round eyes immediately were turned upon Johann with glances of envy.

“But did man fall through his own sinful desires?”

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questioned the Herr Doktor, standing very straight, throwing out his chest, and lifting his chin out of his big stock.

“It was Eve who did tempt him,” announced a small boy that sat on the front seat.

“Right. Sin came into the world through a woman, and ever since then the man who would reach heaven hath to guard against the wiles of the temptress. If it had not been for a woman, we might now be living in the Garden of Eden.”

“Nay, Brother Schneider, teach not that women are evil.” Gerson Brandt placed one thin hand on the desk and turned on the Herr Doktor a face in which was a determined look. “It is meet that thou shouldst tell the children how the world was saved through a woman, who was the mother of Christ.”

“Gerson Brandt, interrupt not this lesson. I have come here to measure the knowledge of those intrusted to thy care.” Adolph Schneider again pounded the floor with his cane. “Can the school tell me nothing more about Eve’s fall?” Adolph Schneider asked.

In the back part of the room rose the fool. He had in his hand one of the gourds that he always carried with him.

“The Bible teacheth us it was the serpent that did tempt Eve,” he said, studying the gourd as if he were reading from it.

“Ja, ja,” said the Herr Doktor; “but Eve, being a

woman, was full of curiosity; she inclined her ear to the serpent."

"And Adam did incline his ear to Eve," the simple one announced. "It is said it is always thus. Even in the colony I have noticed that the men are keen, indeed, to hear what the women would say."

Something like a smile flitted over Karl Weisel's face. He brought his chair forward on its four legs, and listened for what was coming.

"Take thy seat. How darest thou comment on the men and women of Zannah? Thou art the simple one who cannot separate good from evil."

The fool still stood in his place with the gourd in his hand.

"The fool hath ears that he can hear; he hath eyes that he can see."

"But what he seeth and heareth hath not the right meaning to him."

"The fool hath seen Karl Weisel, head of the thirteen elders, listen to the words of Gretchen Schneider, the daughter of the leader of Zannah," declared the fool, still reading from his gourd.

"Silence!" shouted the Herr Doktor. Turning to Gerson Brandt, he said: "So the fool hath become a spy. He is more dangerous than a wise man."

"The truth is not in him," said Karl Weisel, springing to his feet. Hans Peter should be kept in confinement where he cannot speak harmful things."

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“He meaneth nothing wrong,” said Gerson Brandt. “Be merciful to the simple one.”

“The main object in coming here to-day was to instruct you concerning the *Untersuchung*,” said Adolph Schneider, when Karl Weisel had resumed his seat and the children were once more gazing stolidly in front of them. “I hope you are all prepared to give an account of your souls when the elders of Zanah shall inquire into your spiritual condition. From now until the day when we hope to behold the inspiration of a new prophetess I want you all to think over your sins. I wonder how many of you have told a lie this week.” Every boy in the school looked guilty. “I should like to have all who have spoken only the truth stand up that I may see them.”

“Nay, ask not that,” said the school-master. “I fear lest the children be tempted to forget their shortcomings and to act a falsehood because they desire to appear well before thee.”

“Since the loss of thine illuminated Bible thou art tender-hearted towards liars,” said Karl Weisel, in an undertone.

“Thy taunt shouldst cost thee dear, Karl Weisel, were it not forbidden in Zanah that we should resent insult.” In an instant the gentle school-master was transformed. He stood erect, and the scorn in his tone made the head of the thirteen elders feel that the contempt of a righteous man was something not to be

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easily ignored. The Herr Doktor gave the boys no opportunity to perjure themselves.

“I want you to prepare for the *Untersuchung* with prayer and fasting,” he said, and there was dismay upon every face before him.

“It hath been shown the elders of Zanah that Walda Kellar is to be the instrument of the Lord. From her lips will fall words of wisdom. You all know her, for she hath often spoken to you. She hath sung to you hymns of praise. She will no longer come among you, for she must live apart, but it will be revealed to her what is best for the colony. You must no longer run to her as if she were your mother. You must bow before her. You must no longer speak unto her, for she will be above all the people of the colony.”

The hand of Johann Werther was raised, and, when he had been given permission to speak, he asked:

“Are all women daughters of Eve?”

“Yea, yea,” declared the Herr Doktor. “Thou knowest that Eve was the mother of all.”

“And Walda Kellar is to be the instrument of the Lord?”

“Why ask foolish questions? Thou knowest she is to be the inspired one.”

“I would know why a man was not chosen instead of a daughter of Eve?” said Johann.

“Thou shouldst use thy silly brain for less mighty

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questions," was the stern reply. Turning to the school-master the Herr Doktor gave the order:

"Dismiss thy pupils." Adding: "We would talk with thee."

Gerson Brandt sent the boys out-of-doors, and then waited for the president of the colony to speak.

"Brother Weisel and I are dissatisfied about many things in the colony," announced Adolph Schneider, taking a seat on the platform. "There is general discontent. If the *Untersuchung* were not so near, we should be alarmed for the peace of Zanah. The loss of the Bible hath cast suspicion upon thee, Brother Brandt. It is not my desire to say unpleasant things to thee, but in Zanah we are all truthful. Thou wilt not again be elected as elder unless thou canst trace the Bible."

"It would be better for thee to say that Brother Brandt cannot be elected unless he decides to bring the Bible from the hidden place that he hath found for it," broke in Karl Weisel.

"Silence!" commanded the school-master. "Thou shalt not accuse me of stealing the Bible from the colony of Zanah and then of denying all knowledge of it. Take back thy cowardly words."

"It is the custom to speak what we hold to be the truth," said Karl Weisel, in a mocking tone. "I believe that thou knowest where that Bible is secreted."

"It hath been said that men always suspect other

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men of being what they themselves are, and so I make some allowance for thy words; but thou shalt ask my pardon." Gerson Brandt spoke calmly, but his tone as well as his words made the elder cringe.

"I spoke merely for thine own good. It were better that I told thee what I thought than that I thought these things and turned to thee a dissembling face."

"Crave my pardon," said Gerson Brandt.

"I humiliate myself before no man," said Karl Weisel. "It is my right to say what I think."

"It is not thy right to cast aspersions on mine honor. I give thee one more chance to retract thy base charges."

Karl Weisel put his fat hands into his deep pockets, rose from his chair, and walked back and forth upon the platform.

"This quarrel is most unseemly," remarked Adolph Schneider, who had been leaning on his cane and idly listening.

"Speak!" said Gerson Brandt. "Thou shalt not leave this room until thou hast taken back thy words."

Karl Weisel laughed, but in an instant the schoolmaster had sprung upon the platform. He clutched the man by the collar, and, with the strength born of a tremendous indignation, he shook the heavy body of Karl Weisel until the elder's teeth chattered.

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“Loose thine hold upon me!” cried Karl Weisel, who had turned pale with terror.

Gerson Brandt flung him off. He knew he had forgotten all the precepts of the colony, but again the elder laughed, this time to disguise his fright.

“I give thee a chance to defend thyself,” said Gerson Brandt. “As man to man we shall fight this out.”

Adolph Schneider put himself between the two combatants, but Gerson Brandt, stepping past him, dragged Karl Weisel to the open space beside the platform, and there, facing him, said:

“I give thee thy last opportunity to beg my pardon.”

Karl Weisel did not open his lips. Instead, he covertly measured the distance to the door, and with a movement of unusual quickness turned in flight. He had not gone half a dozen steps before Gerson Brandt had him by the collar, and, dragging him back to his position, waited an instant for him to recover himself. Then he struck a blow that felled the elder.

“Help! Help!” shouted Adolph Schneider, who still stood upon the platform.

At first the prospect of a fight between the two influential men of the colony had suggested possibilities likely to redound into material good for himself, and he had been content to play the part of listener and spectator. Now, as he looked at Gerson Brandt, he no

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longer saw the school-master, but a man tall, sinewy, and muscular—a man in whose eye flashed anger and whose pose revealed an unsuspected strength.

“Help! Help!” he shouted again.

Gerson Brandt assisted his adversary to rise. The elder was stunned; the school-master pushed him into a chair, where he sat dazed and silent. Just then Hans Peter came shuffling in at the door. He walked as if he had heard an ordinary summons.

“Didst thou call?” he asked, addressing the Herr Doktor. His pale eyes rested on the figure of Karl Weisel, and there was just the faintest gleam of understanding in them. Before Adolph Schneider had a chance to answer, a rustle of skirts and a light step was heard on the stair that led from Wilhelm Kellar’s room.

“Hath anything gone amiss here?” asked Walda, throwing open the door and standing on the threshold. With a woman’s intuition she saw that there had been some quarrel.

“Be not alarmed,” said Gerson Brandt, walking down a side aisle at the end of the long benches. “The elder, Karl Weisel, accused me of stealing the Bible and of bearing false witness concerning it. The man in me resented the insult. He refused to apologize, and I struck him. Even now I am sorry that I should have hurt one of my fellow-colonists.”

“Nay, Gerson Brandt, thou didst forget that the

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Lord hath said, 'Vengeance is Mine,'” cried Walda, going near to Gerson Brandt. “It is not like thee to let human passions triumph.”

“This will cost Gerson Brandt his place as an elder,” declared Karl Weisel, coming to himself enough to smooth his ruffled hair and settle his loosened stock.

“This is bad, indeed!” exclaimed Adolph Schneider. “In all my years of colony life I have never known one man in Zanah to raise his hand against a brother-colonist.”

“Surely my provocation was great,” said Gerson Brandt, “but I am sorry that I allowed anger to control me even for a moment.”

“This very night shall I prefer charges against thee,” Karl Weisel said, rising and waving his hand with a threatening gesture.

“This very night thou shouldst think well over the quarrel,” said Walda, advancing. “Thou knowest there hath been wrong on both sides. Art thou willing to confess that thou hast called thy brother a liar?” There was a simple majesty in the pose of the girl. For the moment she was the prophetess of Zanah. “Beware lest thou bring disgrace and dishonor to the people of Zanah. It is best that this hour be forgotten. Blot out thine enmities.”

“When Gerson Brandt hath explained what became of the Bible the cause of all the trouble will be

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removed," said Karl Weisel, turning away from the intense gaze of the girl.

"Thou knowest the Good Book is lost. Thou knowest that Gerson Brandt never told aught but the truth. How darest thou impute evil to him? He hath been always one of the most faithful men in all Zanah."

Turning to the school-master, she said:

"Ah, Gerson Brandt, I have prayed much about the Bible. Disturb not thyself. I have faith that it will be found. I would that it could be brought to thee to-day."

In the back of the school-room, Hans Peter, who had been sitting cross-legged in the doorway, pulled himself to his feet.

"I could find the Bible; it is not far away," he said.

"What dost thou know of it?" asked the Herr Doktor.

"I know that it lieth in the earth beneath a great stone. It is safe. Have no fears for it." Hans Peter balanced himself first on one bare foot, and then on the other, and in his face was such a stupid look that Karl Weisel said:

"Look at the fool! He would shield the school-master, to whom he shows a dog's devotion."

"Dost thou really know where the Bible is, Hans Peter?" asked Walda, laying her hand upon the simple one's shoulder.

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“I have not said I knew. I said I knew I could get it,” answered the fool.

“Nay, dissemble not,” pleaded Walda. “I know now it was thou that didst hide the Bible from the elders.”

The boy looked down to the floor.

“Yea, I did take the Bible so that the stranger in Zanah could not buy it with his silver. It was for thy sake and for Gerson Brandt’s that I took it.”

“Listen not to the fool,” said Karl Weisel. “I tell thee he would shield Gerson Brandt.”

“There is a likelihood of truth in his words,” declared the Herr Doktor. Then, in a thundering tone, he commanded: “Bring the Bible to me.”

“It may not be easily found,” Hans Peter answered, still keeping his eyes on the floor.

“Dare not try to put me off,” thundered Adolph Schneider, shaking his cane at the simple one. “Without more ado, fetch it to me.”

All this time Gerson Brandt had been standing silent and sad. He now waited expectantly for the last answer. He knew that his precious book was, indeed, in jeopardy.

Hans Peter gently took Walda’s hand from his shoulder, and, backing to the door, said, rolling his great head from side to side:

“The fool hath no memory. If he would know the thing that happened yesterday he must mark upon a

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gourd words that will bring back to his poor mind what is past."

"Let him not make terms; let him not trade upon his folly," interposed Karl Weisel.

"Thou hast not forgotten where the Bible is hidden?" inquired Walda, very gently.

"I did bury the gourd that told me where the Bible is, and upon another gourd I marked where that gourd was hidden."

"Quick! We care not about thy lunatic pastimes. Bring the Bible!" shouted the Herr Doktor, overcome with impatience.

"And the second gourd I carried in my pocket until one day, when I was marking on it something the stranger had told me, the Herr Doktor struck it out of my hand with his cane and put his heel upon it. The Bible is safe, but it cannot be found without long search."

When the simple one had made his tantalizing speech, the school-master spoke in a quiet tone:

"Hans Peter, thou knowest that the precious book may be spoiled in the ground. Try to think where it is."

"Nay, I tell thee it is safe, for it is wrapped in the oil-skin in which thou didst keep it, and it is nailed in a great box that is covered with another box. I did work upon the boxes a large part of the night before I buried the Bible."

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“The village fool is not to be believed,” said Karl Weisel, “but he ought to be locked up until he can be made to confess that what he is telling is all a lie.”

The Herr Doktor descended from the platform, and, going to the door, clutched Hans Peter by the shoulder. “Thou shalt have a chance to collect thy wits, my boy. Come with me. In a dark room in the cellar of the *gasthaus* thou canst stay until thou hast some memory about the Bible.”

“Before we part it is well that we all agree to forget this misunderstanding,” said Walda. “I am sure Hans Peter will find the Bible, and that we can cast out all anxiety concerning it.”

Hans Peter made no reply. He stood with both hands thrust into his capacious pockets. The Herr Doktor pulled him through the door, and, followed by Karl Weisel, he went down the street towards the inn.

Gerson Brandt turned a white and troubled face to Walda when they were left alone together.

“Thou hast seen me in the clutch of an earthly passion,” he said. “Thou knowest now how unworthy I am to be counted as a counsellor of a prophetess. I have naught to say in extenuation, except that in man human impulses often triumph over the divine aspirations. Canst thou forget that I have thus resented an insult?”

Walda came closer to him.

“Gerson Brandt, it may be wicked of me, but some-

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how I like thee better because thou hast demanded that Karl Weisel retract his sinful words. He hath called his brother a liar, and God will judge him for that."

"And I should have remembered that I am not the judge," said Gerson Brandt. "I should not have let myself take vengeance into mine own hand. When thou art the prophetess thou wilt become my teacher, and, Walda, I am half glad I shall need thine aid to overcome sin."

"Thou hast been my teacher so long it seemeth I could never have any wisdom greater than thine."

Gerson Brandt looked into her eyes.

"Being a woman, thou hast wisdom and power of which thou little dreamest," he said.

"If I have aught of wisdom, it is because thou hast been my guide ever since I was a child. Gerson Brandt, thou hast been nearer to me than my father; thou hast been more to me than all the brothers in the colony."

"It hath always seemed, Walda, that thou wert sent to reconcile me to life in Zanah. Thy presence hath helped me to overcome all rebellion. Having prayed for the time of thine inspiration, it is a struggle for me to give thee up. It is as if I were losing thee, even though thou wilt still be in the colony."

"Nay, Gerson, it seemeth to me that when the light of inspiration cometh to me thou must share it, for,

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after all, it is thy knowledge and thy faith that is in me. There hath come to me lately something of the illumination thou hast told me to expect, Gerson Brandt. There are days when it is as if I stood on the threshold of heaven. My heart is lifted up with a strange joy. I hear harmony in the rustling of the leaves in the trees and the flowing of the water under the bridge and the faint night-sounds that come to mine ears when the village hath gone to sleep. Long after the curfew-bell hath sounded I open my casement and look out into the sky. It is then I feel the vastness of the universe, and yet know that God hath not forgotten me."

As Walda spoke her face was radiant with new joy, and Gerson Brandt knew she was even then far removed from him.

"Thou lookest from thy casement every night? Dost thou gaze at the moon?" he asked.

"Yea, Gerson Brandt, I look long at the moon."

"Walda, that is a habit maidens have when they think not of God but of man. Thou hast in thy thought no human being?"

"There is often a light in the inn; it shineth from the window of him whom we not long ago called the stranger in Zanah. It bringeth him into my mind, and I thank God for his coming to the colony."

Walda's words smote the school-master. A faint

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color came into his thin cheeks. He steadied himself against the desk.

"It is not thy duty to pray for the stranger. The elders can do that," he declared.

"Nay, but he hath helped me much. He hath brought me strength."

"Beware lest that strength become thy weakness." There was a tremor in Gerson Brandt's voice, and his manner puzzled the girl.

"Thou dost speak in riddles," she said. "Thou knowest his world could not touch me. When I gaze from my window I am glad, indeed, that the bluffs shut me out from all the wickedness of the life beyond the colony."

"I beg thy pardon, Walda. It was an unworthy suspicion that crossed my mind. Surely to-day Satan is close to me. And when thou gazest at the moon dost thou think of any one else?"

"Of my father, Gerson Brandt, and always of thee."

"And how do I come to thee in thy thoughts, Walda?"

"Thou comest as one that is ever dear to me. Since thou didst first take me on thy knee thou hast shared with my father all the earthly love of my heart. Have I not often told thee so?"

"Thou didst never think of me as nearer to thine own age than thy father? Do I always appear so old to thee?"

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“Truly, thou dost seem like my father.” In her voice was an infinite tenderness, and the school-master, with a tremor in his voice, answered:

“And yet I am but fifteen years thy senior.”

“But thou lovest me as if I were thy daughter. I have always felt that thou didst give me something more than the neighborly regard in which all the people of Zanah hold one another.”

Gerson Brandt made no answer.

“Thou dost love me as if I were thy daughter?” she repeated.

“Thou hast forever a place in the sanctuary of my heart, Walda.”

The school-master and the prophetess of Zanah looked into each other's eyes for a brief moment.

“Then I know that thou wilt always pray for me—that thou wilt always keep me safe from all worldly temptations.”

“Yea, thou wilt always have my care. Thou wilt always command my services and my prayers. To-day I feel humble, indeed, because I lost my self-control, but I shall strive always to be worthy to be counted as one who walketh near to the prophetess of Zanah. Walda, to-day I am weak indeed. I feel how much I shall need divine strength in the years to come. My way is a lonely one. It is said that after the inspiration is vouchsafed to a prophetess her soul withdraws itself from all human companionship, and

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that even if it were not the custom to separate the instrument of the Lord from the colonists of Zanah, there would be naught in common between her and those who try to serve God in humbler ways. Lately, Walda, I have looked forward with a feeling that the years without thee will be weary. When thou art the prophetess there will be none with whom I can speak of the dreams I have shared with thee."

"Thy dreams, as thou callest them, first made me feel the mysteries of life. Gerson Brandt, it was thou who didst awaken my soul; it was thou who didst turn my heart to God, and now, verily, thou wilt not be sorrowful when my day of inspiration comes?"

"To-day there is so much of self victorious in me that I know the day of the *Untersuchung* will make me sad. It was my intention on that day to give thee the Bible that is lost. For many months thou knowest I worked upon it, making the letters beautiful for thine eyes, and it was a solace to me to feel, every day as I turned the pages upon which I had worked with many a prayer and blessing for thy welfare, that thou wouldst take pleasure in its beauty."

"And was that Bible for me, Gerson? On the last day when thou didst give it to me to read before the school I did covet it."

"I did think that I should never tell thee, and it was a sore trouble when Adolph Schneider demanded that it be sold. I tell thee this because, as I have

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said to-day, I am weak, and I would say something in extenuation of my unseemly conduct towards the head of the thirteen elders."

"And I am very human, for I am glad that the book is lost, and that the elders had no chance to take it from thee."

"I could not endure the thought that the stranger from the outside world should possess what I had come to believe belonged to thee."

Walda turned her head away a moment. Then she answered:

"I want the Bible very much indeed; but, Gerson Brandt, if any stranger were to have it, it had been better it should go to Stephen Everett than to any one else."

A look of pain came into the school-master's face. † His eyes sought the girl's with a glance that strove to read her heart.

"And I would rather that the Bible be destroyed, that its pages be scattered and its letters obliterated, than that Stephen Everett should call it his own."

"Why, Gerson Brandt, thou speakest with much stress. Thou art, indeed, unlike thyself to-day."

"Perhaps my real self is uppermost, Walda, and the school-master, who was always so submissive and passive, is not the actual man."

"Peace to thy heart." Walda came close to him. "Let me tell thee that I should have held the Bible as

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a precious token from thee, and that I am grateful for the kindly thought with which thou hast wrought it for me."

Tears were in her eyes. She hesitated a moment, as if waiting for an answer. Gerson Brandt, with arms folded across his breast, pressed his lips tightly together lest he might speak with the fervor of one who covets from God a supreme gift that must be forever beyond reach.

XIII

WHEN Hans Peter was led away from the school-room after his confession concerning the Bible, Karl Weisel and Adolph Schneider conducted him towards the inn. The Herr Doktor, thoroughly upset from his usual phlegmatic tranquillity, held the ear of the simple one in a pinching grasp. With a speed that caused the colony president to pant, the three descended the hill on their way to the inn.

“Hans Peter should be locked up until he confesseth that he hath borne false witness,” said Karl Weisel.

“I believe he knoweth where the Holy Book is hidden,” answered Adolph Schneider. “We will lock him up where he can have a chance to think over his transgressions.”

Hans Peter, dragging slowly after the Herr Doktor, who every now and then jerked his head, appeared not to hear what was said about him.

“Tell us now what thou didst mean by thy foolish lie about the Bible,” urged the head of the thirteen elders.

“I spoke the truth. But not every one knoweth

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the truth to understand it," answered the simple one.

"He still defieth us," exclaimed Karl Weisel. Then, giving Hans Peter a cuff, he added, addressing him:

"Thou shalt spend the night in the cellar of the *gasthaus*, and if thou dost not speak so as to make it clear that thou dost share all thy knowledge with the elders and those in authority, thou shalt be put in the stocks."

"Threaten not too hastily, Brother Weisel," said the Herr Doktor. "Thou knowest the stocks have not been used these ten years, and the dismembered timbers pertaining to it are stored in the hay-loft of the *gasthaus* barn."

"The stocks can be put together easily enough," muttered Karl Weisel; and Hans Peter, turning his head as much as Adolph Schneider's hold upon his ear permitted, said:

"The village fool feareth no punishment thou canst devise. Ye men of Zanah shall never get possession of Gerson Brandt's Bible."

"Hear! He defieth us!" cried Karl Weisel; and Adolph Schneider responded with an angry grunt, that he punctuated with a superfluous pinch administered to Hans Peter's ear.

They reached the inn, where Diedrich Werther received them with his customary imperturbability.

"Hast thou a place in the cellar where thou canst

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lock up this culprit?" Karl Weisel inquired. At the same time the Herr Doktor pushed the simple one into the middle of the room.

"There is a heavy bolt on the potato-bin," said Werther, taking his pipe out of his mouth and leaning upon the dog-eared register.

"Conduct Hans Peter to it, and be his jailer until to-morrow morning. Mind that he hath no supper."

"What is Hans Peter's offence?" Mother Werther asked, opening the door from the kitchen and putting her black-capped head into the room. "Tut, tut, my boy! I hope thou hast not been exhibiting thy folly in some hazardous manner."

Hans Peter put his hands into his deep pockets, hung his head, and made no reply.

"The simple one is to be locked in your potato-bin until he tells the truth about the Bible," announced the Herr Doktor.

"Nay, be not too severe with him. Hans Peter will tell—wilt not thou, boy?" said Mother Werther, coaxingly.

But the simple one only shook his round head.

"You may have to stay down there in the darkness with the rats for a week," said Karl Weisel.

"Yea, thou shalt not baffle the elders of Zanah," declared the Herr Doktor. "It will be the cellar or the stocks until thou dost wag thy stubborn tongue to good purpose."

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“Now thou art speaking wisely, Brother Schneider,” said Karl Weisel. “Why dost thou not order Diedrich Werther to conduct the fool to his prison?”

“Take him away,” commanded the Herr Doktor.

“Thou knowest I permit no rats in the *gasthaus* cellar,” said Mother Werther, shaking her head indignantly at Karl Weisel; and edging up to Hans Peter, she bent low to whisper: “Thou shalt have the best supper I can carry to thee.”

“Verily, even Mother Werther appears to be encouraging sedition in Zanah,” remarked Karl Weisel, pointing to the innkeeper’s wife with a backward movement of his thumb.

“If there is sedition in Zanah, it is thou that sowest discontent.” Mother Werther put her arms on her broad hips, and looked at him for a moment with such contempt in her kindly face that the head of the thirteen elders slunk aside to a chair behind the high counter.

“I will take Hans Peter to the potato-bin, and he shall have a clean straw tick to lie on,” she said. “Come, Hans Peter.”

Mother Werther put a hand on the simple one’s shoulder and walked out into the kitchen with him. Presently they were heard descending the stairs, and then their voices sounded from the distant place of imprisonment.

It was late that night when Everett returned to the

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inn after a walk far a-field. At supper-time he had asked about Hans Peter, but he had learned nothing of the whereabouts of the simple one. He had a faint idea that he ought to search for the fool, but his thoughts were absorbed by Walda. He spoke to Diedrich Werther, who dozed in an arm-chair, and the landlord slowly lighted a tall tallow dip and passed it to Everett. He lingered to ask whether any message had come from Wilhelm Kellar. The landlord replied that the school-master had stopped to ask for the stranger in Zanah, but it was nothing urgent, for Gerson Brandt had told how fast Wilhelm Kellar was gaining strength.

Everett stumbled along the dark, narrow passage that led to his room. A draught blew out his candle, which he did not relight. Feeling his way to his bed, he threw himself down upon it and tried to think what course was wisest for him to pursue in winning Walda. He was not blind to the many obstacles between them, but he was a man who was accustomed to obtain what he coveted, and he admitted no thought of defeat. He wanted Walda with all the intensity of a strong nature. He knew now that he loved her, and he felt that she was his by right of that claim. A sense of his own unworthiness haunted him when he thought of her innocence and her unworldliness, but there had been born in him a new spirit that consumed all his old desires. He knew

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that even if he could make the prophetess of Zanah love him, it would be impossible for him to persuade her to leave the colony as long as her father lived. He felt a hot wave of shame every time he realized that if love came to Walda it would bring her only dishonor before her people. Whenever this view of the end of his wooing presented itself, he resolutely refused to face it. He listened to the cry of his heart. He loved the woman of Zanah; he coveted her for his wife.

Women are happy to enshrine love in their hearts even when it must burn in a vestal flame, but men are not content unless they can carry it as a torch from which to light the fires in the hearts of those whom they would make their own. Women can kneel before the embers of a great passion and be grateful, even though it must burn out before it can reach their own hearth-stones; men would snatch the holy fire at any cost. Everett had slowly reached the point where he had deliberately determined to make Walda love him. He had eased his conscience by the plea that it was a crime for a woman of such rare beauty to be buried in the colony. He was sure he could make her happy in the world that held so much for him. He could reason himself into the belief that he was saving her from a wasted life. Yet, with all his reasoning, he could not see how he was to obtain her consent to marry him and to go away with him. Still, he hugged to his heart the belief that fate

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would befriend him, and he resolved not to look beyond the one great aim of making Walda love him.

He could not sleep. The thoughts that had harassed him, since suddenly he had come to know Walda had all his love, disturbed him as he lay on the high bed. He stared at the window, which afforded glimpses of a starlit sky between the leaves and branches of a tree that had become black in the night. Day was breaking before he began to feel drowsy. Finally he fell into a deep slumber that was not disturbed until the sun was high in the heavens. He was awakened by a remittent pounding, the sound of which came from the front of the inn. He went to the latticed window, whence he could see that several men were building something in the village square. He made a hasty toilet in his primitive dressing-room, where two buckets of water and a wooden wash-tub were provided for his bath. The cold water refreshed him, but he still had a sense of depression.

Everett hastened out into the village square. In all the time he had sojourned in Zanah nothing unusual had happened. It was pleasing to hope that at last something out of the common might be taking place. Three middle-aged men and two boys were engaged in putting together a most extraordinary structure. They had fixed in place several weather-beaten beams and a number of old planks that led up to the rude platform.

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“What are you building?” Everett asked, but the men pretended not to understand, although he spoke in German. They kept on with their work.

“Cannot you tell me what this is?” Everett asked. The men were still uncommunicative, but one of the boys said:

“These are the stocks in which Hans Peter must sit until he tells where the school-master’s Bible is hidden.”

“Where is Hans Peter now?”

The boy had been silenced by the men, and he dared not reply.

During the breakfast-hour Everett could obtain no further information. He was desirous of seeing the simple one, for he felt in a measure responsible for poor Hans Peter’s trouble. He made a perfunctory visit to his patient. Walda Kellar had ceased to be on duty in the sick-room, and the case had lost much of its interest.

Wilhelm Kellar was sitting up in a big chair. He looked weak and ill, but he proudly announced, with a tongue slow to respond to his thoughts:

“I shall be able to attend the *Untersuchung*. The Lord hath decreed that I shall see the day of my daughter’s final victory over earthly temptations.” The old man’s joy smote Everett, to whom the *Untersuchung* might mean the loss of Walda. He turned to whistle to Piepmatz.

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“I owe thee much for thine aid in helping nature to overcome my illness,” said the old man, speaking slowly. “Thou hast been so kind that thou hast won my enduring confidence. For the first time in a score of years my faith in a man of the outside world is almost restored.”

Again Everett’s heart smote him. He who had come to love Wilhelm Kellar’s daughter knew that he stood ready to tempt Walda away from her vocation as prophetess. He had always held honor first, and he was ill at ease. The day had gone by, however, when he could consider the possibility of renunciation where his heart’s desire was concerned. He had meant to flee from Zanah, but he had stayed because he loved Walda, and because he did not mean to be disappointed in the hope of winning her.

“You are not indebted to me,” he said to Wilhelm Kellar. “The weeks spent in Zanah have been very pleasant to me.”

“Thou art truly a good man, Stephen Everett, and I am thankful that the Lord did turn thy steps to Zanah,” the old man replied.

Piepmatz, looking out from his rustic cage, moved his head from side to side as if he were listening to the conversation. Presently he whistled the bar of the love-song that Everett had taught him. The first notes sounded clear and true, and then Piepmatz sang a false note or two. He began the bar a second time

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and broke down. Everett heard the song, and the bird-voice carried with it an accusation against his loyalty.

“You had better go back to your doxology,” he said, snapping his fingers at the bird.

He said a hasty farewell and went back to the inn. The stocks had been completed and Hans Peter had just been placed in them. His fat, red hands and his bare feet were held so firmly that it was plain the pressure was most uncomfortable. The simple one's face, however, betrayed no sign of pain. He kept his eyes shut so that he could not see the passers-by, who paused to stare at him. His shock of tow-hair was matted on his head, and his blue shirt-sleeves were torn from the arm-holes by the unusual strain upon the garment, which was too small for him. When Everett beheld the simple one thus ignominiously punished his indignation arose. Without speaking to Hans Peter he went into the inn, where he found Adolph Schneider and Karl Weisel.

“It is only fair to believe you do not know you are inflicting a cruel penalty upon Hans Peter,” he said, addressing the Herr Doktor. “You must lessen the pressure on the boy's wrists and ankles, and you must do it now.”

“Whence didst thou get thine authority to issue commands to the president of the colony of Zanah?” asked Karl Weisel.

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“I was not addressing you,” answered Everett, and the head of the thirteen elders, taking account of the athletic build of the man of the world, deemed discretion the better part of valor. He forbore to pick a quarrel.

“Speaking as a physician, I must protest against the use of the stocks,” said Everett. His tone was so cool and determined that Adolph Schneider adopted a conciliatory manner.

“Hans Peter will not remain long in the stocks,” he said, burying his heavy chin in his neck-cloth. “He will soon tell what he knows about the Bible. He would have confessed this morning, but Mother Werther made him so comfortable in the potato-bin that he did not take the trouble to think over our injunction to lay bare the facts about the Bible.”

“Even though Hans Peter may not remain in the stocks an hour, you must confine his hands and feet less closely. I dare say he is numb now,” Everett insisted.

“Well, well, I will call one of the carpenters,” said the Herr Doktor, but he did not move from his chair.

“I will wait until the carpenter comes,” said Everett; “and he must come without delay.”

Adolph Schneider sullenly conceded to Everett’s humane demand, and they went out to the stocks together. A crowd had gathered in the square, and some of the boys who had escaped from Gerson

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Brandt's care were jeering at the simple one. Hans Peter made no sign until Everett spoke to him.

Everett ascended the three steps to the platform of the stocks and waited impatiently while Hans Peter's hands and feet were freed temporarily. The simple one was quite stiff when he was commanded to stand up. He straightened his back with some difficulty, although he had not been an hour in the stocks. Everett stooped to examine the marks upon the lad's ankles.

"Can you call yourselves Christians, and torture a boy in this fashion?" he inquired, in anger, addressing the Herr Doktor.

"Hans Peter is none the worse for a little lesson that will teach him to obey the commands of Zanah," Adolph Schneider answered.

"Do you intend to put him back?" Everett asked.

Adolph Schneider showed some signs of hesitation, but Karl Weisel replied:

"He shall stay there until his contumacious spirit is broken. He must be punished until he confesseth."

"Are you sure that you do not wish to tell where the Bible is?" Everett asked, kindly. But the simple one replied:

"They can keep me in the stocks until I die. I care not. I will not deliver the Sacred Book into their hands." His lips were white, and the perspiration stood upon his forehead, over which his matted hair

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hung into his eyes. He tried to raise his hand to his head, but the pain made the effort futile. Everett took one of the simple one's swollen hands in his and began to chafe the arms, which were numb.

The carpenters soon had their work done, and Karl Weisel ordered Hans Peter back to his place in the stocks.

"Isn't there something I can do to prevent this outrage?" Everett spoke in a threatening tone. "How can you stoop to such persecution?"

Involuntarily he clinched his hands and drew himself up to his full height. Towering above the men of Zanah, he looked from one to the other, as if undecided which to knock down first.

Karl Weisel took the precaution to leave the platform, and when safe on the ground he answered, tauntingly:

"Thine interference will not be tolerated in Zanah. Thou shalt not defeat the ends of justice."

"Nay, mind not Hans Peter; the village fool doth not fear those who are called wise in Zanah." The simple one spoke calmly, and he moved past Everett to the beam upon which he had been sitting.

It occurred to Everett that any violent measures might only cause another method of torture to be devised, and he went into the inn to think about some means by which he could deliver Hans Peter. The day wore away, and late in the afternoon the simple

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one was still in the stocks. An attempt to discuss the matter with the Herr Doktor had proved fruitless. Everett went to the school-master, and Gerson Brandt told him that protest was useless.

“I warned them that I would not consent to such a show of vengefulness,” said Gerson Brandt, “but they laughed at me, and hinted that the simple one was my accomplice.” He was sitting at his desk, and his attitude betrayed the deepest despondency.

Everett went back to the inn just as the afternoon bell rang. It was the signal for the girls' knitting-school and the boys' learning-school to dismiss pupils. At this hour the mill-hands had a brief respite for the drinking of coffee. Soon the village street was full, and all the men, women, and children turned their steps towards the square. Here they stood in groups, talking in low tones, and casting glances up at the simple one, whose face was not less stolid than usual. Hans Peter had become deathly pale, but as he sat with bent back and bowed head he appeared oblivious of the crowd that was gazing at him.

“At last the village fool hath found his right place in the world,” remarked Mother Kaufmann, taking a seat on the lowest step of the stocks and beginning to knit.

“I hope he will remember all the impertinent things he hath said to us, and know that he is receiving his

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just dues," said Gretchen Schneider, who had come into the square with Mother Kaufmann.

"It seemeth to me that Hans Peter is one possessed of a devil," declared Karl Weisel, joining Gretchen Schneider, and taking care to stand so close to her that his coat-sleeve brushed her arm.

On the other side of the stocks Frieda Bergen had stopped to look up at the prisoner with compassion written on her pretty face. She wiped her eyes on the corner of her apron, and Joseph Hoff, who saw her grief, passed by her once or twice, biding his time until he could speak to her without attracting the attention of the elders or colony mothers, among whom his attachment for the girl had become common gossip.

"Hans Peter may be free to-morrow," he said, reassuringly. "Do not feel bad for him."

"There is a tenderness in my heart for all God's creatures, Joseph," the girl answered.

"Be sure thou givest me most of thy sympathy," Joseph Hoff said, and they smiled into each other's faces with a look of perfect understanding.

Many of the children gazed silently at the culprit, and some of them climbed up the stout beams that supported the stocks. A few venturesome boys seated themselves upon the heavy plank that held poor Hans Peter's hands. Mother Werther, who had been going back and forth all day between the stocks and

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the inn, sought a place whence she could speak a cheering word to the simple one. Several times Adolph Schneider had stepped to the inn-porch, and, with a flourish of his cane, had admonished the people of Zannah to preserve order. He had taken occasion to call attention to the ways that the Lord found by which the wicked were punished. He had just finished one of his exhortations when it was whispered that Walda Kellar was coming.

The prophetess of Zannah walked over the bridge with her head bent, as if she were preoccupied. When she looked up it was plain that the crowd astonished her. She quickened her steps, and, advancing with her eyes fixed on the stocks, said, in a clear tone, which was heard by all the people:

“What meaneth this thing?”

She turned flashing eyes from one to another in the throng, and those near her fell back.

“Where is some one who will answer me? I would speak to one of the elders. By what authority is Hans Peter placed in the stocks? Who hath dared to pass such severe judgment upon one of the most helpless in Zannah?”

There was no answer. Walda waited for a moment.

“I would speak to Adolph Schneider or Karl Weisel,” she said; but neither responded to her summons. Adolph Schneider had disappeared into the *gasthaus*

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when he saw her, and Karl Weisel had drifted out of sight. Walda turned to survey the crowd.

“Why are ye here, looking on calmly? Hath no one raised a voice in behalf of him who hath harmed none in the colony?” she cried.

She moved towards the stocks, men, women, and children separating to let her pass. Ascending the steps, she looked down upon the colonists. Suddenly she became clothed in a strange majesty. Her body swayed with the strength of her emotion. She opened her lips as if to address the throng, but some wiser impulse restrained her. She stood as if in prayer, and presently, raising her hand to command attention, she said:

“Hath it been forgotten that it is written in the Bible, ‘With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again’? Are ye so wise that ye can know how guilty Hans Peter is in seizing the Bible? Can ye see into the heart of him whom all have called the simple one? Can ye know his motives? Has none of you, to whom the Lord hath given greater understanding than He hath vouchsafed to this humble child of Zannah, sinned in larger measure than Hans Peter? There hath been lost to Zannah a Bible of great value; but where is your faith? Can ye not believe that if it is best it will be returned unto you? Liberate Hans Peter, and I say unto you it shall be

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made plain that ye have done what is good. Your mercy will be rewarded twofold."

After she spoke the last words she paused for a moment. A murmur passed over the crowd. One of the colonists cried:

"Free him! Free him!"

"Listen not to the voice of a woman's pity," warned Karl Weisel, from his place on the well-curb, which raised him above the heads of the crowd.

"Nay, hear her. The power may be upon her. She may be foretelling what will happen if Hans Peter is set free."

It was Mother Werther who raised her voice. She was standing upon the steps of the inn, and her words caused a hush to fall upon the people of Zanah.

"All we in Zanah can learn a lesson to-day from Hans Peter," said Walda Kellar, turning towards the simple one, who made no sign that he had heard her plea for him. "This poor lad hath meant no harm. He hath followed some strong impulse, born of the belief that he is doing right, and you put him into the stocks, where he remaineth firm in his determination not to undo what he hath thought was a noble deed. For some reason he hath desired to keep the Bible in Zanah, when you would have bartered it for gold and silver. Can ye say that it was not God's will he should hide it so that it could not be sent out into the world, where it might not be valued at its true worth?"

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How can ye be sure that it may not be you, instead of Hans Peter, who should be punished? Doth this structure built by your hands appear to be work that was inspired by God? Were not the stocks devised by Satan? Is it thus that the Father in Heaven would have ye deal with those subjects in your power?"

"Verily, she speaketh as if she were listening to the still, small voice with which the Lord quickeneth the consciences of his people," said the meekest of the thirteen elders, a little, bent man, who supported himself against a fence-rail.

"The time draweth near for the *Untersuchung*, when you will listen to words of wisdom from me," continued Walda, her voice softening into a tone of humility. "Much have I prayed that I may be worthy to be chosen from among you to be the prophetess of Zanah. In these last few weeks there hath come to me a new light. It is yet but as a candle-beam of divine knowledge, but it hath made all things sacred in mine eyes. The glory of God hath been revealed to me in the smallest ways. Instead of feeling the majesty of the Ruler of the universe, I have known something of the meaning of the eternal love which encompasseth the highest and the lowliest. In the Father's eyes, when the day of judgment cometh, this hour in the stocks may be counted so much in outweighing the sins of the simple one that he will be placed above

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us all. This day's record in the Book of Life may have a great significance."

Walda, looking down upon the upturned faces before her, read fear written upon many and compassion upon a few.

"I beseech you, with one voice declare Hans Peter free," she said, turning her face first towards one side of the square and then towards the other, so that all gathered there felt she addressed each separately. "Hesitate not. Each moment that ye wait adds to the pain suffered by your prisoner."

"Dost thou believe the Lord will reward us if we show mercy?" asked the Herr Doktor, who had come out of the inn to hear what Walda had to say.

"The people of Zannah should not weigh the chance of reward for doing what is just and right," answered the prophetess.

Walda stood as if she were listening for some word of pity from the colonists.

"If ye would show that ye have confidence in me, whom ye look to as the prophetess of Zannah, permit me to liberate Hans Peter. Can ye deny me this privilege?" she asked, presently.

"It is meet that we shift the judgment of the simple one to her upon whom the inspiration is already descending," said Mother Werther. "Women of Zannah, pledge her your faith."

Cries of "Give Walba Kellar the judgment!" "Let

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her loosen the stocks!" "The prophetess of Zannah hath spoken!" were heard on every side.

"Nay, the spirit hath not descended on her. Put not such power in a girl's hands," shouted Mother Kaufmann, waving the hand that still clasped her knitting.

Her words were followed by low hisses, and instantly several of the men were heard demanding Hans Peter's release.

"She did say that the value of the Bible might be returned twofold," said Diedrich Werther, who had been encouraged to speak by vigorous nudges from his wife. Mother Werther had pushed him from his place on the porch, where he had been hidden by the vines.

"Walda Kellar, is it the spirit which prompts thee to say the value of the Bible will be made good to the colony?" inquired the Herr Doktor.

Again Walda Kellar stood with her head turned, as if she were listening to the still, small voice of her conscience.

"Nay, Adolph Schneider, I cannot say that it is the spirit; I know not whether my words are words of prophecy. Yet my faith, looking up to God, maketh me believe that if thou showest mercy to the foolish one, a recompense will be given thee."

Her words came slowly. They fell upon the ears of the people in Zannah with a distinctness and a fervor

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that awed them, and again the murmur was heard in the square.

“Free him! Free him!” shouted Joseph Hoff, and the cry was taken up by men, women, and children.

A tall, burly farm-hand pushed his way from the stocks to the porch of the inn, where the Herr Doktor still stood. He was followed by three or four of those who were known as the keepers of the vineyard.

“Beware how thou dost challenge the curses of Heaven,” said the farm-hand. “Dost thou intend to obey the prophetess, now that she hath spoken?”

“We have had bad luck enough already,” said one of the keepers of the vineyard. “Defy not Heaven now.”

Something like fear showed itself in the face of Adolph Schneider. He cast his small eyes towards Karl Weisel, who shook his head. The people had now turned their faces from the stocks, and the crowd gazed upon the village president, who was plainly hesitating concerning what would be the best policy.

“The men of Zanah have spoken wisely,” declared the meek elder, from his place near the fence. “Thou must listen to the voice of the people.”

“Free him! Free him!” the crowd shouted. Amid all the clamor Walda Kellar stood motionless, with her eyes fixed upon the far bluffs, and Hans Peter sat with head drooped so that his face could not be seen. While the crowd was threatening to become a mob,

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it was not noticed that the school-master had crossed the fields, pushed his way to the stocks, and ascended two steps.

“Men and women of Zanah, if ye turn a deaf ear to Walda Kellar, let me offer myself as the one upon whom to inflict the punishment ye deem fitting because the Bible upon which I put much patient work hath disappeared.” Gerson Brandt’s voice was low, but it had a determined ring in it as he spoke to the colonists. He had removed his hat, and those who looked upon his face marvelled that the gentle school-master could be so threatening in mien and gesture.

“Since the Sacred Book disappeared while it was in my custody, I am responsible for it. If any one is to be put into the stocks, it is I, that served you all as your elder—I, to whom you have intrusted the training of your boys. This day’s work shall long be a reproach to Zanah, for ye have stood by while the simple one hath been made to suffer. Even though he may have been guilty of the offence imputed to him, the penalty is greater than his deed hath merited.”

The uproar that followed this speech caused the Herr Doktor to tremble as he leaned upon his cane.

“Surely no one in all Zanah would see Gerson Brandt put into the stocks,” said Mother Werther, taking her place beside Adolph Schneider. “For shame, brethren and sisters of Zanah! Give Hans Peter his liberty.”

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“We demand the release of the simple one,” said the vineyard workers. “Let him go! Let him go!”

“Gerson Brandt, thine offer to take Hans Peter’s place in the stocks is an insult to thy high office as an elder of Zanah,” said the Herr Doktor. “I will accede to the wishes of the people. Thou canst liberate the village fool.”

Adolph Schneider turned to go into the inn, and Stephen Everett, who had been watching the strange scene from the corner of the porch, went out into the square to offer aid to Gerson Brandt. The school-master had acted quickly, and before Everett reached the stocks Hans Peter’s feet were free. Everett loosed the simple one’s hands and raised him to an upright position. Hans Peter was so stiff that he fell upon the rude platform.

“He is exhausted. I will take him into the inn,” said Everett, addressing Walda, who was leaning over the prostrate form of Hans Peter.

“I know that thou wilt minister to him, and that thou wilt restore his senses. See, he hath swooned!”

“I will take care of him. You can trust me to see that he is made comfortable,” Everett promised.

“Yea, I always trust thee, Stephen.”

The man and woman bending over the form of the simple one looked into each other’s eyes for a second. Then Everett lifted Hans Peter in his arms, carried

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him down the steps, and, passing through the crowd, disappeared within the door of the inn.

Standing upon the platform of the stocks, Walda looked after them until the inn-door had closed. Turning, she beheld Gerson Brandt staring at her with terror in his eyes. He was ghastly pale, and his thin nostrils were widely dilated with the quickness of his breathing.

“Art thou ill, Gerson Brandt?” she asked.

“Nay, I have my usual health. Just now, fear clutcheth at my heart.”

“Fear, Gerson Brandt? Thou wert ever brave. What is it that thou couldst fear?”

“A shadow was cast over me. It hath passed.”

Gerson Brandt stooped to pick up his hat, and motioned to Walda to pass down the steps before him. As Walda walked through the square the people bowed before her, in token of their recognition that she was, indeed, the prophetess, for it was whispered that the stranger from the outside world had given his word to Adolph Schneider that he would pay twice the value of the Bible on condition that Hans Peter should not be further punished.

XIV

EVERETT counted the days until the *Untersuchung*. Only ten intervened. In less than a fortnight Walda would be cut off from all communication with him. She would have entered into her duties as the leader of the colony. She would be the prophetess—the inspired one. He tried to imagine himself looking on during the quaint ceremony of the *Untersuchung*, and he had to face the knowledge that he could not stand by while the girl passed forever beyond his reach. Even while he dared vaguely to plan some way by which he could win her for himself, he had a few misgivings concerning her unfitness for his world, which he knew she would find strange and cruel. He told himself that he could protect her, that he could make her happy, and that he could help her to become adjusted to a different sphere. With the unreason of the lover he imagined how they would live for each other, aloof from all the ordinary demands of everyday existence. He knew that she loved the few books that had been open to her in Zanah, and he dreamed of the days when he would guide her into a broader knowledge, when he would help her to acquire the sort

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of an education suited to her unusual mind. He was confident that her artistic nature would develop in a congenial atmosphere. It would be his pride to cultivate her glorious voice, and to teach her to understand the painter's art, which Zanah held sinful. His thoughts travelled over the same circle again and again, but always he came back to the idea that he must act quickly if he would save her from bondage to the colony—if he would awaken her to the meaning of his love.

He was thankful for the opportunity her daily prayers at the tomb of Marta Bachmann gave him to meet her, but the next night after he had walked with her to the little cemetery he had seen her cross the bridge accompanied by no less a person than Mother Schneider herself. He had been compelled to pace restlessly back and forth among the trees, keeping out of sight lest his presence might be discovered.

On the third night he watched for Walda at the point where the road reached the shore of the lake. It was late, and he had almost given up hope of seeing her when she came slowly towards him. For an hour he had been reconnoitring the whole distance between the lake and the cemetery. And now, when he beheld her, he felt as if he must claim her by the right of his love for her. His better judgment, however, told him that he must be circumspect in his wooing. One impetuous word might put her on her

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guard. The touch of his hand had given her a pre-science of danger, for, according to her belief, love was the greatest danger that could beset her path. When Walda saw him she appeared surprised at the chance encounter. It was evident she had no suspicion that he had deliberately waylaid her.

"It is good that I should meet thee here, Stephen," she said, "for my heart is so full of joy I feel as if I must share my gladness with some one."

"What has happened to make you so happy?" Everett asked. He saw that there was a radiance in her face, and that her eyes shone with an unusual brilliance.

"There hath been no outward experience different from those that come to me every day," she said. "But, Stephen, my heart is lifted up exceedingly. I feel in me a new strength. My spirit dwelleth in dreams."

"Dreams, Walda? What are your dreams like?"

"They are misty—formless. It is as if a light were just breaking over the darkness of my soul. I feel the whisperings of a divine knowledge; a marvellous power hath been given to me. Stephen, I know the inspiration is coming to me. All my doubts are vanishing. I feel very near to God."

She was transfigured with the intensity of her emotions. In her exaltation of spirit she was so aloof from Everett that he stood dumb before her.

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“Stephen, hast thou nothing to say? Dost thou not rejoice with me?”

“I am glad to know that you are happy, Walda; but being just a man of the world, I am selfish enough to feel unreconciled to your separation from me. Walda, I crave a little part of your thoughts. I want to share your joy. And now I behold you carried so far away from me that I cannot even comprehend the transformation which is taking place in you. Is it prayer that is raising your spirit above the earth?”

“It is not prayer alone that hath made me behold new glories, Stephen, for through all my years spent in Zanah I have prayed unceasingly. Thou hast helped to open mine eyes; thou hast been the messenger that hath turned my face to the light. Verily, it is written that the Lord doth choose mysterious ways by which to work his will.”

For a moment Everett felt he was, indeed, a hypocrite. He was not an egotist, but his hopes, which a moment before had been cast down by the girl's extraordinary rapture, now rose, for he perceived that he had, indeed, gained an influence over her.

“I want to talk to you, Walda,” Everett said, after he had thought for a moment. “Come with me down to the shore of the lake, where there is a log that makes a comfortable seat.”

Walda hesitated.

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“Nay, Stephen, I must hasten to Marta Bachmann’s grave.”

“Don’t you think that sometimes it may be better to talk with the living than to pray with the dead?” Everett asked. “I thought you were interested in my welfare. Don’t you know that a few words from you may change my whole life?”

“If I could lead thee towards heaven it would be my duty to speak with thee.”

“Well, you can lead me to heaven.”

Everett parted the low branches of the trees so that Walda could pass through, and as she stepped into the little path to the water’s edge one of her long, fair braids caught upon a twig. She turned her face backward as she felt the sharp pull, and Everett, thanking his stars for a lucky fate that appeared to be attending him on this particular evening, disengaged the shining hair. He pretended to be very clumsy, and his head was brought close to Walda’s. The slightest trace of embarrassment showed itself in the manner of the prophetess of Zannah as she smoothed the braid and adjusted her cap. She walked forward rather hastily, and Everett pointed out the log, at one end of which the limbs made a graceful back for the rustic seat.

“Let me help you over these stones,” said Everett, and, taking her hand, he led her to the log. He placed her comfortably, and, standing beside her,

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told her to look at the wavering shadows in the water.

“All is peace here, Stephen,” the girl said, looking up at him. “In Zanah there is rest for the weary spirit. Couldst thou not be contented here always?”

“If we could always be together as we are now, Walda, it seems to me I could never wish for anything more.”

He seated himself upon the log quite close to her, and, leaning with his elbow on his knee, studied every feature of her beautiful face. In his heart was a tumultuous longing to make her know that he loved her, but her presence overcame him with a feeling that she was too holy to be disturbed by the knowledge of his passion. Walda said, presently:

“It is strange that when I am with thee neither the past nor the future harasses me. I am satisfied with the present; it is as if thou didst encompass my soul with the fortress of thy strength. To-night all my fears about the future are gone. I am happy, Stephen—strangely happy.”

She leaned back against the gnarled limbs of the old tree, and turned her face towards the lake.

“Walda, has your religion never taught you that only in the union of a man’s soul and a woman’s soul can there be perfect knowledge of life?”

She thought a moment, and then answered:

“Nay, Stephen, there is naught in the Bible which

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teacheth that the prophets needed any but divine aid. In no place in the Bible were two souls united in receiving the inspiration of God. Yet it hath seemed to me that thou wert somehow joined to me in my inspiration. Instead of separating me from thee, the knowledge that is coming to me maketh me feel dependent upon thee."

Stephen touched her hand, and she drew it away to hide it in the folds of her blue cotton gown.

"You don't mind having me near you, do you, Walda?" he asked.

"Nay, Stephen; it hath seemed lately that I craved thy presence too much."

Everett felt his pulses quicken.

"I know that thou hast been sent to me by divine dispensation," she continued. "But since the spirit of prophecy hath begun to come to me, thou dost stir my heart. I know that I must withdraw from association with thee and with my people. To-night there cometh over me a vague alarm. I am happy near thee, and yet I fear this peace may vanish."

"You cannot deny me the privilege of speaking to you in these few days before the *Untersuchung*," Everett answered. He gently took the hand Walda had hidden in her gown, and, holding it in a firm clasp, said:

"I have a mind never to let you go from me, Walda.

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I need you all my life. I cannot look forward to the years out there in the world without you."

"Dost thou mean, Stephen, that thou wouldst stay here in Zanah serving the Lord with the men of the colony? Stay for the good of thy soul?"

Everett pictured himself attired in colony garb and meekly accepting the orders of Adolph Schneider and Karl Weisel; but, holding Walda's hand, the absurdity of such a position became every second less apparent to him. He felt that no sacrifice could be too great if it kept him near to the prophetess of Zanah.

"Do you want me to stay, Walda?" he asked.

"Yea, Stephen, even if I might not speak to thee, it would cheer me to look upon thy face. I have thought much of thy going away, and I have felt that Zanah will be dreary without thee. Sometimes I have feared lest I might be tempted to carry thine image in my heart. It is gratitude that maketh thee thus inhabit my thoughts."

"It is not your gratitude that I want, Walda," Stephen said. "No, you cannot take away your hand. I want to hold it while I talk to you. In these few weeks in Zanah I have come to know that you will be always the one woman who can command all my reverence, my respect, and my allegiance. You have taught me that I have lived too much for self; you have aroused in me an impulse to make more of my opportunities. You have become my good angel, I can-

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not go back to the world, and to a lazy, careless existence. I have forsaken my old idols, Walda."

"Thou hast builded thee a new altar, Stephen. And now thou wilt not profane it."

It was the prophetess, not the woman, who spoke. Walda had forgotten all the vague alarm. She was looking upon Stephen as a new disciple of Zanah whom she was glad to welcome into the fold.

"Yes, I have a new altar upon which I am willing to sacrifice all my old habits, my previous interests," he confessed. "To it I bring the incense of love and service and loyalty. Before it I feel my own unworthiness. Walda, I am but an ordinary man, one who has been content to live for the day. Since I came to Zanah, my future years have a new meaning."

"When a man turneth his footsteps towards heaven, then, indeed, the future is glorified. Henceforth thou wilt press onward towards the gates of heaven."

"But, Walda, I may find the gates closed, after all. Don't you know it is you who hold the key?"

"Nay, thou art almost blasphemous. I can only point the way."

They sat there silent for a few minutes. The twilight was gathering. The shadows of evening closed out Zanah and all the earth. A soft wind rippled the lake, which broke in tiny waves at their feet.

"Walda, you who are so wise in the knowledge of

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things that pertain to heaven are ignorant of many of the fundamental principles of life here upon earth. Cannot you understand that at this very moment I am like a wayfarer standing at the gate of paradise?"

Involuntarily he tightened the clasp of his hand, and love, sleeping in the heart of the woman, was suddenly disturbed.

Walda drew her hand away, and, rising to her feet, looked at Everett with fear in her face.

"To-night thou dost speak in parables, Stephen," she said. "To-night thou dost cause me to tremble before thee. Let me go to the grave of Marta Bachmann, where I can pray until my spirit is soothed."

Everett stood before her as if he would block her path. He uncovered her head, and gazed at her with all the passionate longing of a strong nature. He would have put out his arms to draw her close to him, but her sweetness and innocence made him ashamed of the impulse. She was in his power, but he saw that her momentary fear had passed away, for, with her eyes raised to the stars that had appeared above the horizon, she was praying. The man's mood changed instantly. He could have knelt before her to kiss the hem of her gown.

"Walda, I ask your forgiveness for showing to-night that I am almost unworthy of your trust in me," he said. "Turn your face to me now, and tell me that you will go away thinking of me as one who

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would hold you so sacred that he would sacrifice his heart's desire if in so doing he could assure you of the fulfilment of life's best promises."

Walda had folded her hands upon her breast. Having thus made the sign of Zanah, which was believed to ward off all earthly influences, she said:

"Verily, Stephen, thou hast put unrest in my heart, yet even now I feel an abiding faith in thee."

"I shall try to be worthy of your faith, Walda."

While they stood close together the curfew-bell sounded from the village belfry. It brought back to earth the man and woman who lingered thus just outside the walls of paradise.

"Good-night, Stephen. God be with thee."

Walda had again become the prophetess of Zanah. She passed him in the narrow path from which he had stepped aside, and he let her go without a word. She walked a few paces only, her face still uplifted to the sky and her hands still folded across her breast. Then she paused to look backward at the man whose parables had in them a meaning which she had never found in the words of Holy Writ.

And being a woman, as well as a prophetess, she saw that Everett was good to look upon.

XV

IT was a rainy day in Zanah. Early in the morning, when Everett looked out of the diamond-paned window of his bedroom, he saw that the trees and vines in the garden were dripping. The night-wind had beaten off many of the leaves, which had grown yellow in the long drought and the dying summer. The distant bluffs were hidden behind a curtain of mist. Two village "mothers" passed, their shawls drawn over their heads and their feet dragging slowly in their clumsy, wooden shoes. Everett dressed quickly, for his room was dark, and the silence of the village oppressed him. When he went out to his breakfast in the long, bare dining-room, Mother Werther served him in silence. He wondered at her unusual taciturnity, and he tried to start a cheerful conversation. She replied to him in monosyllables. The entrance of a boy whom he remembered seeing at the learning-school temporarily diverted Mother Werther from her unpleasant thoughts.

"This is my son Johann," she said, pushing the lad forward.

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The boy hung his head, and Everett inquired why Johann was never at home.

"It is not wise that he should be kept at the *gasthaus*," Mother Werther explained, as she fixed a place for Johann at the distant end of the table.

"Does some unusual occurrence bring him here to-day?" Everett inquired, with a show of interest.

"It is the Day of Warning, and families hold communion before they go to the meeting-house," Mother Werther explained. "It is the last Sabbath before the *Untersuchung*, and we make ready for the annual accounting of our faults and follies."

The woman's words brought uppermost in his mind the thought that had harassed him in the hours of the night. The time of Walda's ordination as prophetess was very near. He rose from the table. He heard the rain falling upon the slate roof of the side porch upon which the dining - room opened. Lifting the heavy latch, he pushed the door slightly ajar. The downpour was steady.

"Does your prophetess take any special part in to-day's ceremonies?" Everett asked, because he felt that he must contrive to see Walda.

"Nay, she will be present at the meeting, that is all," said Mother Werther, bustling out into the back kitchen.

Everett sauntered into the office, which was occupied by Hans Peter. The simple one had placed upon

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the mantel-shelf above the fireplace half a dozen of his marked gourds, and he was studying them intently. He did not pay any attention to Everett, who stepped up beside him.

“Are you preparing for the Day of Warning and the *Untersuchung*, Hans Peter?” Everett asked.

The village fool shook his head.

“Thou forgettest that Hans Peter is one whom the Lord hath forgotten,” he said. “The Almighty taketh no account of the sayings and doings of the simple one.”

The simple one took into his hand a gourd which bore but one or two deep cuts dried into its hardened surface.

“This Hans Peter had in his pocket on the day that he carried the carpet-bag of the stranger,” he said.

“What do the marks stand for, Hans Peter? I hope they do not mean anything uncomplimentary.”

The simple one said that he did not understand, and Everett explained.

“This meaneth that the stranger in Zanah bringeth trouble,” the village fool answered.

Everett paced up and down the sanded floor for a few moments.

“You are not a prophet, Hans Peter,” he said, stopping to pull the village fool’s ear. “Have I done any harm in Zanah?”

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“Thou hast sown some seeds of discord.”

“Cannot you forgive me for the Bible episode? You know I have done my best to make amends. You will not always blame me for your suffering in the stocks, I hope.”

The simple one put the gourd he had been examining into one of his deep pockets.

“Thou knowest the stocks were but the penalty of mine own deed,” he said. “There are other things that even a fool can see and hear. Thou hast a soft voice when thou speakest to the prophetess of Zanah. Thine eyes watch her always when she is near thee.”

Hans Peter folded his arms in imitation of Everett and stared at him with unblinking eyes.

“You are observant, Hans Peter. As I have often told you, every day I am more and more convinced you are the wisest man in Zanah.” Everett flicked the ashes from the cigar he was smoking and smiled down at the queer little figure. “What conclusions do you draw from your two discoveries?”

“It seemeth that thine actions are like Joseph Hoff’s, and the people of Zanah say that he hath earthly love in his heart.”

“If my memory serves me right, it was you who aided Joseph Hoff to send messages to the one he loves,” said Everett.

“She was not a prophetess,” the fool declared.

Hans Peter had selected a second gourd from the

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shelf, and had fled from the room before Everett could sound him on the subject of acting as errand-boy.

Still the rain poured down. Everett chafed under his enforced inactivity, for he felt that every hour meant much to him. Presently, because he had nothing better to do, he took down from its place beside Hans Peter's gourds the old tinder-box, and lighted the wood that was piled in the fireplace. He lounged upon the settle and idly watched the flames creep along the logs. His thoughts flew out to Walda. He wondered what she was doing. He felt a disgust for the fanaticism of the colony, and he tried to think of some way of claiming the woman he loved. He was ready to carry her off without any ado, but he knew that as long as her father lived he could not persuade her to go away. Although he had not yet made her realize she loved him, he would not harbor the thought that he could lose her—and yet his suit appeared hopeless.

His reflections were disturbed by the voice of Mother Werther raised in indignant remonstrance. She was in the next room, and he heard her say:

“Diedrich, thou dost vex me much lately. And now thou dost tell me thou likest to gaze through the car-windows to behold the women of the world as they pass by Zanah.”

“They are comely,” the innkeeper answered, in his laconic fashion.

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“How darest thou tell me that? To-day I am half persuaded to confess to the elders that at last I have learned the love of man is not to be trusted. I have a mind to claim promotion to the second rank of the colony, and who knows but I may soon hate thee enough to serve the Lord in singleness of purpose!”

“Thy tongue proveth thou mayst yet become like Mother Schneider and Mother Kaufmann, who have long been in the third rank because they love not men,” remarked Diedrich Werther.

“Thou speakest hateful words.” Mother Werther’s voice was choked with anger. “Many times hast thou tried me sorely, but never until to-day have I seen that thou art indeed a man with sinful impulses. Thy feet have been turned from the straight and narrow way. Thou hast a liking for wicked things.”

Everett smiled when he heard what he might take as an object-lesson of the inevitable experience of even the most faithful of married couples. He shrugged his shoulders, and thought that, after all, it was only the few who knew the real meaning of love, the love that blended worship and lofty aspiration.

Diedrich Werther came into the office. It was plain that the berating he had received had not disturbed his phlegmatic calm. He shuffled along in his carpet slippers until he reached the desk, behind which he perched himself on a high stool. Everett felt irritated at the unpleasant interruption to his thoughts

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of Walda. He snatched up his soft felt hat and went out into the muddy street. He turned his steps towards Wilhelm Kellar's room, where he found his patient sitting up in an arm-chair. Gerson Brandt was with him. The two colonists showed an unusual restraint in the presence of the stranger in Zanah.

"I have been telling Brother Brandt that I need thy services no longer," said Wilhelm Kellar, addressing Everett. "There is nothing to hinder thee from leaving Zanah to-morrow."

Everett noticed that Gerson Brandt watched him closely while Wilhelm Kellar spoke.

"I shall not go away for at least a week," said Everett, leaning against the chest of drawers, and assuming an indifferent manner.

"It is strange that thou findest colony life so pleasant," said Gerson Brandt.

"It is restful and interesting to me," Everett replied, carelessly.

As he faced the two elders of Zanah he felt a twinge of remorse, because his dearest purpose in life was to win from them Walda Kellar. He who had held honor first experienced a certain amount of self-abasement, but he quieted his conscience, as he had many times before, by the thought that love was the ruling power of the world, and that all things should give way before it.

"The colony of Zanah would recompense thee for

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thy services in helping to restore me to health," said Wilhelm Kellar. "Wilt thou render to me thine accounting?"

"Whatever aid you have received from me has not been given for money," Everett replied, in a voice so decided in its accents that both his hearers felt there was beneath his words something which they could not understand.

"The colony never shirks the payment of its debts," Wilhelm Kellar declared, proudly.

"If you think you owe me anything, accept the amount as a gift to Zanah," said Everett.

A moment of embarrassment followed, and he was glad to take his leave rather hastily. When he reached the inn, many of the villagers were assembled in the main room and on the porches. The meeting-house bell sounded as he went up the steps, and instantly the men and women moved towards the old building on the hill. The women drew heavy shawls over their heads to protect them from the rain, and the men, who walked apart from them, now and then removed their caps to shake off the water which ran down upon their hair and shoulders. No one spoke. It was evident that the Day of Warning had its terrors for many of the colonists. Everett stood on the top-most step watching the little children, who were miniature reproductions of the men and women, and listening to the click of the wooden shoes upon the

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board-walk. He looked down the street in the hope that he might see Walda Kellar, but he was disappointed.

“Would I be admitted to the meeting-house?” he asked Diedrich Werther, who was putting a long-tailed coat over a faded blue-gingham shirt.

“Ja, ja; if thou desirest to attend a service of much solemnity, come with me,” the innkeeper answered.

The meeting-house was crowded when they entered. Its interior was as devoid of ornament as its exterior. The bare, white walls were broken at regular intervals with small-paned, clear glass windows, which let in but little light on a gloomy day. A broad middle aisle led straight to a platform upon which sat the thirteen elders, for Everett was astonished to see that Wilhelm Kellar had been carried in his arm-chair from his room in the near-by school-house. The men occupied rude benches on the right side of the meeting-house, and the women sat on the left. The children were placed in front, the boys on the men’s side and the girls on the women’s. On a dais in the middle of the elders’ platform was a heavy oaken chair.

A few moments after Everett’s entrance a group of colonists, who still lingered at the door, separated to allow some one to pass in. A hush fell upon the assemblage, for Walda Kellar was walking up the aisle. Over her blue gown she wore a long cloak with a point-

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ed hood that she put back from her head as she moved slowly forward. The damp air had caused her hair to curl in many unruly ringlets about her forehead, and her pure skin had the peculiar clearness and transparency that a rainy day imparts to a delicate complexion. Everett could see only her profile. There was a majesty in her carriage, a consciousness of power in her pose, that made her seem far off from him. His heart beat wildly as he looked at her, and when the villagers knelt in acknowledgment of her presence, he obeyed the impulse of worship, and bent forward with a despairing humility in his heart. He, to whom prayer had long ceased to be a daily habit, breathed his heart's sincere desire in a petition that his love might be given its reward.

When Everett raised his eyes again Walda had ascended the platform, and had taken her place on the steps in front of the chair which it was plain was the seat reserved for the prophetess. She had thrown aside her cloak, and she sat with her hands folded in her lap. Adolph Schneider spoke, in German, the words of a droning invocation. He left the front of the platform, and Everett was surprised to see Walda come forward as if she were about to speak. Instead of making an address, she began to sing a monotonous hymn, to which her rich voice lent a glorious melody.

While Walda sang, the man of the world listened

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in breathless awe. Her voice thrilled with the diapason of hope. It rose in triumphant notes, and then fell with a softened cadence. His soul went out to hers, but in the tense moment that followed her hymn he felt as if she were far away from him. Her purity rebuked the passion of love in him, and yet he could scarcely restrain himself from the impulse to claim her there before all Zanah. She went back to her place on the steps before the chair of the prophetess, which she was to occupy before another week had passed.

Adolph Schneider commanded the colonists to listen with undivided attention to what he had to say to them. It was the Day of Warning, when all who felt they were not prepared for the *Untersuchung* would make confession. If there was any man or woman who desired to ask for promotion in the colony, the time had come to show reason for a desire for advancement.

A tall, large-boned woman rose from her place far back in the congregation.

"I would seek advancement to the first grade of the colony," she said.

"What is thy ground for making this request? Why dost thou believe that thou art worthy?" the Herr Doktor asked.

"It is five years since I refused to listen to the elders of Zanah when they told me of the trials earthly love

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would bring," answered the woman, turning a sallow, weather-beaten face towards the platform. "Now have I learned that marriage is a hard discipline. Otto Schmidt hath vexed me every day for forty months. I have found that the love of man for woman is fleeting, and now do I know that I can worship God in singleness of heart."

On the men's side a stout mill-worker pulled himself to his feet.

"Christina hath not suffered the smallest tith of the mortification of spirit that hath been mine," he declared, in an emphatic tone. "It was for her sake that I gave up my place in the first grade of Zanah's people, and now do I confess that the elders of Zanah are wise when they entreat the people to beware of love. Love is but the fire of man's vanity kindled to flame by a woman's wanton eyes."

"Nay, it is but a woman's faith which is nourished by man's false promises of kindness and constancy," replied the woman, who was still standing.

"Let the brother and sister of Zanah be seated," commanded Adolph Schneider.

As she obeyed, Christina Schmidt cast a glance of hatred towards her husband.

The elders spoke together. While they were holding their conference, Everett noticed that Hans Peter was creeping slowly up the aisle with a letter in his hand. He passed the envelope up to Adolph Schnei-

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der and tiptoed to a vacant place on the front seat. The elders examined the letter. The colonists waited without any show of impatience.

“It is my sad duty to announce that one of the colony youths hath looked with longing eyes on a maid, and that he entreats permission to wed her,” said the Herr Doktor, standing upon the edge of the platform and looking down at the people with a stern expression on his face. His small eyes scanned the women and then the men. “I would have Frieda Bergen and Joseph Hoff step forward.”

It would not have been in human nature for the people to remain impassive. More than half of them turned their heads to look for the culprits. Joseph Hoff made his way towards the elders. He carried his head high, and had an air of bravado that showed how little he cared because he was transgressing the laws of the colony. He waited for Frieda Bergen, who came towards him with her head bent and her cheeks flaming. “Be of good courage,” he whispered, as they faced Adolph Schneider.

“You two have made for yourselves idols here on earth,” said the president of the colony in a thundering tone, which frightened every youth and maiden in the meeting-house. “Ye have not heeded the behests of Zanah. How did Satan manage to tempt you when all the safeguards of Zanah were thrown around you?”

Neither of the lovers spoke.

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“It is not permitted here in the colony for men and women who are unmarried to speak together except on rare occasions, and never are they allowed to talk when no one is near them; how then did ye two surrender to the tempter?”

Still there was no answer.

“Speak, Joseph Hoff!” Adolph Schneider shouted, in a tone which showed that he was filled with indignation.

“Love needeth not words or messengers; love is carried on the winds that blow across a woman’s cheek,” said Joseph.

“Nay, it is like a prayer that cometh from the heart of man to the heart of woman,” faltered Frieda, bending in a low courtesy.

“Thou art blaspheming!” Adolph Schneider cried, looking on the maiden with angry eyes. “It is plain that thou art made mad by what thou callest love. To you two erring ones shall be given a chance to repent between now and the *Untersuchung*, but if your eyes are then still blind to your iniquities ye shall be allowed to marry. Ponder well upon the testimony given here this day by Otto and Christina Schmidt. Human love lasteth but a few years, and eternity is not long enough to blot out the sorrow it can bring to a human soul. Go hence to pray that ye may be delivered from paying the hard penalties earthly love bringeth to all.”

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Tears were streaming from the girl's eyes as she walked back to the women's side of the building, but in her face was no sign of repentance.

Karl Weisel and the other elders had listened with stolid faces while Adolph Schneider rebuked the people. After the young lovers had taken their seats, Wilhelm Kellar pronounced a benediction. The colonists filed slowly out of the meeting-house. Everett lingered in the hope that by some happy circumstance he might speak to Walda, but she was detained by the elders, who gathered around her. He had given up hope of getting near her when it occurred to him to make Wilhelm Kellar's imprudence an excuse by which he might at least go closer to the woman he loved. He went forward to where Wilhelm Kellar stood at the foot of the platform steps.

"You have taken a great risk," he said, to his patient. "You should not have come here to-day."

The old man drew himself up with a show of strength and said he was well enough to make an effort to enter the Lord's house.

Walda, who had smiled upon Everett when she saw him coming towards her, put her hand upon her father's shoulder and persuaded him to be carried back to his room. Gerson Brandt and another man of Zanah lifted the invalid's chair. Everett opened the side door that they might pass out. Walda, who was anxious for her father's comfort, would have gone into

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the rain ahead of them, but Everett reminded her she had not put on her cloak. He stepped up to the chair of the prophetess without taking thought that he might be profaning the place of the elders, and, taking the long garment, put it around her. Although Karl Weisel and the other elders stood by, he calmly fastened the clasp at the neck and drew the hood over the head of the prophetess. Walda, looking up into his face, beheld in the deep-set eyes as they rested upon her something that sent the blood to her face. Gerson Brandt, looking back over his shoulder, saw Everett hold the door open while Walda went through, and he noticed that the strong face of the man of the world had upon it a look of tenderness such as he had never seen before.

Everett hesitated a moment as he buttoned his mackintosh. He was uncertain whether to go out into the woods for a long walk or whether to return to the dreary inn. He turned his steps towards the inn, and he had not gone half-way down the hill before he saw Walda coming from the school-house. The prophetess was with Frieda Bergen, and behind them walked two of the village "mothers." Everett let them pass him, but he noticed with a pang that Walda appeared not to see him as he stood with uncovered head while she walked by.

"The elders have asked me to entreat thee to overcome this love that thou hast confessed," he heard

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Walda say to Frieda Bergen; but they had gone beyond ear-shot before the girl replied.

They went into the inn, whither Everett followed them after a time. Walda drew Frieda Bergen to the settle near the fire which Everett had kindled.

“Thou seemest so happy in thy sin that I would know what is thy feeling,” said Walda. “Thou hast the look of one to whom heaven hath been revealed.”

“A great joy hath come to me, Walda. If it is wicked to love, then would I continue in my sin,” answered Frieda. “Hast thou never known the temptation of love? Hast thou never seen one who maketh the world seem better to thee?”

“Gerson Brandt and Stephen Everett have taught me much,” said Walda, “but no one hath ever tempted me to forget God and to worship man. Doth not thy conscience make thee repentant?”

“Nay, I cannot believe that it is wicked to love.”

“How didst thou come to know that thou lovest?”

“One day, as we worked together, Joseph Hoff looked at me through the trellis of a hop-vine. He was on one side and I was on the other. My heart trembled, and thenceforth his face was often before me.”

“That is but a small matter. The stranger in Zannah hath sometimes made my heart leap, but that meaneth naught.”

“After the hour in which Joseph Hoff looked at me,

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the day was happier when I could see him. I no longer rebelled against the hard tasks given me. I had sweet dreams," declared Frieda.

"I have felt as thou sayest thou feelest, but it was prayer and fasting that made the earth like the outer courts of heaven. Frieda, Frieda, thou hast mistaken the spirit of holiness for earthly love."

Walda Kellar leaned forward, clasping her hands together in a gesture which betrayed her relief at what she supposed was her discovery of the true state of her companion's mind.

"Nay, nay, it was love that made a new life for me," insisted Frieda, shaking her black-capped head and speaking in a low voice.

"How couldst thou know?"

"One day Joseph spoke to me sweet words; he touched my hand. Life became changed again. In my heart thenceforth was a great loneliness except when I was near Joseph Hoff. I trembled when he touched my hand, and I would have had him always by my side."

"Ah, this that thou tellest me is strange indeed. I have known something of this loneliness, but it was the loneliness of the soul that seeketh God and feareth to lose the way to heaven. Tell me something more of thy love."

"Joseph Hoff sometimes said I was like an angel to him. He spoke softly of love."

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“Thou wert wrong to listen,” said Walda.

“Thou hast spoken often with the stranger in Zanah.”

“True, but we talked of books, and the woods; of the wonders of the heavens and the glories of the earth.”

“We spoke few words, but they gave me strange strength. The earth seemed a pleasanter place after we had talked together. Hast thou never known a day when suddenly the flowers became more beautiful and the sun shone brighter?”

“Yea, lately, since the inspiration hath come to me, it is as if Zanah were bathed in a heavenly radiance. But tell me more, Frieda.”

“The days became pleasant; every one was joyous. There was in my heart a singing that made me care not for the reproofs of the village mothers.”

“I know what thou meanest. Thy experiences are not different from mine.” Walda looked into her companion’s face with a smile of sympathy. “Disturb not thyself any longer. Thou hast the revelation of divinity that the Lord sendeth to those who serve Him. Why didst thou think this new glory in thy life was an earthly love? Foolish girl, I am glad that I did have this chance to probe thy heart to-day.”

“It was not love of God that was in my heart, Walda.” Frieda looked into the fire and shook her head thoughtfully. “Else why should I look each day for

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a glimpse of Joseph Hoff? Why should the simplest word from him be more to me than the longest prayer of any of the elders? Even if I had thought in the beginning that the tumult in my heart was due to the fervor of my religious faith, I found out very soon that it was Joseph Hoff I loved."

"How did the revelation come?" Walda whispered.

"One day, when I went back into the hay-field to find a rake I had left, Joseph Hoff, who was working on the top of the stack, came down to the field, and, taking both my hands, he kissed me." Frieda lifted the corner of her apron and half hid her face as she made this confession.

"Ah, that was sinful, indeed!" exclaimed Walda, her eyes wide with horror. "We of Zanah have been taught that a kiss is the password that Satan giveth to weak and foolish men and women. I hope that thou didst rebuke the bold and sinful youth."

Frieda raised her apron a little higher and made no reply.

"What didst thou do when he had kissed thee?" Walda asked, after a moment of silence.

"I—I—waited for him to kiss me again."

Walda drew away from the girl beside her. "How couldst thou let any man touch thy lips?" she exclaimed in indignation.

"Because I loved him."

"And since Joseph Hoff hath kissed thee, hast thou

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not lost the sense of holiness that belongeth to the people of Zanah?"

"Nay, every kiss hath added a glory to the earth. I care no longer for heaven if I may dwell with Joseph Hoff here in Zanah."

"Truly, thy state of mind doth alarm me, Frieda. Thou hast many of the emotions that have come to me since the beginning of mine inspiration, and yet thou hast fallen a victim to the wiles of man. Pray that thine eyes may be opened to thine errors."

"Nay, I would not pray that, lest my prayer should be answered. If I prayed from my heart, I would ask that many years might be given me to live and love Joseph Hoff here on earth." Frieda Bergen rose and walked away, but she turned back to put her hand on Walda Kellar's shoulder.

"Forgive me if I seem of a stubborn spirit. I know that thou canst not understand how the love of man can take possession of a woman's heart. Thou wilt be satisfied to live aloof from the people of Zanah that thou mayst be near to God, but I would rather have the love of Joseph Hoff than the inspiration that cometh to a prophetess of Zanah."

"It is my duty to reprimand thee for thy sin, but somehow, when thou speakest of Joseph Hoff, I cannot feel the abhorrence for thy transgression that should fill my heart. I will pray that the Lord may show thee the right way."

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Walda leaned her head against the settle and thought about Frieda Bergen's state of mind, but her thoughts were confused. Her reflections were interrupted by Everett, who came into the inn. Drawing near to the fireplace, he made a great show of drying his hat, which was wet from the rain. Walda did not seem to notice his presence.

"You appear to be troubled about something," he said.

"Yea. A matter of much moment hath been laid before me, and I have not wisdom enough to see it in all its sinfulness."

"Do you suppose my worldly advice would help you?" Everett asked.

"Nay, thou hast different measures of judgment from those set by the people of Zanah. Thou dost not hold earthly love a sin."

"No, I do not, Walda." Everett smiled. "I hold love—the earthly love you are taught to try to escape—as the most precious gift the Creator gave to the children of men."

His voice was low, and it betrayed an intensity of feeling that caused Walda to give him a questioning glance. Everett looked at her with so much tenderness she turned her head away.

"Thou hast in thy tones the same sound that was strange in Frieda's voice. Dost thou love? Hast thou the same unreasoning rapture as Joseph Hoff?"

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“Not the same, Walda. I love much more than any man in Zanah.”

Walda's face became as white as the cap upon her soft hair. She clasped her hands tightly together and said, with a catch in her voice:

“Stephen, why hast thou never told me of thy love?”

“Because I thought you would not care to hear about it. Because it is forbidden to speak of love in Zanah,” Everett answered.

He seated himself beside her on the settle. From behind the high desk Diedrich Werther now and then stared at them with a glimmer of suspicion in his eyes. His recent contact with the world at the railway station evidently had made him less trustful than his fellow-colonists. Everett noticed the innkeeper's watchfulness, and therefore was careful not to betray emotion.

“Walda, you are not angry because I have deceived you, are you?” he said, when she did not answer him.

“Angry with thee, Stephen? Nay, thy love cannot concern the prophetess of Zanah.” Her lip quivered, but she held her head high, and disdained to let him know that the heart beneath her kerchief was throbbing so that her words were almost smothered in her throat. “Thy confession did cause me to be abashed for a moment. I had never thought that out in the world some woman loved thee.”

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She rose to her feet as she spoke, and she would have gone away without another word but he boldly caught her hand and pulled her back upon the settle. Diedrich Werther looked on with jaw dropped and pipe suspended at elbow-length, but Everett defied him.

“You misunderstand me, Walda. I want to explain to you, but this is not the place.”

“I—I would not hear what thou hast to say about thy love, Stephen,” she said, with a faint smile. “Frieda hath told me her story, and it is enough for me to think of in the watches of the night. Detain me not. I must pray for Frieda Bergen. I must seek divine light for the understanding of mortal weaknesses, of which love is said to be the most dangerous. Verily, to-day I fear the inspiration hath been withdrawn from me, for I am dull of comprehension.”

Before Everett could reply, Gerson Brandt entered the room. The school-master came towards them with a stern look upon his face.

“Why dost thou talk here with the prophetess of Zanah?” he said, addressing Everett. “Thou canst have nothing to say that will be worthy of her hearing, since she is close to heaven and thou art of the wicked world.”

His long hair was wet as it lay upon his shoulders, and his thin face was deeply lined.

“We were talking of love—earthly love,” Walda said, leaving her place beside Everett. “Gerson Brandt, he hath just told me that he loveth.”

The school-master’s tall, gaunt form swayed beneath the burden of a great emotion.

“Tell me, sir, thou hast not dared to speak of love to the prophetess of Zannah?” he cried.

“Yes, I have spoken of love,” said Everett, going to the farther side of the fireplace. “Yes, I have spoken of love.” He was again the cool, well-poised man of the world. Carelessly he took up an old pair of bellows, as he added: “But you need not fear. The prophetess of Zannah did not care to hear about my love.”

“Walda, thou wouldst not listen to any man who would dare to speak of love to thee, wouldst thou?” Gerson Brandt asked, in an agony of fear.

“Disturb not thyself, Gerson Brandt,” Walda answered. “What harm can there be in Stephen Everett’s declaration that he loveth a woman out in the world?”

An expression of relief passed over the face of the school-master. Beads of perspiration stood upon his white forehead. He was shaking so that he had to steady himself against the end of the settle.

“Thy time of inspiration is so near that thou shouldst not speak to the stranger,” he said, in a soft-

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ened tone. "Thou art close to heaven, and it is not wise for thee to commune with any man."

"Must I speak no more with thee, Gerson Brandt?" Walda looked at him with all the tenderness of a deep affection shining in her eyes. Everett watched her as she addressed the school-master. The childish heart and the unawakened soul associated with the majestic form of a woman had fascinated him when he first came to Zanah, but he saw that the face, once as placid as a nun's, showed the inner disquietude that is the recompense of those who come into a knowledge of the great emotions of life.

"Thou wouldst better dwell alone until the great day of the *Untersuchung*," Gerson Brandt said to Walda. "Go now to thy closet, where thou canst pray until thou forgettest what thou hast heard of earthly love."

Walda started to obey the counsel of the school-master, but she hesitated after she had gone to the door. She glanced at Everett. His tall form was outlined in the fire-light, but she could not see his face, which was in the shadow.

"I would speak a last word with Stephen Everett," she said. Gerson Brandt stood by the door while she went near to Everett.

"Since this may be my last meeting with thee, I would offer thee gratitude from my heart for all that thou hast done for my father and for me," she

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said. "Thou hast helped me to gain wisdom, Stephen."

"Do not speak of gratitude, Walda. You cannot say good-bye to me here, for I shall see you again."

"Nay, I may not be permitted to see thee again." She stopped, as if she were taking care to speak wisely. "It is my prayer, Stephen, that thy love shall bring happiness to thee and to the woman upon whom thou hast set thine heart."

She was gone before she could hear Everett's reply.

XVI

THE evening of the Day of Warning closed in dark and dreary. The rain stopped and a high wind came up. After tea in the inn, Everett walked up and down the porch. The village square and the winding street were deserted. At long intervals lights gleamed from fast-curtained windows. At first he took it for granted that Walda would not make her nightly visit to the grave of Marta Bachmann. When he thought over the matter, however, it occurred to him that it might be well to walk out towards the cemetery. He knew the fanaticism of the colonists caused them to be punctilious in the smallest religious observances. He watched for Walda in vain. After Gerson Brandt's exhibition of evident unfriendliness to him he knew that precautions might be taken to prevent Walda from passing the *gasthaus*. As he had nothing else to do, he decided that a walk out through the woods to the shore of the lake might possibly be rewarded by a glimpse of the prophetess. He met no one on the way to the cemetery, but when he reached the gate he could dimly discern the forms of two women who were standing by the grave of Marta Bach-

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mann. He guessed that Mother Kaufmann had been sent with Walda. A tall hedge surrounded the God's-acre of Zanah, and he followed this evergreen wall to the point where it was nearest the grave of the dead prophetess. He was careful that his presence should not be discovered by the colony "mother."

An old oak-tree spread its branches over the little plot of ground in which the tomb of Marta Bachmann was situated. The wind waved the branches of this tree and blew a shower of brown leaves upon the two women. It wound Walda's cloak about her and tore the shawl from Mother Kaufmann's shoulders.

"This is a night to make the spirits of the dead walk about their old haunts," said Mother Kaufmann.

"Put superstition away from thee," Walda answered. "If thou hast fixed thy faith on God, evil spirits cannot harm thee."

Mother Kaufmann put her hand to her forehead while she peered about her, as if to discover some chance ghost.

"Dost thou not hear footsteps among the dried leaves?" she asked Walda.

"Nay, Mother Kaufmann. Why art thou so affrighted?" the girl replied. At that moment a gust of wind almost swept them from their feet. Mother Kaufmann uttered a scream of terror and pointed to a far corner of the graveyard where a white form was

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moving about among the graves. She did not wait to find out who or what the unexpected apparition might be. Gathering her skirts in her hand she fled, leaving Walda alone beside the grave. Everett stepped through the hedge and spoke gently to Walda.

“Do not be afraid,” he said. “I will find out what sort of a ghost has frightened Mother Kaufmann.” He walked towards the place, where what appeared to be a headless form wrapped in a sheet was moving back and forth. When he came near to it he saw that it was a most substantial substance, for Hans Peter had borrowed a white rubber blanket, through which he had thrust his head, and thus improvised a most serviceable rain-coat.

“What are you doing here?” Everett asked, in an angry tone of voice. “Do you know that you have scared one of the colony women?”

“Thou hast no concern in what my errand may be,” said the simple one, gathering his rubber blanket around him and calmly seating himself upon the nearest gravestone. “If Mother Kaufmann had been scared to death there is none in Zanah who would have wept upon her bier.”

“You had better go back to the village,” Everett advised, as he with difficulty restrained a laugh.

“Nay, it is thou who hast no occasion to linger near the cemetery,” the simple one replied. “I have come to wait for Walda Kellar.”

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Another gust of wind, even stronger than the preceding one, carried Everett's hat away, and while he searched for it in the dark a tree was uprooted. It fell with a crash that came from the direction of Marta Bachmann's grave, towards which Everett ran in a frenzy of fear lest Walda had been injured.

"Stephen, Stephen," he heard her call. She took a few steps towards him, and in a moment his arms were around her.

"You are not hurt, are you?" he said, putting his right hand upon her head, and drawing it close to him until it rested on his shoulder. He felt her tremble, and he said:

"You are quite safe now. I will take you home."

The simple one had come near. Without glancing towards Stephen and Walda, he went to Marta Bachmann's grave, and, climbing over the branches of the fallen tree, began to search for something. Everett gently put Walda away from him lest the simple one should notice them. Then, taking her by the hand, he led her through the hedge and along the road until they came to the open place by the lake.

"Stephen, I have shown a grievous weakness and lack of faith," said Walda, catching her breath, and drawing her hand from his. "The prophetess of Zanah should not know fear, and yet I felt a strength and comfort in thine aid that my prayers have never given me."

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Walda raised her face to him, and again he put his arms around her.

“Walda, I mean to take care of you always,” he said. “I shall never let you go. Cannot you understand that it is meant you should belong to me?” He kissed her on the lips, and, abashed and trembling, she drew away from him.

“Stephen, thou dost betray my trust in thee. Why wouldst thou profane the lips of a prophetess of Zanah?” she cried. She put her hands over her heart, as if to still its wild beating, and her eyes were wide with fear and astonishment.

“Walda, I love you. I think I have loved you ever since the first day I came to Zanah. I have kissed you because my heart claims you from all the world. Life without you means nothing to me. Can’t you love me, Walda?”

“I know not what it means to love. I have been warned that it is selfish and sinful for men and women to fix all their thoughts upon each other. Oh, Stephen, what have I done that thou shouldst speak thus to me?”

“You have made me centre all my hopes in you. You have won my reverence. I know I am unworthy to touch your hand, but this love that has come to me gives me a supreme courage. Walda, surely your heart answers mine. Words are so clumsy that, now that my tongue should tell you how great and holy a

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thing is the love of a man for a woman, I am but a poor supplicant." He took both her hands in his and drew her towards him. Again he kissed her, and, instead of resenting the caress, she hid her face upon his shoulder. He held her thus for a moment. He pushed back the white cap and softly touched her hair.

"Walda, do you know, I have often been afraid of the prophetess of Zanah," he said, in a low tone, "and if it were not for my great love I would not have the courage to covet you for my wife. Love is stronger than reason, and so I dare covet you for my own forever. You are mine, for I could not love you so if you were not the woman destined to rule my life. Cannot you find in your heart a little love for me?"

"I know not what is in my heart," she answered. "Thy kisses make me ashamed, Stephen, and yet my heart is glad. This night my weakness hath been revealed to me. Even now I cling to thee when I should bid thee go away from me."

"You do love me, Walda. You must love me. It was fate that brought me to Zanah to find you. I know that all my years I have been waiting for you. You have been kept for me here in Zanah. Cannot you begin to comprehend that love is the birthright of every man and woman? Zanah would have cheated you, but now it cannot separate us."

"Thy words make me think of my duty, Stephen."

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Walda's voice trembled. "Since thou hast kissed me, I am no longer fit to be the prophetess of Zannah."

"You will be a wife instead of a prophetess, Walda. You can still be an instrument of the Lord, for you will make the world outside better for your presence."

She was very quiet for a moment. It was as if she had not heard him.

"Is it love that maketh my heart beat? Is it love that casteth out fear while thou hast thine arms around me?" she asked, presently. "What meaning is there in a kiss that it should make me ashamed and yet happy, Stephen? Verily, thy kisses are not like the kisses of good-fellowship that the elders give one another at the *Untersuchung*; they are not like the kisses the mothers have pressed upon my forehead."

"Of course they are not," Everett said, and he laughed aloud in the joy the knowledge of her love gave him. "Look up, Walda, and let me kiss you again, and you will learn that the kiss of love is the token that unlocks the hearts of men and women."

She looked into his eyes, and their lips met.

"Thou speakest truly, Stephen," Walda said. "Let us go back to the village. I would think of thee and of love in solitude and with much prayer. This hour hath robbed me of the mantle of the prophetess."

"But it has given you the highest heritage of life. It is better to be a wife than a prophetess, Walda."

XVII

KNEELING by the window in her bare little room, Walda tried to pray after the manner of Zanah, yet no words of penitence came to the lips that had been touched by a lover's kiss. The soul that the good elders had turned towards heaven as a mirror upon which the divine will might be reflected held an earthly image. A human love was enshrined in the heart that had been consecrated to God. As the girl prostrated herself, the discipline of long years of religious training was forgotten. Her Zanah life fell from her. New emotions swept over her, submerging her old character and bringing strange, sweet hopes. The soul of the priestess was consumed by the supreme passion of earth, and in its place flamed the soul of a woman.

One by one the lowly duties that had occupied her days came up before her. She recalled the pious fervor that had made them pleasant. Looking back to the time when Everett's chance words in the sick-room had tempted her to enjoy the beauties of sky and field, she realized how far she had grown away from her former self since the almost imperceptible

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beginning of the fuller life which she had unconsciously entered. Kneeling there in the darkness, for the first time in all her life she rebelled against the laws of Zanah. Her youth and womanhood demanded the privilege of accepting human love. Everett's influence was over her, and she gave little thought to the future. It was enough to feel the exaltation of love, to comprehend that she stood at the threshold of the ultimate mystery of life. She looked out at the stars that shone above the far horizon. She felt that she had ceased to belong to Zanah. It was as if she had entered into a larger kinship with all nature. Love had wrought the miracle that puts away all one's years and leads the soul into a new existence independent of the past, expectant of the future.

Long after the village had gone to sleep Everett stayed out in the starlight, thinking of the weeks he had spent in Zanah, and of the woman who would henceforth claim his life's allegiance. He dreamed of the future that was his and Walda's. He saw the girl's stunted life expanding under its new environments. His thoughts wandered over imaginary years, and he beheld her clad in the ripened charm of maturity. He saw the light of happiness in her eyes reflected in the eyes of their children. Sometimes, perhaps, they would look back to Zanah and thank God that among the middle-aged mothers with dwarfed

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minds and cramped souls there was none that bore the name of Walda Kellar.

For Walda the next day dawned with mysterious splendor. Zannah had fallen under a spell of enchantment, yet as the village awoke to life all its influences once more stole over her. Looking out of her window, she began to remember that she had been the prophetess of Zannah. She watched the men and boys walk leisurely towards the factory. Ox-teams creaked up the narrow street. The children solemnly wandered schoolward. She could no longer put her father or Gerson Brandt from her thoughts. The realization that she would give them pain burst upon her.

She tried to think what Everett's love meant to her, but she found it impossible to get beyond the one idea that she was to be unfaithful to the trust that the people of Zannah had put in her. She did not shrink from facing the change in her position in the colony, but she could not understand what her future would be. She recalled that Everett had taken it for granted she would leave Zannah, but she knew she could not desert her father, even though a greater love than that which she bore for him might call her away. She was not sad, however, for underneath her new anxieties there was the consciousness of the revelation of love, the recognition of divinity that was so different from the one to which she had looked forward since her childhood. It gradually came over her that the inspira-

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tion she had felt came through a human medium, and not directly from heaven. She fell upon her knees before the low table that held her little German Bible. She tried to pray that she might know the will of God, but she could not bring herself to plead that she would have power to cast out from her heart the human love which had brought to her life the holy exaltation she had hoped to obtain through rigid conformity to the creed of Zanah.

Walda went out of the house of the women and stood in the little street, in which she felt suddenly that she was a stranger. She turned her steps towards the hill, for she obeyed the impulse to go to her father. Wilhelm Kellar was sitting in the window whence Walda had looked so many times at the far-off bluffs. He was reading his Bible, and as Walda entered the room he was mildly rebuking Piepmatz, who was singing the doxology and the love-song, mingled in such a medley as was never before heard from the throat of any bird.

“Peace be with thee, daughter,” he said, taking off his horn spectacles and stretching out his thin hand to her.

Walda clasped his hands, and her eyes fell beneath his glance. “Thou art feeling better, I hope?” she said, sinking upon a stool that was just beneath Piepmatz’s cage.

“The knowledge that the day of the *Untersuchung*

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is so near giveth me new life," declared the old man. "To-day I am full of gratitude because the Lord hath kept thee safe from the wiles of men. I have given thanks unto the Lord that thou art to be the proph-
etess."

Walda's face flushed and then became pale. Her heart beat so that she could not answer.

"Come near to me, Walda," her father said. "I would tell thee that thou hast crowned my life with happiness, that thou hast atoned for the sin of the mother who bore thee."

Walda knelt before him and hid her face upon his knee.

"Nay, nay, father," she cried, "I am unworthy of thy trust. I am but a weak woman such as thou sayest my mother was."

"It is right that thou shouldst feel humble, my daughter," the old man replied, putting both hands upon her head. "But thou hast not sinned in deceiving those that trust thee. Thou hast not known the temptations of a human love."

"Father, father!" Walda raised her head and looked up with tearful eyes.

A knock sounded on the door, and Hans Peter, still tapping on the door-jamb with one of his gourds, crossed the threshold.

"The elders have sent me to tell thee they would consult with thee. They bade me make ready the

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ink-horn and the papers, as they have business of much importance," he announced.

Walda went away from her father's room with her confession still unspoken. She lingered for a moment on the school-house porch, for she felt uncertain what to do with her day. For the first time in all her Zanah life she had no inviting task before her. She was already removed from the calm routine of duty. Ordinarily she would have gone to study the heavy books kept in the elders' room which occupied a little wing of the meeting-house, but as she looked at the door, which stood invitingly open, she felt that she would no longer need to be familiar with the annals of former prophetesses and the discourses of the elders long since sanctified by good works. She had a sense of being outside the colony. A pang of homesickness made her sink upon the bench and look out upon the quiet valley.

The years had slipped by so noiselessly that she had come into womanhood without realizing the changes wrought by time. When she was a child, the colonists had labored in simple harmony and humble faith, content to work for the common welfare. Each season their harvests had been more abundant, their vineyards more fruitful, their lands more extensive. In the midst of this well-preserved plenty she had been happy, although she had often vexed the "mothers" by her sudden impulses and hasty actions. Beneath

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the kerchief crossed upon her breast now an eager, restless heart beat, and she comprehended that all the teachings of the good elders had not altered her intense nature. It seemed to her that Zanah had been metamorphosed since the coming of the early summer-time when she had looked forward to the autumn with a large hope for the final step towards her complete consecration to the service of God and the colony. She felt that, somehow, mysterious influences were at work. There was a general discontent. It had been a bad year for both the mills and the harvest fields, and she had represented hope and wisdom to the colonists. Tears came to her eyes when she thought that she had betrayed the trust of Zanah, and yet underneath her remorse was the consciousness that she was being led by the divine power in which she had trusted. Love flamed beneath every shifting emotion.

Through her tears Walda gazed down at the quaint village. The low-roofed stone houses were almost hidden beneath the vines and shrubbery that were turning to gorgeous color with the magic touch of the first frosts which had come early. Beyond the village the little valley melted into the plain, which rolled away to the far-off bluffs. The fields were brown and gold, as the gleaners had left them after the harvests, except here and there where the rich, black earth had been turned up by the plough. Cattle

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grazed beside the placid river that flowed almost imperceptibly onward to the Mississippi. The sunlight, mellowed by the autumn haze, glorified even the commonest every-day things. The scene had the beauty that gave it unreality. As her eyes rested upon the familiar landscape Walda felt a vague fear that it might vanish, since she had forfeited her right to remain in it as one of the faithful colonists. While she was looking down the wavering street she saw Gerson Brandt slowly climbing the hill. He had taken off the broad-rimmed hat that distinguished him from the other men of Zanah, and Walda noticed with a pang that his face had the stamp of pain upon it. He paused half-way up the hill to look back upon the village, and the girl, whose perceptions had been quickened with her recognition of an earthly love, noticed that the school-master's tall form was more stooped than usual. When he resumed his walk towards the school-house Gerson Brandt caught sight of Walda, and his face took on an expression of gladness.

“Providence is kind to give me yet another chance to speak with thee before the *Untersuchung*,” he said, pausing before her. He saw that there were tears in her eyes, which refused to meet his glance. “Thou hast no sorrow? Surely, I know that nothing can disturb thee, now that thou art so near to thy Father in heaven. Yet why dost thou weep?”

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He pushed the long hair back from his forehead with a trembling hand while he waited for her reply, but she remained silent, with only her profile turned to him. The white kerchief on her breast moved with her quick breathing.

"Canst thou not answer me, Walda?" he asked, in the tender tone that she remembered from her childhood.

Walda rested her elbows on the back of the porch seat, and, with her chin in her hands, shook her white-capped head. The tears began to fall so rapidly that she dared not try to speak. Gerson Brandt sank upon the seat opposite her.

"It would be foolish for me to offer thee solace for thine aching heart, for I know that thou, who art the prophetess of Zanah, no longer cravest human sympathy. Forgive me for forgetting that thou art no longer the colony maiden over whom I have felt a care all these years. Yet thy tears are no more sacred to me now than they were in thine earliest childhood, Walda. Thy griefs were always felt by me." Gerson Brandt leaned forward as if he would read what was in Walda's heart, and he paled with a formless fear.

"Thy tears distress me," he said, presently, "and yet I know that it is but natural thou shouldst feel awe-stricken and oppressed with a weight of responsibility, now that thou art so near to thy consecration."

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“Speak not so. Thy words smite me,” exclaimed Walda, turning towards him and blushing scarlet as she met his eyes. “I am not worthy to be the prophetess. I—I—I am sorely troubled.” She put her face upon her arms and sobbed.

“To them whom the Lord maketh most strong He revealeth weakness,” the school-master replied.

“I shall need much strength,” said Walda, controlling herself with an effort.

“Yea, that is true,” agreed Gerson Brandt. “My prayers will help to support thee, for thou art always in my mind. Much have I rejoiced to know that thou hast escaped all danger from earthly love. Ah, now that thou hast safely passed thy period of probation nothing can befall thee.”

“Gerson Brandt, tell me what would have happened if I had found an earthly love?” asked Walda, turning to him with an intensity of interest that was but lightly disguised.

“Why wouldst thou waste time talking of such an unprofitable subject now at this holy season? It is a sacrilege to link the name of the prophetess of Zannah with an earthly love.”

The school-master was looking far away as he answered, and he did not see that his words caused the girl to clasp her hands tightly and to bite her full, red lips.

“Tell me, is human love such a wicked thing, after

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all? Thou didst once speak to me as if thou hadst known it, and thou canst tell me whether it hath in it something of the divine quality. If I had loved, wouldst thou have condemned me as severely as would those of the colonists who live like the cattle on the fields, feeling none of the mystery and the glory of life?"

"If thou hadst loved any man I should have sorrowed more than all the colony, for I have longed to see thee spared the pangs and pains that love brings."

"Doth love never bring happiness?"

"The woman who loveth must suffer much," declared Gerson Brandt.

"But women are glad to suffer for love."

In Walda's eyes shone the light of a new-born courage, and Gerson Brandt, catching some of the spirit that had taken possession of her, answered:

"Walda, it passeth understanding that thou shouldst speak thus of love now, when thou hast gone forever beyond the reach of temptation. Thy mood doth confound me."

He went near to her, and, standing before her, studied her face.

"In thine eyes I behold a mystery," he said, presently, with a tremor in his voice. "Thou hast lost the essence of childhood that lingered with thee until—was it yesterday or to-day that thou didst lose it?"

"The world hath been different to me since the sun

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set yesterday." Walda spoke the words softly, and Gerson Brandt beheld in her face a radiance which made him ashamed of the vague suspicions that had sent a chill to his heart.

"Verily, the spirit of prophecy hath descended upon thee. Thou hast come into the full possession of the divine gift." He drew away from her, and looked at her in awe.

"Nay, nay," Walda faltered; "thou art deceived."

Her gaze wandered past him as she spoke, and she saw, ascending the hill, six of the village mothers. Gerson Brandt, following her glance, said: "This is the day when thy vigil beginneth. The watchers are coming for thee."

Walda's face paled.

"I had forgotten that the time had come," she exclaimed. "I am not ready for it. I am unworthy."

"It is the hour of our last talk together," Gerson Brandt announced, in a solemn tone. "Thy misgivings are only human." He raised his hands above her bowed head and gave her his blessing. He could not trust himself to look at her again. Passing by her he entered the school-house, closing the door tightly behind him, lest he might be tempted to look back.

Walda submissively followed the women, who led the way to the little room that opened out of the bare auditorium of the meeting-house. It was here that she had spent many hours of study among the elders'

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books, but its appearance was slightly changed. In one corner stood a cot covered with white blankets of the finest weave that came from the looms of Zanah. In the centre was a reading-desk, upon which a large Bible lay open. Six chairs were ranged along the wall just outside the door that led into the interior of the meeting-house.

“Thou wilt find nothing to distract thy thoughts here,” said Mother Kaufmann, glancing into the room.

“We will take good care that thou art not disturbed,” asserted Mother Schneider.

Walda gave no sign that she heard. Crossing the threshold she closed the door, shutting out the six women. She threw herself upon the bed, and gave way to a paroxysm of weeping. The realization that she had missed her opportunity to confess her love for Everett at first frightened her, for she knew it was now too late to speak before going to the *Untersuchung*. Zanah guarded a propheticess so carefully that when once the door of the sanctuary in which Marta Bachmann had fasted and prayed closed upon one supposed to be inspired, no word could be spoken. She lay awake far into the night. When the day had faded, a single candle had been put upon her reading-desk by Mother Kaufmann, who scanned her face with the inquisitive look of a mischief-maker. Walda, sitting with folded hands, had appeared oblivious

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of the woman's presence. She had heard the evening prayers of the colony gathered in the meeting-house. She felt a dull pain when she recalled her father's face. Underneath every emotion that she experienced in the dreary watches of the night she was always conscious of the memory of Everett's voice as he pleaded for her love. At first she had a faint hope that he might speak to her through the window, or that, in some way, he would send her a token of encouragement, but nothing disturbed the oppressive quiet of the laggard hours.

Walda was wakened early in the morning, after a brief and troubled sleep, by the whispers of the women outside her door. She knew that the watch was being changed, and that soon she would be expected to be kneeling at her prayers. Rising from the cot she looked out of the one window—it overlooked the school-house garden, and she saw Gerson Brandt walking back and forth amid the tangled nasturtiums and late asters. As he moved to and fro he never once turned his eyes towards the meeting-house. With difficulty Walda repressed an impulse to call him to her. Through all her childhood and girlhood he had bent a ready ear when she told him her troubles, and now it seemed an easy matter to confide in him. While she was still at the window, Gerson Brandt went up the worn steps that led to the school-room.

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A long, dull day followed for Walda. Her pride enabled her to preserve an outward calm when, on various pretexts, the women opened the door to look in upon her. She tried to think what she ought to do. So great is the power of love that it did not occur to her she might try to put out of her heart the sacred emotion she had mistaken for religious inspiration. She accepted it as the divine gift for which she had been waiting. Although she knew that it was likely her father would forbid her marriage to Everett, she told herself no one in Zanah could take away from her the glory of an earthly love. Towards the end of the day she fell again into the old habit of praying much. Kneeling at the reading-desk, with her head upon the big Bible, she asked that she might be given strength to do her duty to her father, and to submit to the will of Zanah.

For the second time the evening hymns were chanted outside the door. Walda listened quite calmly, and, long after she knew the meeting-house was emptied of all except the six watchers, she sat in the fading light of the evening looking out into the school-yard, and thinking serenely of the life she was putting behind her. Presently her thoughts were disturbed by a man's voice. With a heart-flutter she recognized Everett's low, clear tones. She heard him command one of the women to open the door. Rising to her feet, she listened breathlessly to the protracted parley

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that followed. Without warning, a light knock sounded on the door.

“Let me in, Walda,” said Everett.

Before she could go to the door, he had lifted the latch and had entered, followed by the six women, all of whom spoke words of angry protest.

“So this is where they have hidden you, Walda?” he said, paying no attention to the colony mothers. “I have searched for you all day, for I have much that I wish to say to you.”

His manner was quiet and determined. “I wish to be left alone with Walda Kellar,” he said, turning to the watchers. “I have a message of much importance to give to her.”

“How darest thou break in upon the vigil of a prophetess of Zanah!” shrieked Mother Kaufmann. “Dost thou not know that the instrument of the Lord is not permitted to speak until the last hour of her probation hath expired?”

“Ja, ja, Mother Kaufmann is right. We will send for the elders if thou dost not leave here this minute,” chorused the women.

Everett coolly surveyed the group. Putting out his hand he grasped Walda's arm, and quickly drew her into the meeting-house assembly-room. With a quick motion he slammed the door and turned the key, imprisoning the six women, who immediately began to call for help. Reopening the door for a little

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space he ordered them to keep silence, accompanying his admonition with the remark that if they summoned a crowd they would prove they were not fit to watch the prophetess. For the second time he turned the big key. Walda had watched the proceeding with astonishment. Her face was white and scared when he put his arms around her and drew her to him.

"There, do not be frightened," he said, soothingly, as he kissed her on the forehead. "I have come to take you away."

"Ah, Stephen; now, indeed, do I know that I was never fitted to be a prophetess," said Walda, looking up into his face. "My heart hath thirsted for thee. With thine arms around me I feel as if I had found a safe refuge from all my troubles. When thou didst kiss me I forgot for a moment that I had been untrue to the people who trusted me."

"I mean never to let you go away from me again," he said. "But come; we are wasting time. Let us go now to your father and tell him that you are to belong to me, and not to Zanah."

Walda drew away from him. "Nay, Stephen," she said. "In the nights and day that I have been alone there in that room, it hath been made plain to me that I must tell all the people how I have betrayed their faith in me."

"You owe the people nothing," said Everett, with

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a trace of impatience in his voice. "Come; there is no time to be lost. I mean to take you away from Zanah this very night. Your father and Gerson Brandt can explain to the colony why you are not to be their prophetess."

Walda shook her head. "Wouldst thou have me show a craven spirit?" she inquired. "Dost thou think I could go away to be happy with thee and forget my father, even if I could be unmindful of what I owe the men and women of Zanah?"

"Do you not think you owe me any duty?" Stephen asked. "Do not let us stand here discussing what is right and wrong. It is right that you should be my wife. You have been the victim of the bigotry and superstition of a clannish, religious sect. Love has made you free. Doesn't your heart tell you to answer the call from my heart?" He stretched out his arms to her, but she stepped beyond his reach.

"Stephen, I have prayed constantly that wisdom might be given me, and my way hath been made plain before me," she answered, firmly. "I must go before the *Untersuchung*, and, for my father's sake, I must accept whatever penalty is meted out to me."

"Do you mean that you would submit to any decree of the colony of Zanah? That signifies that you do not love me, after all. It means that you are lost to me forever."

The strong man's voice trembled as he spoke. A

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wave of passion and longing swept over him. He drew her to him and held her close, pillowing her head upon his breast, and whispering to her that she was his; it was not in her power to make the choice since love gave him the right to her.

“Thou dost affright me. There is something in thy love that terrifies me,” she said, trying to make him free her.

“I shall not let you go until you have promised that you will marry me,” he said.

“I cannot promise that, Stephen,” she said, so faintly that he scarcely heard her. “Thou knowest I cannot leave my father, and surely thou wouldst not be content to stay here in Zanah.”

“I could live here or anywhere else with you. Promise.”

“Nay, nay, I cannot,” she repeated.

“Will you pledge yourself to marry me when your conscience tells you that you are free?”

“It is in my heart to promise that to thee, Stephen, but during my vigil I have come to know that if thou shouldst live away from me out in the world thou mightst no longer love me. Nay, I will not bind thee. The only pledge I give thee is the pledge that I will love thee all my life.”

A furious knocking on the door made them remember the imprisoned watchers.

“If you refuse to go with me now what do you wish

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to do?" Stephen asked, coming back to the subject of his original errand.

"I want to wait until the *Untersuchung*, and I want thee to be patient until thou hearest what the elders say. I shall pray that I may be given to thee."

"There is no danger of your repenting of love, is there, Walda?"

She smiled confidently and answered: "Thy love will dwell in my heart forever."

He kissed her farewell, holding both her hands in his.

"I wish I could spare you the ordeal of the *Untersuchung*," he exclaimed. "Why need we care for all the world?"

"Hush!" she said. "We care not for Zanah or the whole world, but if we would keep our love holy, we must be true, Stephen, to all our duties."

After he had kissed her for the last time, she stood before the elders' platform and looked up at the chair of the prophetess. Everett unlocked the door.

"I appreciate the opportunity you have given me of speaking to Walda Kellar," he said, with a suavity and courtesy to which the women of the colony were so unaccustomed they did not know what it meant. They stood scowling at him until Mother Kaufmann replied:

"Thou wilt be ordered out of the colony for this day's work."

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“If you are wise—and I am sure you are, or you would not have been chosen to attend the prophethess of Zanah—you will not make any complaints.” He bowed deferentially to all of them, and passing Walda, before whom he stopped to whisper “Farewell, until the *Untersuchung*,” he went out of the meeting-house.

“It must have been a message of much import that brought the stranger here,” sneered Mother Kaufmann, as she seated herself on the nearest chair.

“He hath small respect for the laws of Zanah,” declared a second watcher.

Without uttering a word, Walda returned to her place of temporary imprisonment. Kneeling before her reading-desk, she prayed that she might be given strength and courage to accept whatever penalty the elders might allot to her.

XVIII

THE day of the *Untersuchung* came at last. A brilliant sun shone upon Zanah. An early frost had turned the maples yellow and had touched the oaks with crimson. In the vineyards the last purple grapes hung in the shrivelled foliage. Along the winding road the golden-rod was blossoming in the tall, feathery grasses. A hush fell upon the quiet valley in the morning. The brown fields on lowland and hill-side were deserted. At the edge of the village the mill-wheels had ceased their busy whir.

Everett had walked out under the autumn sky nearly all night. In the days that had passed since his interview with Walda at the meeting-house all the villagers had avoided him. Even the school-master had passed him by with scarcely a nod of recognition. Time had dragged. Of all the people of Zanah, Hans Peter alone remained on friendly terms with him.

At dawn Everett arose from a brief sleep, and dressed himself with unusual care. The thought came to him that before sundown he might be robbed of Walda. All his strength left him. He dropped upon a chair near the window. Love had become life to him.

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Sitting with his elbows on his knees he looked out upon Zanah. Walda represented hope, worship, aspiration. The touch of her lips had awakened all that was good in him. He, who had rarely prayed, petitioned, in an agony of longing, that he might be given the woman of Zanah.

Some one knocked. Everett jumped to his feet to open the door. Hans Peter, freshly scoured with soap until his round face shone, stood in the hall, twirling a cap that had been recently mended.

“The elders have sent me to tell thee that thou art to remain away from the timber-land where the *Untersuchung* is to be held,” announced the simple one.

“And why is my absence desirable?” Everett asked.

“Question not the village fool,” Hans Peter replied. “He knoweth not what the great men of Zanah think inside their wise heads.”

“What do you think inside your foolish head?” Everett laughed, as if he made light of the order.

Hans Peter looked down at a pair of copper-toed shoes, which were to him the insignia of an unusual occasion.

“It seemeth to the simple one of Zanah that it is wise for the stranger to be far away when the proph-
etess doth pledge herself to love only God and the angels.”

“I intend to go to the *Untersuchung*, Hans Peter, and I want you to find a good place from which I can

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look on during the hours when the people give their testimonies concerning the state of their souls."

"Thou canst not sit among the colonists," said Hans Peter. "The men and women of Zanah have turned against thee. They will not permit thee to mingle with them on the most solemn day of all the year."

"Whether or not they permit me, I shall go to the *Untersuchung*," Everett replied. "Would it not be safe for me to wait behind the line of poplars not far off from the platform upon which the elders will sit?"

"If thou shouldst go out there early, and stay where the wild hop-vine might hide thee, there is a chance no one would behold thee," admitted the simple one.

"When does the prophetess go before the elders?" Everett inquired. "I know nothing of to-day's arrangements, because here at the inn no one will give me any information. You are my only friend, Hans Peter. I expect you to tell me all you know."

"Thou forgettest that the fool hath no memory."

"Where are your gourds? Is there not one that will help me to find out when to hide among the poplars?"

Hans Peter twirled his cap.

"Thou wert merciful to me when I was in the stocks," he said, slowly. "The fool's memory hath still a knowledge of that day. The fool doth know

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that, last of all Zanah, Walda Kellar will appear before the elders."

"That means I need not go to the *Untersuchung* until this afternoon?" queried Everett.

"Yea, thou shouldst wait until late in the day." Hans Peter turned as if to run away, but Everett caught him by the sleeve of his gingham shirt.

"Have you been to the meeting-house to-day?" Everett asked, looking at the simple one with such entreaty in his eyes that Hans Peter answered:

"Yea, I have but just come from the place where the prophetess of Zanah hath been keeping her vigil."

"You went there on an errand, I suppose?"

"I carried orders from the elders." At this point Hans Peter closed his mouth very tightly and stared stupidly. Everett saw that further questioning would be of no avail.

As soon as he had had breakfast Everett walked out to the timber-land where the *Untersuchung* was to be held. The elders had chosen a strip of woods near the lake as a place for the ceremonies of the inquisition. The road leading to it was that over which Everett had walked with Walda the first day she visited the cemetery to pray at the grave of Marta Bachmann. About two hundred yards from the shore of the lake a large clearing had been made. A rude platform for the elders had been built between the lake shore and rough benches, which had been ar-

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ranged in orderly rows beneath the intertwining trees. Everett saw that the line of poplars was beyond the place where the path led into the out-door chapel. Hidden there he could easily escape detection, and he would be near enough to hear most of what was said from the platform. He walked to the farther shore of the little lake, and lay down upon the ground to wait as patiently as he could for the laggard hours to pass. The quiet beauty of the day appealed to him, and, thinking of Walda, he was finally lulled to sleep. It was mid-day when he awoke. He sauntered back to the scene of the *Untersuchung*. He made a seat for himself at the foot of one of the poplars where the vines were thick. Through the screen of leaves he saw the people slowly gathering. The women occupied the benches nearest him.

By two o'clock all the colonists had assembled. The thirteen elders formed a solemn row, Adolph Schneider holding the middle place, with Wilhelm Kellar at one end of the platform and Gerson Brandt at the other. After a droning hymn and a tedious prayer, those who were candidates for preferment in the colony went before the elders. The men first were catechised by Adolph Schneider, who did not rise from his chair. Everett was astonished to see how few signified ambition for colony honors. When the women's turn came the applicants greatly outnumbered the men. In both cases those who pleaded for

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advancement boasted of spiritual conflicts and victories. Their sing-song voices maddened the impatient lover. At last, when he had begun to fear that Walda would not be summoned until the next day, Everett noticed that the people, who had sat stolid and unmoved through the hours of dreary recitative, stirred with something like interest. Everett pulled himself to his feet, and, looking down the road, saw a sight that made his heart beat.

Two by two, a long line of girls approached slowly. All wore the blue gowns of the colony, but white caps and white kerchiefs were substituted for those of every-day use. Each carried in her hand a large hymn-book. When the procession turned into the path of the woodland chapel Everett caught sight of Walda, walking last of all. As they marched slowly onward, the girls chanted a hymn. Walda carried her head in the old, proud way, and her manner reassured the watcher who loved her. She was clothed in a trailing gown, fashioned of the white flannel from the colony mills. The clinging folds brought out the noble lines of her figure. The kerchief crossed upon her bosom was of some thin material of the same tint as the flannel. The cap, pushed back from her brow, revealed the waves of her fair hair, which was confined in two long braids. Her face was pale; her lips were firmly set; her eyes shone with the light of peace and courage. The little procession passed quite near Everett,

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but, although his heart called to her, and his eyes followed her, she appeared unconscious of his presence. He noticed that her hands hung at her sides, and he read a meaning in the fact that she no longer crossed them upon her breast in the old fashion, signifying that she would keep out the world and all its emotions.

When the procession appeared before the colonists all the people knelt in their places, none daring to lift curious eyes to her whom they hailed as the instrument of the Lord. The procession moved back of the assembly, crossing to the farther side of the clearing, and then advancing to the front of the platform. Here Walda took the central position, the girls separating to stand on either side of her. The chanting ceased, and Walda bowed her head in prayer.

All the elders rose to receive the prophetess of Zanah. Wilhelm Kellar, still weak from his illness, leaned upon his cane and murmured a thanksgiving to the Lord. Gerson Brandt, at the other end of the platform, looked at Walda, and then turned his eyes away, as if the day and hour held something that brought a severe test to the spirit long disciplined to self-control.

"Stand not before me, O ye elders," Walda said, in a clear, steady voice, lifting up one hand to claim attention. "Bow not, O ye people of Zanah, for I am unworthy to be your prophetess."

"Speak not such words of humility," said Adolph Schneider. "We know that the inspiration hath

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come to thee. Thou hast already shown to us that thou hast received the gift of tongues. To-day thou shalt be anointed prophetess of Zanah."

"Amen!" shouted one of the elders, and the word was repeated in a chorus by the men.

Walda's face became as white as marble. She stood immovable, with one hand pressed against her breast as if she would stop the beating of her heart. She would have spoken, but the Herr Doktor turned to command that the chair of the prophetess be lifted to the centre of the platform. The elders moved to give it space, and, when it had been put in position, Adolph Schneider said:

"Come hither to thy rightful place among the elders."

"My place is among the lowliest of the colonists," said Walda. "Let me stand here while I speak to the people of Zanah."

The elders shook their heads, and the people murmured that they could not hear. Walda walked to the end of the platform where the steps ascended. She moved slowly, pausing for a moment as she passed Gerson Brandt. She crossed the platform with head bowed, but when she faced the multitude there shone in her eyes a strange radiance that filled the colonists with awe.

"To all you of Zanah I have a last message," she said, turning first to the elders and then to the people.

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“From the years of my childhood ye have led me in the ways of the Lord. Ye have looked upon me as the instrument chosen to reveal the divine will of Zannah. I have prayed through the months and years for the day of inspiration. It was not until this summer that mine eyes were opened to the glory of God. In my heart suddenly gushed a well-spring of happiness. I read meanings in the stars, and the smallest things of earth spake to me. It was as if I walked very near to God.”

Walda, pausing, swept the assembly with her eyes. In the exaltation of her mood she had become clothed in a majesty that overawed the people. Some of the women fell to their knees, weeping.

“Behold the prophetess! Behold the prophetess! Blessed be her name!” shouted one of the elders.

Walda continued, unheeding:

“In my heart I felt a gratitude, for I believed that at last the divine revelation had come to me. I thought that the love in my heart, which made all that pertaineth to life sacred, belonged to heaven alone. I thanked God that the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been given me.”

Cries of joy ascended from the throng.

“In the first days of the inspiration that had come to me I was impatient for this time, when I could dedicate my whole life to the service of Zannah. It seemed easy to live always near to God. Voices spake to me.

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I believed that I was, indeed, the prophetess of Zanah—the prophetess who could live untouched by human emotions. But one day there was given to me a clearer vision. Just before the beginning of my vigil it was shown to me that mine was not the rapture of the saints”—Walda paused and caught her breath—“I came into the knowledge that my inspiration had its origin in human love.”

She pronounced the last words distinctly, with her eyes uplifted. Gerson Brandt uttered her name in an agonized groan. Wilhelm Kellar strove to speak, but his voice died in his throat.

“What sayest thou, Walda Kellar?” demanded Adolph Schneider, rising from his chair. The colonists listened stolidly, as if they did not comprehend the meaning of Walda’s speech.

“Nay, surely thou hast not been touched by an earthly love?” said Gerson Brandt, in a tone which told that despair was clutching at his heart. “Thy words are vague.”

Walda saw the horror in her father’s face. She looked away from him and the school-master, waiting a moment that she might choose her words so that they would not give unnecessary pain.

“We believe thou hast not looked with favor on any man,” Adolph Schneider said, encouragingly, and then he added, as if to convey a covert warning to the people of Zanah: “Yet thou art a woman, and all that

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are made in the image of Eve are easy to be persuaded by the voice of Satan, speaking through man."

"A love that is of heaven, and yet of earth, hath taken possession of my heart," declared Walda, fixing her eyes upon the people. "It came to me like a great light shining through the gates of heaven. I did not know the glory that enfolded me was what ye of Zanah call an earthly love, for, truly, even now it seemeth to have in it more of heaven than of that which pertaineth to earth. I did not fight against this love which hath been revealed to me, for I did not know it was human love which made me feel a kinship with God. Here, in Zanah, ye have taught me that the love of men and women is a sinful thing, and there came to me no prick of the conscience—no warning that I was transgressing the law of God."

She was transfigured with the mystery and beauty of her new heritage of love, and the people listened in awe. When she had stopped speaking, she turned to her father with a look of such pleading and entreaty that the old man, who had heard as one that dreams, moved his lips in an effort to speak. Presently there arose a murmur from the people. The Herr Doktor commanded that all should hold their peace.

"What man in Zanah hath stolen thy thoughts from God?" the Herr Doktor asked, in a stern voice.

"I love Stephen Everett, the stranger who belong-

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eth not to Zanah," Walda answered, in unfaltering tones.

A wail arose from the people. It grew into a mighty sound that was like the autumn winds rushing through the tall trees on the slopes of the bluffs.

"The tempter hath come to Walda Kellar even as he came to Marta Bachmann, but repentance is possible for her who hath been chosen to be the instrument of the Lord," declared Adolph Schneider. "Daughter of Zanah, pluck this love from thine heart."

"I have proclaimed to you that this love seemeth a holy thing sent from heaven. It is fixed in my heart forever."

Walda was again the prophetess. She spoke slowly, and it was as if she were but repeating the promptings of some inner voice.

"Walda, I command thee, let the fountains of thy tears wash away this earthly love!" Wilhelm Kellar cried, rising from his chair and lifting his arms as if he were beseeching the intervention of Heaven.

"Nay, I cannot repent. There is that which tells me this is the love that is stronger than death," Walda said, softly. "Father, I crave thy forgiveness, and the forgiveness of all that belong to Zanah."

She went to him and knelt humbly before him. Gerson Brandt stood with arms folded across his breast and head bowed over them. Karl Weisel gathered some of the other elders close to him and

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talked to them in whispers. The people looked on breathlessly. Suddenly, from her place among the women, arose Mother Kaufmann.

“Behold the unfaithful one asking for forgiveness,” she cried, in rage. “Through her vanity and her weakness the divine messages that were to direct Zanah how to prosper are withheld from the colony. Our crops may fail and we may starve, but she careth for naught if she may love a man. She hath chosen a stranger sent by Satan from the outside world to confound us.”

Cries of derision and reproach were heard among the women. At first they were but low mutterings. Then an old hag jumped upon a bench and shouted:

“Send her back to the room where the watchers can guard her. Cast the stranger out of Zanah.”

“Yea, yea, cast out Satan’s messenger,” shouted the women. The men took up the cry, and in a moment the orderly crowd of religionists became a mob of fanatics which pressed towards the platform.

“Repent, repent!” shouted the people. “Remember thy duty!” “Put aside thy sinful love!” “Ask the Lord to forgive thee for thy transgression!”

Walda faced the angry mob fearlessly. Her personality still impressed the people, so that none dare lay hands upon her.

“Let the curse of Heaven descend upon the head of the stranger in Zanah!” Mother Kaufmann shrieked.

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"Curse him! Curse him!" called out the men, repeating the woman's imprecation.

In an instant Walda compelled silence. She raised her arms in a warning gesture, and shamed the people by the contempt she showed for their weakness as she looked down upon them.

"How are ye fitted to judge the stranger in Zanah?" she asked, in a scornful tone. "Have ye the Christian charity the Bible enjoins you to cherish in your hearts? If there is any one to be blamed for the loss of your prophetess it is I, Walda Kellar, that should bear it all. But again I tell you there is naught concerning love of which I would repent."

"She would defy Heaven!" shouted Mother Kaufmann. "Let the elders take her away that the sight of her shall not breed sinful thoughts of love in the hearts of the maidens of Zanah."

"Yea, lock her up until she cometh to her right mind," said the old hag, waving her hands to invite the elders' attention.

The uproar became deafening. Gerson Brandt stepped forward where he could stand between Walda and the mob. Through all the commotion Everett, with difficulty, had restrained himself from rushing out to protect Walda from the maddened colonists, but he realized that his appearance would but fan the flame of wrath and increase the confusion.

In the centre of the women's division of the out-

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door chapel Mother Schneider and her daughter Gretchen had been sitting. Both had taken little part in the demonstration against the fallen prophetess. When Gerson Brandt was seen to move forward on the platform Mother Schneider said to the women near her:

“It is a sorry day when the women of Zanah are permitted to hear a maiden boast of a love that knoweth no bounds. It is an indecent confession that Walda Kellar maketh. Truly, she belongeth to the class of women that should be stoned.”

“It is such as she that cast wicked spells upon men. Behold, the elders fear to discipline her,” answered a mother, who that day had been promoted to the highest grade of the colony because she testified that she had found earthly love an unholy thing.

“She should be stoned! She should be stoned!” repeated the women; and the words passed from mouth to mouth until they reached a boy who loitered on the edge of the crowd. The boy picked up a flat stone, and, aiming it at Walda, threw it with all the force at his command. It sailed above the heads of the people. Gerson Brandt, with a quick movement, pulled Walda aside. The stone struck him on the forehead, making a deep gash, from which the blood coursed down his cheek. Walda, with a woman’s quick instinct of ministration, undid the kerchief around her neck, and gave it to Gerson Brandt.

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“Stanch the blood with this,” she said, and when he made no effort to take it, she pressed it against his cheek.

Everett threw every consideration of prudence to the winds when he saw the stone hurled towards Walda. He pushed his way to the platform, but he had to fight his path through the crowd, which had been dazed at the sight of the blood on the school-master’s face. The men frowned at him sullenly, and some muttered low imprecations. Everett climbed to a place near Walda. When the people of Zanah saw him they shouted in angry protest. One burly man sought to lay hold of him, but he shook off the colonist and would have gone closer to Walda, but Gerson Brandt put out a restraining hand.

“Profane not this place with thy presence,” said the school-master, stepping between Everett and Walda. “Thou art a traitor. Thou hast betrayed the trust we put in thee. The brother of Zanah doeth well to hold thee back.”

All the pent-up emotion of the hour suddenly burst out as Gerson Brandt spoke. His gaunt form trembled with the strength of his passion.

“It is this man who should bear all the curses of Zanah,” he continued, turning to address the people. “We took him into close communion with us, and he hath repaid our faith in him by seeking to ensnare the love of our prophetess. He pledged me his honor,

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and he cared naught for his word given with the seal of a hand-clasp. He is a Judas who hath worked secretly for the undoing of Zanah — a Judas who hath cared for neither honor nor truth, so that he might win the woman whom he coveted. He deserveth not mercy. Let us cast him out of Zanah, and when he hath gone back to the wicked world to which he belongeth, the soul of Walda Kellar can be cleansed of the stain of an earthly love. Much prayer and fasting will restore her to fellowship with God."

Everett moved close to Walda, and, laying his hand upon her arm, would have drawn her away from the infuriated mob. When he touched her, the sight of what seemed an assertion of his claim enraged Gerson Brandt. The school-master was imbued with the strength of a giant. He thrust Everett away with a mighty stroke of his arm.

"Seize this man!" he commanded. "Bind him, and put him out of the sight of the people!"

Four or five colonists sprang forward to obey Gerson Brandt's orders, but Everett threw them off as lightly as if they were children.

"You have no right to touch me," he said, towering above even the tallest. "I have broken no law, and I can hold you responsible if you deprive me of my liberty."

The elders had gathered about Gerson Brandt and Walda. Wilhelm Kellar tottered to his daughter's

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side, and implored her to surrender her will to the will of Zanah.

“Shame on you! Shame on you, men of Zanah!” cried Mother Kaufmann, who had climbed to the top of a high tree-stump. “Will ye let one man make cowards of you? Do the bidding of Gerson Brandt.”

Some of the women hissed, and a score of the mill-hands fought their way to the platform. Surrounding Everett, they closed in upon him. One, more daring than the rest, sought to seize him. Everett felled the colonist with a quick blow. The others endeavored to detain him, but none was a match for the athlete with muscles of steel. Knocking down two or three of the most aggressive of his assailants, Everett went to Walda, who trembled with fear for his safety. He drew her close to him. The quavering voice of Wilhelm Kellar sounded in their ears.

“Offend not the eyes of Zanah by parading your unseemly love,” he said, raising his cane as if he would strike the man of the world. The effort was too much for his feeble strength. He almost fell, and Walda knelt before him to support him with her outstretched arms. His indignation changed to grief, and, looking down at the daughter upon whom he had built all his ambition, he gave way to bitter lamentation.

“Oh, Lord, how have I deserved this punishment?” he cried.

Walda sobbed, still holding his frail body close to

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her. "Forgive me, father," said she, looking up through her tears.

"Nay, ask not my forgiveness," he answered, sternly. "Seek the forgiveness of the Lord, whom thou hast offended. Repent now, when it is not yet too late."

"There is no repentance in my heart," she said, rising to her feet. "This love must ever seem to me a holy thing."

"Come away with me now, for I would talk to thee alone. Let us flee from the presence of this man and the people of Zanah," pleaded Wilhelm Kellar.

"Yea, we will go away together," Walda answered. She drew his arm through hers, and gently led him to the end of the platform. They slowly descended the steps and walked to the middle aisle, which offered them a chance of egress. As they passed the women, Mother Kaufmann hissed Walda, and taunts and jeers from the crowd assailed her. Wilhelm Kellar stopped. Raising himself on his cane, he said, with a tremendous effort:

"Wag not your tongues, ye women of Zanah. Ye have no right to heap insult upon her whom an hour ago ye were proud to hail as the prophetess."

"Lo, this prophetess is but a Jezebel!" sneered Mother Kaufmann; and the women near her repeated the name "Jezebel! Jezebel!"

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Wilhelm Kellar heard the insult to his daughter, and once more raising himself on his cane, he called out:

“Let your evil tongues be silent! There is none in Zannah who hath suffered the bitterness of disappointment that hath come to me, yet now do I forgive Walda Kellar, and bespeak for her your mercy and loving kindness.”

His voice died in a rattle in his throat. His gray head sank upon his breast. His arm loosened its tense hold upon Walda, and he fell in a heap at her feet.

Walda bent over him with a cry of such agony and fear that it pierced to the outer edge of the great assembly.

Raising his head, she looked upon his face, ghastly with the touch of death. In his eyes a last flicker of light faded as she stooped to pillow his head upon her bosom.

“Stephen, Stephen,” she called, “come to my father!”

Everett gently lifted the emaciated form of the elder, and, waving the crowd apart, laid his burden down upon the ground. A glance told him that a soul had gone out of Zannah.

“My father is dead! Dead!” shrieked Walda. Sinking on her knees, she wrung her hands and gave way to her grief.

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“Wilhelm Kellar is dead,” Gerson Brandt announced, in solemn tones.

He stood for a moment on the edge of the platform, where he could see the white face upturned to the sky. Then his eyes fell upon Walda, who was weeping with her head supported on the shoulder of Everett. The school-master jumped from the platform, and, pointing to Everett, ordered that he be bound. With his own hands he loosed the stranger's arms, and would have made the weeping girl lean upon him, but she proudly drew away.

“Brothers of Zanah, bind this man,” he said, repeating his command. “Through him, death and grievous trouble have come to the colony.” Everett waited, ready to defend himself, but the men hesitated before making a second attempt to carry out the elder's orders.

“Let them bind thee, Stephen,” Walda said. “In the presence of death it is not meet there should be strife.”

“I want my liberty in order that I may defend you from these mad zealots,” Everett answered.

“Nay, Stephen, thou forgettest that I am in the Lord's hand,” Walda replied, with a little quiver of the lips.

“I surrender myself as your prisoner,” Everett said, addressing Gerson Brandt. “It will not be necessary

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for you to have me tied. I give you my word that I will not try to escape."

"It hath been shown to me that thou hast no regard for thy promises," Gerson Brandt said, in an angry voice. "When thou art securely bound I shall have faith in thy word, and not till then."

The insult kindled Everett's anger. He would have retorted, but a sign from Walda compelled his silence. He let the men tie his hands behind him. They used the rope clumsily, and drew it so tightly over the flesh that it was painful. During the process Gerson Brandt looked on, and Walda stood with eyes upon the ground. The colonists waited quietly. The elders on the platform had resumed the air of stolidity which generally distinguished them. They watched the proceedings without interference. By common consent they permitted Gerson Brandt to take the initiative in dealing with the tragic climax of the *Untersuchung*.

"Let a bier be brought that the body of Wilhelm Kellar, who hath fallen into his last sleep, may be carried back to the village," Gerson Brandt directed.

Diedrich Werther with three other colonists carried a heavy bier, over which was thrown a black pall, down the grassy aisle of the out-door chapel. Following it walked Hans Peter, carrying a gourd in his hand. The body of Wilhelm Kellar was lifted upon the bier and covered with the pall. When the

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men stooped to raise the bier, Adolph Schneider spoke:

“Behold, this day we have lost one of the leading men of Zanah. Wilhelm Kellar hath guided the business affairs of the colony. He hath been my strong arm. Lo! he is slain by the frowardness of the daughter upon whom he had centred too much affection. He hath suffered because he let her become an idol of earth. If she repenteth, so that she may become the prophetess of Zanah, her crime may be blotted out of the book of life.”

He paused, but the people made no demonstration.

“Repent, O daughter of Zanah!” the Herr Doktor shouted, in a voice intended to terrify all who heard it. “Repent now. Pledge thyself to put earthly love out of thy heart, and to serve the Lord forever.”

“Love that hath taken root in the heart cannot be plucked out at will. This love must remain always with me,” Walda replied.

“Let thy shame be upon thine own head,” shouted Adolph Schneider. “Thou art a woman possessed of Satan. Thou hast caused thy father’s death, and yet thou darest to defy the laws of God and the laws of Zanah.”

“She hath committed murder,” cried a woman. “The mark of Cain is set upon her forehead.”

The colonists surged around the place where Walda and Gerson Brandt stood. Straining at his bonds,

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Everett, who had been dragged back upon the platform and thrown before the vacant chair of the prophetess, shouted to the elders to preserve order. Seeing Walda's peril, he demanded that he be released, and poured forth such a torrent of invective and entreaty that Adolph Schneider and Karl Weisel were moved to action. The two elders tried in vain to obtain a hearing. The crowd was clamoring for revenge. Infuriated by disappointment and goaded by superstition, the colonists pressed so closely upon Walda that she was in danger of being crushed.

Some of the women would have spat upon her, but Gerson Brandt pushed them away. Terrible in his anger, he widened the circle around the white-clad figure of the fallen prophetess, who seemed unmindful of the turmoil about her. She stood with bowed head, and her lips moved in prayer.

"Make way for the bier!" Gerson Brandt said. Diedrich Werther and his three companions lifted the bier, and slowly started down the grassy aisle. When Walda would have followed, one of the most turbulent of the colonists roughly shoved her back. Gerson Brandt threw out his arm with a protecting gesture, and in the surging of the crowd Walda was pressed close to him. His arms folded about her, and for one moment he felt her heart beating upon his. In that moment the fires of life that had long smouldered in him flamed up and illuminated his soul. In

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that moment came to him the knowledge that he, the elder of Zanah, had long been possessed of the earthly love against which he had preached so many years. For a few seconds the golden autumn day faded from his sight. He passed into a new existence. His divinity was unveiled to him. When the mist before his eyes cleared away he looked into Walda's face, and, still clasping her close to his breast, said:

"Canst thou forgive me for mine anger, which hath brought upon thee much unnecessary trouble this day? Until this moment I have been blinded. I have done thee and him whom thou lovest a grievous wrong."

"Thy provocation hath been great," Walda answered. "Yet there is resentment in my heart since thou hast caused Stephen Everett to be bound."

"Forgive me, and I will make reparation for mine offence," he pleaded. "For the sake of the past, for thy father's sake, bear no enmity against me."

"Thou wilt see that no harm befalleth Stephen Everett?" she said. Unconscious of the tumult in the school-master's heart, and indifferent to his touch, she thought only of the stranger in Zanah. The mob moved forward, and Gerson Brandt gently put Walda away from him.

"Let Walda Kellar follow the bier of her father," he commanded.

Again the women hissed their fallen prophetess.

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Raising her hands to heaven, Walda uttered the words:

“Lord, have mercy upon us, thy people in Zanah. Forgive us our transgressions.”

The colonists' jeers were silenced. As Walda passed down the aisle, the majesty of her carriage and the exaltation that was written on her face cast a fear upon the people. One woman who had but a moment before uttered bitter gibes kissed the hem of the white garment of the fallen prophetess.

Hans Peter, who had been watching the proceedings from the limb of a tree, slid from his high seat and walked a few feet behind Walda.

A hush fell upon the multitude. Standing with uncovered head, Gerson Brandt waited until the bier disappeared among the trees and the last glimpse of Walda's white-robed figure was obscured.

The distant bell of the meeting-house tolled. The sunset hour of prayer had come. Beneath the sky, dyed in crimson and purple, the people of Zanah bowed their heads.

XIX

FOR three days after the *Untersuchung* Zanah was in mourning. The body of Wilhelm Kellar lay in the meeting-house, and there the colonists spent many hours in prayer and fasting. Gerson Brandt shut himself in the upper room where Wilhelm Kellar had been so long ill and where Piepmatz still hung in the big wicker cage. The school-master sat for hours looking towards the bluffs which shut out the busy world. He thought constantly of Walda. He had given her a pledge that he would make reparation for his part in the *Untersuchung*, but his heart rebelled against his task. He coveted Walda with all the strength of a nature in which the best human impulses had been thwarted. He knew that he must give up the woman he loved to the stranger in Zanah, but his soul cried out against the fate that took her from him. He looked back upon the years in Zanah, and he knew that she had become all of life to him. At first he was dead to the sense of his own unfaithfulness to the colony. Gradually he realized that his had been the part of the unconscious traitor. He felt relieved

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when he looked forward to his release from the irksome duties of a leader of Zanah.

A sense of terrible loneliness took possession of him whenever he thought of the death of his friend, but his grief became more poignant with the thought that Wilhelm Kellar's death made Walda's departure from the colony possible. There was no reason why she should not go out into the world as Everett's wife. Night after night he battled with himself to the end that he might be strong enough to help the woman he loved to the attainment of happiness. He gained many partial victories over himself, but at first he could not summon the courage to go to see Walda in the House of the Women where she was kept under surveillance. The day after the *Untersuchung* he compelled himself to ask that Everett be released, but he found that the cupidity of Adolph Schneider had been aroused by the possibility of exacting a fine from the stranger, who was locked in his room at the inn. It was a rule of the colony that a member who brought money into the community should, in case of departure from Zanah, receive just what he had contributed. Wilhelm Kellar's share was not small, and the danger of Walda's marriage, and consequent demand for her portion of her father's property, was one that the elders desired to avert.

"Thou canst persuade Walda Kellar that the curse of God will descend upon her if she leaveth Zanah,"

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Karl Weisel said to Gerson Brandt, at the close of a long conference of the elders. "She is suffering from remorse, and thou canst sway her woman's heart."

"I refuse to have aught to do with inclining Walda's will to the will of Zanah," said the school-master, in a tone so decisive that the matter was dropped.

It was two days after Wilhelm Kellar's death that Gerson Brandt, who had gone to look once more upon the still face of his friend, encountered Walda. The girl was kneeling alone beside the bier.

"See how peaceful he looketh," she said, in a voice that was shaken with sobs. "It is a comfort to remember that his last words told me and all the people that he had forgiven my failure to fulfil his hopes."

"He hath attained greater wisdom. He knoweth that thou wast led by a stronger power than thine own will," the school-master answered.

"As thou art my friend, point out the path of duty to me," Walda implored, rising to her feet. "I have prayed constantly, and it seemeth that it is right I should stay here in Zanah serving the people, and proving to them that while love must ever be in my heart, I can still follow in the paths of righteousness."

Gerson Brandt was silent. He stood looking at her as if he would have her image graven on his mind for all his coming years. The tempter spoke to him. One word of counsel, given as from her father's friend, and he could keep her safe in Zanah.

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Art thou strong enough to let Stephen Everett go back into the world without thee?" he questioned.

"I have prayed for fortitude. I have found courage to think of living on here without him," she replied. "I have seen myself an old woman of Zanah who goes her way dreaming still of the love of her youth."

"Thou knowest that I would watch o'er thee," said the school-master.

"Yea; but thy brotherly compassion hath not the sustaining power of love."

"Thou knowest not what sustaining power brotherly compassion may reveal."

Gerson Brandt's voice betrayed suppressed emotion, and, looking up, Walda saw that his face had become suddenly old and drawn.

"I have pained thee by my seeming ingratitude for all thy kindnesses," she said, putting her hand on his arm. The school-master's face flushed, for her touch made his heart throb.

The tempter's voice spoke insistently.

"Shall I send Stephen Everett away?" Walda asked, after a brief pause. "Direct me aright. Help me to do what my father would have me do."

Gerson Brandt did not answer.

"The people of Zanah accused me of murdering my father," Walda said, after a long silence. "All the night after the *Untersuchung* I was filled with terror,

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but now I know that I could not have spared him the sorrow. I was, indeed, but the instrument of fate. I had to tell the truth as it was made clear to me. Oh, tell me that thou dost not deem me guilty of my father's death."

She was weeping again, and Gerson Brandt was stirred to compassion.

"Cease thy lamentation," he said, gently. "I have thought much about thee ever since thou didst make thy confession of love. I have come to know that thou must follow the dictates of thy heart. It is right that thou shouldst go out into the world as Stephen Everett's wife. There thou wilt find pain and suffering, but all will be glorified by thy love."

The tempter was vanquished. The school-master had listened to him for the last time.

"Nay, speak to me as my father would speak."

"As thy father's friend, and as one who holds thee in the deep recesses of his heart, I tell thee to go forth from Zanah with the man thou lovest."

"And do I owe no duty to the colony? Is it not right that I should strive to make amends for my unfaithfulness to the trust reposed in me? Tell me the whole truth. Spare me not, for I would do the Lord's will."

"The colony hath forfeited all claim upon thee, for the men and women did shamelessly flout thee. Thy father hath recompensed the people of Zanah a

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hundredfold for whatever may have been done for thee."

Walda gazed at the face of her dead father. Its calmness gave her assurance of his forgiveness. Then the realization of her loss impressed itself on her. She wept again. Stroking his stiffened hands, she prayed that he might know she had not meant to disregard his teachings or to bring him to dishonor.

Distressed at the sight of her remorse, Gerson Brandt urged her to leave the meeting-house, and when she gave no heed to him he led her away, holding her hand as was his custom in the years of her childhood. Two colony mothers were waiting on the steps.

"Remember my counsel," said the school-master. "There is but one path for thee."

Walda walked slowly towards the House of the Women, and left him standing on the threshold of the meeting-house. A mist came before Gerson Brandt's eyes, and as it cleared away he saw Hans Peter running up the hill.

"The stranger, who is still bound at the inn, would speak with thee," said the simple one, when he had reached the meeting-house steps.

"What doth he want?" said the school-master.

"He hath not talked with the village fool," answered Hans Peter, "but even the simple one might guess that he wants thee to have him set free."

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Gerson Brandt thought for a moment. Walda's presence still exerted its influence over him. He had not the courage to see the man she loved.

"Tell Stephen Everett that I cannot go to him until after Wilhelm Kellar's funeral," said the school-master, "and you may give him the message that he may trust me to work for his deliverance."

"He hath made threats that he will not be patient much longer," Hans Peter volunteered. "He hath told the Herr Doktor that it will cost Zanah much if he is imprisoned another day."

"According to the laws of the United States he hath right on his side," declared Gerson Brandt.

"He hath offered to pay much money if they will let him take Walda Kellar away, and every hour that he remaineth with his hands behind him he is more wasteful of his dollars."

"Stand not here gossiping, Hans Peter. Hasten back with my reply to the stranger's message," admonished the school-master, to whom the words of the simple one had suggested an easy method of obtaining permission for Walda to leave Zanah. If the elders were seeking to profit financially from the loss of money as a compensation for the loss of their prophetess, they would be likely to consent to let Walda leave the colony on one condition—the forfeit of her property rights.

In his room at the inn Everett received Hans Peter

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with much impatience, and, after he had heard Gerson Brandt's message, gave expression to his views on Zanah's methods of dealing with strangers.

"So I am to remain bound until to-morrow," he said. "Since Diedrich Werther consented to tie my hands less tightly I am not so uncomfortable. But I want you to summon the Herr Doktor immediately."

Adolph Schneider was slow in making his appearance, and Everett, who had fretted under the delay, was not in his usual self-contained mood.

"I sent for you to tell you that I am tired of this outrageous treatment," he said, as soon as the Herr Doktor's burly form appeared at the door. "You must come to an understanding with me to-night, or I will show you that Zanah cannot ignore all the laws of the United States. I will have you and all the leaders arrested for falsely imprisoning me. I will cause an investigation of the affairs of the colony."

Adolph Schneider's fat face was deeply lined and his thick skin was a pallid yellow. He showed plainly that he was worried with the numerous troubles that had come upon the colony. He sat upon the nearest chair, and, letting his head sink into his neckcloth, studied Everett furtively.

"What do you intend to do with me?" the prisoner asked, after his first outburst had remained unanswered.

"After the funeral to-morrow thou art to have a

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trial, and then the people of Zanah will fix thy penalty."

"Penalty? Penalty for what? I have broken no law. I have done nothing for which you can deprive me of my liberty."

"Thou art not the judge of that," declared the Herr Doktor. "Thou hast acknowledged that thou hast wronged the people of Zanah, for hast thou not offered to pay a fine?"

"I have offered to buy my freedom, because I cannot expect to obtain justice here among you bigots," returned Everett. "I warn you that if you do not take this rope off my arms, I shall see that you do not get a penny from me, and that you pay for this week's work."

"So long as Walda Kellar is guarded it will be safe to let thee have thy freedom, but we take no chances now."

"Walda Kellar is my promised wife, and I demand her liberty as well as my own."

"Walda Kellar belongeth to Zanah, and thou canst not assert any claim to her," Adolph Schneider retorted, angrily.

"You will see what I can do," Everett said. "But I do not want to try coercion. Give your consent to our marriage, and I will make Zanah a gift of money to signify my gratitude."

The Herr Doktor's little eyes glittered.

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“How much?” he asked.

“We will not discuss terms until I am freed from these ropes,” said Everett. “My imprisonment would be much easier to bear if you would let me have my hands free, so that I can smoke.”

Adolph Schneider surveyed the stranger in Zanah with a look of suspicion.

“Zanah would not be doing the will of God if Walda Kellar was not punished for causing her father’s death,” he remarked.

“How dare you accuse her!”

The prisoner strained his bonds, as if he would use his hands to some purpose in defending the woman he loved.

“Her confession broke her father’s heart,” said the Herr Doktor.

“The cruelty of you zealots of Zanah made Wilhelm Kellar die,” declared the prisoner. “I warn you to be careful how you blame an innocent girl, who simply told the truth at your *Untersuchung*.”

Everett’s face was so stern in its expression that the wily colonist thought it wise not to pursue the subject.

“When thou art ready to make an offer of money, the elders will weigh it against Walda Kellar’s transgression,” he said. “If it is found better for the colony that she be cast out with thee, consent to the marriage may be given.” He thought for a moment,

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with his chin in his neckcloth. Shaking his head, he added: "There is still a chance that Walda Kellar may receive the true inspiration. She may yet lead the people. It is but small hope that I can give thee."

He turned to go out.

"Stop! How about these ropes? Have them taken off," Everett said, in a tone that was menacing. "I shall be here to my trial. Don't think I would miss that. I shall stay in Zanah until I can leave the colony with Walda Kellar."

Adolph Schneider paid no attention to Everett's demand. Instead, he stalked through the door, his cane pounding in unison with every other step.

XX

IT was noontime when the colonists gathered in the meeting-house to attend the funeral of Wilhelm Kellar. The bier, placed before the platform of the elders, was covered with flowers—the late garden blossoms of autumn. White dahlias and asters, intertwined in wreaths, almost concealed the lid of the coffin. The women, who wore gowns of black calico, gathered solemnly on their side of the big, bare room. The men stood in groups until the elders had taken their places on the platform where the vacant chair of Wilhelm Kellar was draped in black. This occupied the position formerly given to the chair of the proph-
tess, which was pushed back and turned so that it faced the wall.

The bell tolled the age of the dead elder. When its fiftieth stroke had died away Walda was brought in from the room where she had held her vigil before the *Untersuchung*. Mother Werther and Mother Kaufmann accompanied her. Her appearance caused a hush to fall upon the assembly, and some of the women covered their eyes, for it was seen that over her black gown was thrown the scarlet cloak, which

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betokened that her soul was clothed in the garment of sin. It was the same cloak that Marta Bachmann had worn during the time of her probation, and some of the softer-hearted of the colony "mothers" prayed that the fallen prophetess might follow in Marta Bachmann's footsteps until she reached the height of final repentance. The maidens of Zanah gazed on Walda with fascinated eyes. A few were bold enough to hope that she might be able to leave Zanah with the stranger whose worldly ways and physical beauty had charmed even those who had never spoken to him. At the head of the coffin a stool had been provided for Walda, and she sank upon it as if overcome with sudden weakness. For a moment she bowed her black-capped head in prayer, and then, looking unflinchingly into the faces of the colonists, waited with courage for the service to begin. She was very pale, and once she threw off the cloak, as if it smothered her. In a second she remembered its significance, and drew it about her shoulders.

From his seat at one end of the platform Gerson Brandt, with pitying eyes, looked upon Walda. His thin face had a pinched look, and from his eyes had faded the last smouldering fires of youth and hope. He sat with hands tensely clasped, except when, now and then, he pressed his thin fingers to his temples, from which the long hair, touched with gray, fell back to his shoulders.

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Karl Weisel read a long chapter from the Bible, and then a meek elder offered a prayer. Adolph Schneider next told the people of their dead brother's services to the colony. His thick, droning voice, monotonous in its cadences, did not hold Walda's attention, until presently she knew he was speaking of her and accusing her of unfaithfulness to Zanah. She listened with downcast eyes, her lithe body quivering with emotion, but she was too proud to show the pain she suffered. She choked back the tears and prayed for strength.

At last the funeral address was finished. The bier was carried out into the golden sunshine. Walda rose as if to follow it, but one of the elders detained her.

"Is it meet that one who wears the scarlet cloak should walk first behind the bier?" he asked.

Gerson Brandt answered by going to Walda's side, pulling her arm through his, and waving the people aside.

"He hath touched Walda Kellar's hand, and he is no kin to her!" cried Mother Kaufmann; but the school-master walked on as if he had not heard her. Tenderly he supported Walda's faltering footsteps. The procession formed behind them, the men and women walking on opposite sides of the village street, while Gerson Brandt and Walda kept in the middle of the grass-grown road, directly behind Wilhelm Kellar's coffin.

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“Gerson Brandt, thou art, indeed, a friend in mine hour of trouble,” Walda said, when they had reached the strip of woods and the bier had been put down in order that its bearers might rest.

“Until death thou wilt be ever safe in my heart,” the school-master answered, solemnly.

“Pray that I may have fortitude when I see the earth cover my father’s body,” she whispered, as the procession started again, and he pressed her arm to give her the assurance of his aid.

The school-master could have prayed that the walk to the graveyard might last forever. He knew that, in all the coming years which might belong to him on earth, he might never again touch her or be close to her. He trembled in the excess of his joy. He felt a great strength taking possession of him. They came to the lake, and he looked out upon it as it lay undisturbed by wave or ripple. Around the water’s hem the yellowing willows dipped into the placid pool. The sumach flamed among the oak-trees.

“When thou art gone from me out into the world I shall pray that thy soul shall be untroubled as is this lake to-day,” he murmured, softly.

“Ah! To-day I feel that I must remain here in Zanah to make atonement for my betrayal of the people’s trust,” she answered.

The tempter had spoken to him for the last time, and so he made haste to say:

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“Thy love leads the way of thy duty. Harbor no longer the thought of sacrificing thyself to no purpose.”

They reached the high gate of the graveyard. The bier was carried to the rise of ground where Marta Bachmann's burial-place had been selected many years before. A grave had been hollowed out near that of the prophetess of revered memory. The colonists gathered around it. Walda and the schoolmaster stood on one side and the elders on the other while the coffin was lowered. The simple one, who had not been seen at the meeting-house or in the procession, looked on from a place of vantage on the gravestone of Marta Bachmann.

Adolph Schneider announced that there would be a reading of the Scriptures. An awkward pause followed. It was discovered that the Bible had been forgotten. The elders held a conference, while the villagers waited stolidly.

“Hans Peter shall be sent back for the Holy Book,” announced the Herr Doktor, motioning to the simple one.

Hans Peter advanced with slow steps.

“There is a Bible here,” he said.

“Bring it quickly, then,” ordered the elder.

“It can be brought only after an understanding,” answered the simple one. “Gerson Brandt's lost Bible is hidden here. It belongeth now to the stranger in

W A L D A

Zanah. If it is the will of him who made it gay with colors that it be given to the stranger I will bring the Bible forth."

"Would the fool make terms with the elders of Zanah? Bring forth the Bible," commanded the Herr Doktor.

Hans Peter did not stir.

"Dost thou defy me?" asked Adolph Schneider.

The simple one made no sign that he heard.

"Speak," urged Gerson Brandt. "Stephen Everett shall have the Bible."

"When the promise is given that the elders will let me deliver it to the owner I will find it," said Hans Peter.

The promise was given, after a brief consultation of the elders. Hans Peter went back to Marta Bachmann's gravestone, and from beneath it pulled out a stout wooden box. This he opened with some difficulty, and from it produced the Bible, which was wrapped in oil-cloth. Gerson Brandt's heart gave a throb of joy when he saw it.

"Bring it here to me," he commanded, and the simple one, almost staggering under its weight, obeyed the wish of the school-master.

The people whispered among themselves, and the elders looked sullenly at the volume about which there had been so many conjectures.

"I will read from the Scriptures," announced Ger-

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son Brandt, motioning to the village fool to help him hold the heavy book. He turned to the fourteenth chapter of St. John, and, scanning a page more beautiful in its illumination than all the rest, he began to read the message of peace. After he had finished he closed the Sacred Book. One of the elders prayed, and while the people's heads were bowed Hans Peter stole away with the Bible.

Diedrich Werther began to shovel the earth into the grave. Walda, with a sudden feeling of horror, clutched Gerson Brandt's arm, upon which she buried her face. The school - master forgot the people of Zanah. He leaned over her, whispering words of comfort and strength. Half fearfully he touched her on the shoulder, and bade her remember that the Lord worketh in wondrous ways. He told her that the Father in heaven had planned for her deliverance from Zanah.

The people had begun to leave the graveyard before Walda was calm. Two of the colony "mothers" waited for her, and she bade the school-master return to Zanah, leaving her alone with the women.

Gerson Brandt hesitated, loath to walk away from the place that had become to him one of the outer courts of heaven.

"I would pray here for a time," Walda said, "and thou shalt be remembered in my petitions."

He looked at her, not trusting himself to speak.

W A L D A

He led her close to the new-made grave and left her there. Not until he had closed the graveyard gate behind him did he dare to look back. Gazing with straining eyes he beheld the prophetess as she lay face downward on the ground, with the scarlet cloak still wrapped around her. From a place a little distant the colony women watched her.

XXI

IMMEDIATELY after the funeral the colonists gathered in the village square for the trial of Stephen Everett. The stocks still stood where they had been erected for the punishment of Hans Peter, and upon the high platform surrounding the culprit's seat the elders met for the purpose of passing judgment. The prisoner was not brought from the inn until after all the villagers were assembled. He walked from the porch of the *gasthaus* with a step that showed he was glad to have a chance to make a plea for liberty. An expression of scorn and anger was plainly visible on his handsome face. He had been inclined to accept whatever happened in Zanah as rather an amusing experience, but the events since the morning of the *Untersuchung* had awakened him to a full sense of what he had at stake. He meant to have Walda at any hazard, but his patience had been exhausted in his tiresome ordeal of imprisonment. His old, careless manner asserted itself when he had ascended the steps to the stocks and had taken a seat upon the great beam in which the simple one's feet had been fastened.

W A L D A

At the first sight of him some of the villagers gave vent to indignant murmurs, which were quickly quieted.

“This man is accused of being one whom Satan hath sent to Zanah,” announced Karl Weisel. “He hath stolen the affections of her who would have been our prophetess; he hath tempted the Lord’s chosen one with an earthly love. He hath broken his pledge to an elder of the colony. Through his wicked plottings the plans of Zanah are overthrown. He hath lost to the people who serve God the instrument that would have led the people in the paths of pleasantness.”

“He shall be punished!” shouted some of the people.

“Yea; he shall be punished,” agreed the head of the thirteen elders, puffing out his chest and knitting his brows. “He shall be punished; but is there a penalty severe enough for offences such as his?”

“He shall be made to pay a fine,” said Adolph Schneider. “Many thousand dollars would not wipe out the harm he hath done to the crops since we are deprived of the guidance of a prophetess.”

“Cast him out of Zanah!” clamored many voices.

At this point Gerson Brandt advanced from his place at the end of the row of elders.

“Who is fitted to determine the stranger’s punishment?” he asked.

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No one answered. With arms folded upon his breast Gerson Brandt waited for a response.

“In this case it seemeth just that only he who hath not succumbed to the same temptation that Stephen Everett hath found here in Zanah is fit to choose a penalty for this offence. Let the man of Zanah who hath lived twenty-one years without loving a woman say what the stranger’s punishment shall be.”

The men of Zanah stared at one another. The women tiptoed to see if they might read long-buried secrets in the faces of their husbands and brothers.

“There must be many here who have escaped the lure that lurketh in the eyes of women,” the school-master said, presently. “It may be that my meaning hath not been made plain. Let him who hath attained the age of manhood without knowing what Zanah calleth an earthly love judge Stephen Everett.”

The men of Zanah looked at one another with shamefaced glances.

“Is not he who hath loved and repented a better judge?” asked Karl Weisel.

“Nay; why should one that hath been weak in the presence of woman judge another?” responded the school-master. “There are many men of Zanah who have never married. Why do not they answer? Why do not they volunteer to measure the sin of loving a woman?”

A minute passed.

W A L D A

“Is there none in Zanah qualified to judge the stranger?” inquired Gerson Brandt.

From the edge of the crowd came the simple one.

“I, the fool of Zanah, have passed the age of one-and-twenty without loving,” he declared, in a tone that betrayed not the least trace of any feeling.

His face was, as usual, absolutely without expression.

“Set a fool to judge a fool,” sneered Mother Schneider. But the men had nothing to say.

“What is thy judgment, Hans Peter?” asked the school-master.

“The simple one would have the stranger freed,” said Hans Peter. Standing with both hands in his pockets, he waited to be dismissed. He had uncovered his head, and as he stood there before the people something of the tragedy of the simple one’s life was revealed to Zanah. He was a creature apart; one who had reached the years of manhood without attaining to the full stature and the full knowledge of maturity. Some strange recesses of his brain were closed to memory, and yet nature had made compensation by giving him queer flashes of wit and odd shreds of intelligence that often confounded Zanah. In the crowd were some, more superstitious than the rest, who looked at the village fool with fear written on their faces.

“Let us free the stranger and send him out of

W A L D A

Zanah. He hath brought a curse with him. The sooner he goeth from among us the better," spoke Mother Werther, who, since the *Untersuchung*, had gone about with care marked upon her good-natured face.

"He whom you call the simple one is the only man in Zanah who hath not transgressed the colony law forbidding all who would attain to serve the Lord in singleness of purpose to put away earthly love," said the school-master. "Would not your own weaknesses teach you lenity?"

From his place on the stocks Everett scanned the dull faces below him. The idea of associating sentiment or romance with the heavy-featured men of Zanah brought a contemptuous smile to his lips.

"How is it that thou dost not judge the stranger?" asked Mother Kaufmann. "Surely thou hast not loved a daughter of Eve?" She laughed, mockingly, showing her hideous tusks.

"Let Gerson Brandt, the elder and school-master, be the judge of the stranger," cried a sturdy colonist, who had been quietly looking on from the porch of the inn.

A chorus of voices bade the school-master deal with the prisoner.

Gerson Brandt motioned to Hans Peter to retire from the place in front of the stocks.

"Thou hast this day taught Zanah a lesson," he

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declared, in a kindly voice. "Thy verdict is right. It should be accepted by the people."

"Faugh! Wouldst thou let a fool decide a matter of great importance to Zanah?" angrily inquired Adolph Schneider, who had with difficulty smothered his rage when he saw the chief law of the colony made ridiculous by Gerson Brandt's declaration that the man who had never loved should judge Stephen Everett.

"We demand that the school-master shall fix the penalty," shouted Mother Schneider. "He knoweth best to what extent the madness of an earthly love hath afflicted her who would have been a prophetess; he hath lost his best friend through the iniquitous influence of the stranger."

The people became unruly, for their patience had been tried by the suspense. They clamored for speedy justice to him who had made trouble for them.

"Gerson Brandt, thou shalt pass the verdict," said Karl Weisel. "Since thou didst order Stephen Everett made a prisoner, thou shouldst make sure that he suffers for his misdeeds."

The school-master pushed back the hair from his forehead. He waited for a moment, lifting his hands to invite the attention of the people.

"None is more unworthy to judge this man for loving a woman than I, Gerson Brandt," he said, with a quaver in his voice. "It is my desire that some of

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you fix his punishment, for even though you may set him free, I shall do penance for him. I have sinned against Zannah more than he."

"What meanest thou, Brother Brandt?" asked Adolph Schneider, confronting him. "Beware how thou dost forfeit the respect of the people."

"I have treasured in my heart an earthly love," the school-master confessed, turning from Adolph Schneider and speaking to the colonists.

His words caused even the most stoical of the elders to turn pale. It meant much to the colony to lose the school-master from among those who managed the affairs of the community.

The people heard and yet appeared not to believe their ears. The square became so quiet that when Piepmatz, hanging in his cage from a rafter of the inn-porch, sang the one bar of the love-song, the bird-voice reached every one in the throng, and presently broke the spell of amazement that held the villagers.

"Thy case shall be taken up presently," said Karl Weisel, who was the first to recover from astonishment. "Thy sin is minor to his, in that thou didst not love the prophetess."

"Mine offence is greater than his," answered Gerson Brandt. He had gained complete control of himself, and he spoke in a voice clear and unfaltering. "I have loved Walda Kellar even from the days of her childhood with a love that is stronger than all else in

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life. I had thought that mine affection was merely that of a teacher, a counsellor, a friend, until, through the stranger, it became known to me that I loved her who might have been the prophetess as a man loveth the woman whom the Lord hath sent into the world for him to cherish until death. There is no word of extenuation for me. I love Walda Kellar with the longing to claim her from Zanah and all the world."

He paused, as if the flood-gates of his heart had broken, and the tide of his emotion drowned his words. Stephen Everett, who had listened with a shamed sense of his own good-fortune, gazed upon the school-master's face until he was compelled to turn his eyes away, for he saw despair and pain so deeply graven there that the pity of it brought tears.

"In the heat of what I thought a righteous anger I did order the stranger to be bound," Gerson Brandt said, after a brief pause. "But there, in the place of the *Untersuchung*, it was made clear to me that jealousy actuated me unworthily to use my power as an elder. For that offence, I crave Stephen Everett's pardon and Zanah's forgiveness."

The people were stirred with indignation and sorrow. They began to speak to one another, but Gerson Brandt compelled them to hear him to the end.

"I would ask you to release the prisoner and to give Walda Kellar into his keeping. The love I bear for this daughter of Zanah hath in it that which giveth

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me the strength to surrender my heart's desire, and so I crave for her the happiness that cometh through the love of another man. I plead with you to consent to the marriage of Stephen Everett and Walda Kellar. Send them forth into the world together this night. Delay not in meting out to them the judgment that will give them joy. The punishment is mine."

Gerson Brandt leaned against one of the supports of the stocks. He was dimly conscious that the elders whispered to one another and that the people gathered in groups to talk earnestly.

The afternoon was far advanced. A golden haze had settled upon the valley. Above his head the dry leaves of the trees were rustled by a gentle wind that soothed his spirit. He was conscious of a sudden faintness. His little world, the colony of Zanah, slipped away from him for a moment, but he remembered that he had not won his battle for Walda's freedom, and he steadied himself, calling all his senses to serve him until the end of the day's ordeal.

"Art thou aware that when an elder lets human love into his heart he must be put under the ban of silence?" asked Adolph Schneider. "It is the law of Zanah. Thou art the first elder to prove himself too weak for the high office."

Gerson Brandt made no response. Far down the road he caught sight of the scarlet cloak worn by the fallen prophetess.

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The elders continued their conference, presently taking Stephen Everett into their circle. The school-master kept his eyes on the approaching figure of Walda, who came towards the square with lagging steps. Her attendants followed her closely, and when the three at last came into the crowd he saw that some of the villagers gathered about them.

“Will Walda Kellar stand before the stocks,” commanded Karl Weisel, seeing that the fallen prophetess had come into the square.

Walda obeyed the summons.

“Art thou willing to forsake Zanah in order that thou mayst go forth into the world with a stranger?” he asked.

Everett looked at her with pleading in his eyes, but she hesitated before replying. He leaned forward in an agony of suspense.

“Tell the elders that thou art under a law higher than any of Zanah,” prompted Gerson Brandt. “Thou art led by the law of love, which ruleth the world outside the colony. This day hath shown that it ruleth here, even in Zanah.”

“If in leaving Zanah I am not ignoring any allegiance I owe to the memory of my father, I would go with Stephen Everett. This love that I bear to him hath given me a desire to be always near him,” Walda answered.

“Thou shalt be cut off from the roll of those who

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serve the Lord in Zanah," declared the head of the thirteen elders. "Thou shalt leave Zanah to-night, after the village hath closed its doors on thee, so that the eyes of the men and women may not be offended by seeing the beginning of thy journey into the world."

"I would give vent to my gratitude," Walda said, tremulously. "Even now I prayed at my father's grave that if it be the will of God I might be permitted to be the wife of Stephen Everett, and lo! when I least hoped for it my prayer hath been answered."

"Silence! Dare not to rejoice in thy frowardness of heart here before the people of Zanah," Karl Weisel admonished. "Remember that there may be a curse in answered prayer."

Walda shrank under the lash of his cruel words. She glanced around her as if seeking sympathy from some of the women, but all who were nearest her drew their skirts away as if they would not be defiled by the touch of her scarlet cloak. Her pride came to the rescue, and, drawing the crimson mantle around her, she stood proudly waiting for a sign that she might pass on.

"From this moment Walda Kellar, once hailed as the prophetess of Zanah, is no longer to be counted with the colonists who live in the hope of earning an entrance to heaven by walking in the paths of righteousness," announced Adolph Schneider, coming forward. "She hath listened to the voice of Satan, and

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she hath been unfaithful to a most sacred trust. She hath lost the gift of tongues; she hath turned a deaf ear to the voice of prophecy. Henceforth, forever, her name shall not be spoken in Zanah. Let her go in peace, and may she repent of her sin."

Some of the colonists shuddered as the Herr Doktor proclaimed the excommunication of the fallen prophetess. Walda read reassurance and encouragement in Gerson Brandt's face. She stood gazing up at him, and he held her spirit in calm submission.

"Stephen Everett is hereby liberated. He hath consented to pay to Zanah a goodly fine, which is still out of proportion to his great offence," Adolph Schneider next announced. "Through the agency of Gerson Brandt, Walda Kellar hath waived all claim on her share of the property of Zanah. She shall go forth from the colony penniless, and dependent upon the stranger."

"That is good," agreed some of the men.

"To-night Stephen Everett and Walda Kellar shall leave Zanah, even as Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden," continued the Herr Doktor, pronouncing the sentence so that it might intimidate all possible lovers in the colony. "They shall go forth, never to return."

When Adolph Schneider dwelt on the words "never to return," Gerson Brandt caught his breath as if he felt a sudden pain.

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“It is my duty to pronounce upon Gerson Brandt the ban of silence,” Karl Weisel said, taking the Herr Doktor’s place at the front of the platform. “As head of the thirteen elders I hereby declare to the people of Zanah that his office of counsellor and guide to the colony is vacant. Like the fallen prophetess, he hath forfeited all right to a high place in Zanah by opening his heart to an earthly love.”

Walda could not repress an exclamation of surprise. She glanced questioningly among the women, as if she would discover the one upon whom the school-master had bestowed his heart, but she received such looks of anger and indignation that she turned to Gerson Brandt, as if she would read his secret. He gave her a smile, and she listened sadly to the terrible sentence pronounced upon him.

“For the space of a year no man or woman of Zanah shall speak to Gerson Brandt,” the elder continued, in a loud voice. “Although he hath been the school-master, the children shall not be permitted to utter one word to him. He shall no longer be a teacher in the colony. Instead, he shall dwell alone, avoided by all. Because Zanah harboreth no drones, he shall serve the colony as night-watchman. During all the hours of darkness he shall pace up and down the street of Zanah. He shall call out the hours from sunset until sunrise, and he shall be forgotten by all who serve the Lord.”

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Gerson Brandt heard the words unmoved, as if the sentence were of little concern to him. In a moment, after Karl Weisel ceased speaking, his thoughts were far away. He exulted over the solitude before him. He knew that he could live in memories; precious dreams would be his. Each night, while he walked alone, he told himself that he could send to Walda his best hopes. He could speak her name in his prayers. After all, he had triumphed over himself and over the laws of Zanah. Unconsciously he drew his thin body to its full height. The light of victory illumined his face. He looked at Walda and saw that she was weeping for him. Then he was troubled.

"This sentence is monstrous," Everett asserted, with wrath in his voice. "Gerson Brandt shall come out into the world with me. Walda Kellar and I owe him whatever of happiness may be ours in the future, and we shall see that he has some of the joys of life."

"Nay, nay," spoke Gerson Brandt. "I would be out of place in the great world. I thank thee, but I am better here. I shall be quite contented to remain in Zanah. Outward conditions count for naught."

When Everett still would have insisted, he showed such evident embarrassment and uneasiness that it was kindlier to cease to importune him.

"Stephen Everett, thou shalt take Walda Kellar to the *gasthaus*, there to wait until darkness falls," snarl-

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ed Adolph Schneider, who had begun to feel that he had not made the stranger's fine large enough.

Everett hastened to Walda's side. When he gently took her by the arm, Gerson Brandt turned his head away. The crowd began to disperse. The schoolmaster walked down the steps from the stocks. All the colonists pretended not to see him. As he crossed the square a little girl ran to him, clasping her arms about his knees. He stooped to disengage himself, and a woman snatched the child away from him. A few steps farther on several of the boys who had been his pupils ran away from him, one hiding behind a tree to peep at him, as if he were an evil thing. He had not reached the bridge before he felt some one touch him on the arm. It was Hans Peter.

"I shall dwell with thee," said the simple one. "The laws of Zanah rule not the village fool."

XXII

EVERETT led Walda into the living-room of the inn and shut the door. Taking the red cloak from her shoulders, he tenderly placed her in one of the big rocking-chairs.

“From this moment you are always to be in my care,” he said. “Ah, Walda, I cannot realize that at last you are to be mine—all mine.”

She looked up at him with tears in her eyes.

“Stephen, it is strange, but now that I am about to go out into the great world with thee I am full of misgivings,” she replied.

He knelt beside her, and, taking her hand, said:

“You have had a tragic day. You are exhausted. Surely, you are not afraid to trust yourself to me?”

“Nay, nay. When thou art close to me I feel safe from all trouble; yet my heart trembles. Thy love hath a power that affrights me.”

He had risen and kissed her, drawing her head upon his breast and holding it there. She hid her face with a sudden shame while she asked:

“Are we to be married to-morrow, Stephen?”

“It was the agreement that we should leave Zanah

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at midnight. We shall drive to a town twenty-five miles away, and there, at sunrise, you and I will attend our own wedding."

"Thou art sure that my father would have had it so?"

"Yes, Walda; I would have gained his consent. You are to forget all the troubles that my love has brought to you. I shall try to atone for every heart-ache of these last few days."

"Our love was sent from heaven. Truly thou believest that?"

"Fate has given you to me. You must not ask any more questions. We are to begin to be happy now." He stroked her cheek and soothed her as if she were a child, and his great strength gave her confidence. "The first thing that I shall do will be to send for your white gown, so that you can take off this mourning," he said, lightly, when he saw that she was more composed. "I bought from the elders the white gown and the red cloak, for both have a significance for us—both have marked great days in our lives."

She smiled faintly, and he began to unpin the black cap that she wore. It was securely fastened to her fair hair. He had to ask her assistance in getting rid of it. When it was loosened he threw it on the floor, and then walked off to look at her. She was very pale, after the sorrow and excitement of the day. Her black gown accentuated the fairness of her skin, and

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her clear-cut features were brought out in relief against the dark back of the chair.

“You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen,” he said, with the fervor of sincerity. “How often you will hear your praises sung when you belong to the world.”

“Art thou teaching me vanity so soon, Stephen?” she exclaimed, with a sigh, for she was in no mood for gayety.

“I am half afraid to take you into the world,” he answered, with some seriousness. “You see, I have my misgivings. But you did not tell me what disturbed you. Come over here to Mother Werther’s sofa, where you can whisper to me all the vague fears of your heart.”

“Thou knowest I shall need thy charity oftentimes,” Walda said, after Stephen had made her rest her head upon his shoulder. “I shall not understand many of thy ways—even thy thoughts will be too deep for me to understand.”

Everett laughed.

“You forget that you have wisdom and goodness that I can never fathom.”

“Here in Zanah those who love soon weary of each other. Surely, it is not so in the world, where earthly love is not counted a sin. Is it?” she questioned.

“Our love is for all our life,” he said, softly. “I shall be faithful to it always.”

W A L D A

“And thou wilt be patient with me? Thou wilt teach me all that I should learn, if I would be thy worthy companion?”

“I would not have you changed in any way, Walda.”

“Ah! but love bringeth wisdom, and I have thought much about our marriage. I shall be unlike all the people thou knowest. When Gerson Brandt said he would be out of place in the great world, his words smote me.”

“You shall learn all that you need to know about the ways of the world,” Everett promised, easily. “Is there any other subject that is causing you apprehension?”

“Nay; none that I may voice to thee. When a woman is about to give herself to the man she loveth there is a tumult in her heart. It is of mingled faith and fear. Love carrieth both with it, for, while it exalts the soul, it bringeth the wisdom that hath a far sight of the meanings and mysteries of life.”

Walda put her hands upon his shoulders, and, looking into his eyes, saw in them something that gave her courage.

“Let us be grateful in this hour of our deliverance,” she said, rising. “Have the white gown—my wedding-gown—brought to me.”

Everett went up to the room he had occupied during his last sojourn in Zanah, leaving Walda alone while he made his preparations for the journey.

W A L D A

Walda, leaning on the window-sill, looked out upon the quiet village that had been so long her home. One by one the lights in the stone houses on the winding street went out. The footsteps of chance passers-by became less frequent. The noises in the inn were hushed. At last every door was closed against her.

When the tall clock struck eleven, Everett entered the room. The solitary candle had burned out, and Walda was sitting in the darkness.

“Can you see to find your cloak?” he asked. “It is time for us to start.”

Walda caught up the wrap from its place on the sofa, and followed Everett out on the porch of the *gasthaus*. There was not a sign of life anywhere.

“The carriage will be waiting for us on the other side of the square beneath the old oak-tree,” said Everett. “Don’t you want to say good-bye to Piepmatz, or would you like to take him with you?”

“Nay, Stephen; Piepmatz is like the others that dwell in Zanah. He would not feel at home in the great world,” Walda answered, going to the cage where the chaffinch, with his head beneath his wing, slumbered in happy unconsciousness of the influence of love-songs.

On the bridge appeared a lantern. It came towards the inn, and when it was a few feet away the form of the bearer, Gerson Brandt, was discerned. By his side walked Hans Peter.

W A L D A

“I was afraid I should not have the chance to say good-bye to thee, Gerson Brandt,” Walda exclaimed, going down the steps to meet him. Everett drew the simple one away, with the excuse that they would go to see whether the carriage had come.

“Nay, at any cost, I meant to send thee out into the world with my blessing,” Gerson Brandt answered. He set down his lantern and put his hands behind him lest he should be tempted to touch her.

“It seemeth selfish of me to be so happy when thou art sad, Gerson Brandt.” Walda put her hand upon his arm, and they looked into each other’s faces with something of the old frankness in their glance.

“In this hour of parting it is good to know that thou leavest Zanah with a light heart.” Gerson Brandt spoke bravely, but his lips quivered. “Farewell, Walda. If I never behold thy face again, remember thine image is ever treasured in the memory of a man of Zanah. To him thou wilt never grow old. Here in my thoughts thou shalt dwell always in thy youth and beauty.”

He trusted himself to let one hand reach out above her head.

“Peace go with thee. The Lord bless and keep thee,” he said, softly, lifting his face to heaven, because he could no longer depend upon his human strength.

They stood silent for a moment.

W A L D A

Everett and Hans Peter returned to the inn to say that the carriage was waiting.

"Thou shalt have Piepmatz, if thou art willing to be burdened with the care of the chaffinch," said Walda, speaking to the simple one.

"Nay, give him to both of us," pleaded Gerson Brandt so earnestly that she bestowed the bird upon him and Hans Peter, with the injunction that they must not disagree over the partnership.

Everett put the scarlet cloak upon Walda's shoulders and led her away. She went without waiting to say a last word to the man of Zanah, who had lifted his lantern and held it so that it might give her light. Gerson Brandt would have gone on ahead illuminating the way, but a sudden weakness overcame him when he saw that Walda had forgotten his presence in the excitement of her departure. He sank upon the well-curb, at the very place where Everett had first seen him and Walda speak to each other. He listened for the wheels of the carriage. He heard the horses start and then stop suddenly. Hans Peter had run out of the inn carrying on his shoulders the illuminated Bible which had become, by right of purchase, the property of the stranger.

Gerson Brandt quelled in his heart the rebellion he felt because to him was denied even the privilege of giving to Walda the Sacred Book into which he had wrought so many of his best thoughts and most pre-

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cious hopes. He buried his head in his hands, waiting patiently until he should know that the woman he loved had gone forever beyond his reach.

The horses' hoofs struck the soft road with a muffled sound. The wheels started a second time. Gerson Brandt closed his ears for a moment, and then, rising, listened for the last sound of the carriage. He was still standing in the deserted square when Hans Peter spoke to him.

"It is almost the beginning of a new hour," the fool said.

Gerson Brandt examined his big, silver watch by the light of the lantern.

"Midnight!" he called, in a voice out of which all hope had gone. "Midnight!—"

"And all is well!" cried the simple one, taking up the words that Gerson Brandt had not power to speak.

THE END

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