Why can't you be as you used to be? You used to like me well enough."

"And I like you now," answered Cynthia. They were very near the hotel by this time.

"You talk as if you were ten years older than I," he said, smiling plaintively.

She stopped and turned to him, smiling. They had reached the steps.

"I believe I am, Bob," she replied. "I haven't seen much of the world, but I've seen something of its troubles. Don't be foolish. If you're coming to Brampton just to see me, don't come. Good-by." And she gave him her hand frankly.

"But I will come to Brampton," he cried, taking her hand and squeezing it. "I'd like to know why I shouldn't come."

As Cynthia drew her hand away a gentleman came out of the hotel, paused for a brief moment by the door and stared at them, and then passed on without a word or a nod of recognition. It was Mr. Worthington. Bob looked after his father, and then glanced at Cynthia. There was a trifle more color in her cheeks, and her head was raised a little, and her eyes were fixed upon him gravely.

"You should know why not," she said, and before he could answer her she was gone into the hotel. He did not attempt to follow her, but stood where she had left him in the sunlight.

He was aroused by the voice of the genial colored doorkeeper.

"Wal, suh, you found the lady, Mistah Wo'thington. Thought you would, suh. T'other young gentleman come in while ago — looked as if he was feelin' powerful bad, Mistah Wo'thington."

CHAPTER VII

AN AMAZING ENCOUNTER

When they reached Boston, Cynthia felt almost as if she were home again, and Ephraim declared that he had had the same feeling when he returned from the war. Though it be the prosperous capital of New England, it is a city of homes, and the dwellers of it have held stanchly to the belief of their forefathers that the home is the very foundation-rock of the nation. Held stanchly to other beliefs, too: that wealth carries with it some little measure of responsibility. The stranger within the gates of that city feels that if he falls, a heedless world will not go charging over his body: that a helping hand will be stretched out, — a helping and a wise hand that will inquire into the circumstances of his fall — but still a human hand.

They were sitting in the parlor of the Tremont House that morning with the sun streaming in the windows, waiting for Ephraim.

"Uncle Jethro," Cynthia asked, abruptly, "did you ever know my mother?"

Jethro started, and looked at her quickly.

"W-why, Cynthy?" he asked.

"Because she grew up in Coniston," answered Cynthia. "I never thought of it before, but of course you must have known her."

"Yes, I knew her," he said.

"Did you know her well?" she persisted.

Jethro got up and went over to the window, where he stood with his back toward her.

"Yes, Cynthy," he answered at length.

"Why haven't you ever told me about her?" asked Cynthia. How was she to know that her innocent questions tortured him cruelly; that the spirit of the Cynthia who had come to him in the tannery house had haunted him all his life, and that she herself, a new Cynthia, was still that spirit? The bygone Cynthia had been much in his thoughts since they came to Boston.

"What was she like?"

"She — she was like you, Cynthy," he said, but he did not turn round. "She was a clever woman, and a good woman, and — a lady, Cynthy."

The girl said nothing for a while, but she tingled with pleasure because Jethro had compared her to her mother. She determined to try to be like that, if he thought her so.

"Uncle Jethro," she said presently, "I'd like to go to see the house where she lived."

"Er — Ephraim knows it," said Jethro.

So when Ephraim came the three went over the hill, past the State House which Bulfinch set as a crown on the crest of it looking over the sweep of the Common, and on into the maze of quaint, old-world streets on the slope beyond: streets with white porticos, and violet panes in the windows. They came to an old square hidden away on a terrace of the hill, and after that the streets grew narrower and dingier. Ephraim, whose memory never betrayed him, hobbled up to a shabby house in the middle of one of these blocks and rang the bell.

"Here's where I found Will when I come back from the war," he said, and explained the matter in full to the slatternly landlady who came to the door. She was a good-natured woman, who thought her boarder would not mind, and led the way up the steep stairs to the chamber over the roofs where Wetherell and Cynthia had lived and hoped and worked together; where he had written those pages by which, with the aid of her loving criticism, he had thought to become famous. The room was as bare now as it had been then, and Ephraim, poking his stick through a hole in the carpet, ventured the assertion that even that had not been changed. Jethro, staring out over the chimney tops, passed his hand across his eyes. Cynthia Ware had come to this!

"I found him right here in that bed," Ephraim was saying, and he poked the bottom boards, too. "The same bed. Had a shock when I saw him. Callate he wouldn't have lived two months if the war hadn't bust up and I hadn't come along."

"Oh, Cousin Eph!" exclaimed Cynthia.

The old soldier turned and saw that there were tears in her eyes. But, stranger than that, Cynthia saw that there were tears in his own. He took her gently by the arm and led her down the stairs again, she supporting him, and Jethro following.

That same morning, Jethro, whose memory was quite as good as Ephraim's, found a little shop tucked away in Cornhill which had been miraculously spared in the advance of prosperity. Mr. Judson's name, however, was no longer in quaint lettering over the door. Standing before it, Jethro told the story in his droll way, of a city clerk and a country bumpkin, and Cynthia and Ephraim both laughed so heartily that the people who were passing turned round to look at them and laughed too. For the three were an unusual group, even in Boston. It was not until they were seated at dinner in the hotel, Ephraim with his napkin tucked under his chin, that Jethro gave them the key to the characters in this story.

"And who was the locket for, Uncle Jethro?" demanded Cynthia.

Jethro, however, shook his head, and would not be induced to tell.

They were still so seated when Cynthia perceived coming toward them through the crowded dining room a merry, middle-aged gentleman with a bald head. He seemed to know everybody in the room, for he was kept busy nodding right and left at the tables until he came to theirs. He was Mr. Merrill, who had come to see her father in Coniston, and who had spoken so kindly to her on that occasion.

"Well, well, *well*," he said; "Jethro, you'll be the death of me yet. 'Don't write — send,' eh? Well, as long as you sent word you were here, I don't complain. So you licked 'em again, eh — down in Washington? Never had a doubt but what you would. Is this the new postmaster? How are you, Mr. Prescott — *and* Cynthia — a young lady! Bless my soul," said Mr. Merrill, looking her over as he shook her hand. "What have you done to her, Jethro? What kind of beauty powder do they use in Coniston?"

Mr. Merrill took the seat next to her and continued to talk, scattering his pleasantries equally among the three, patting her arm when her own turn came. She liked Mr. Merrill very much; he seemed to her (as, indeed, he was) honest and kind-hearted. Cynthia was not lacking in a proper appreciation of herself — that may have been discovered. But she was puzzled to know why this gentleman should make it a point to pay such particular attention to a young country girl. Other railroad presidents whom she could name had not done so. She was thinking of these things, rather than listening to Mr. Merrill's conversation, when the sound of Mr. Worthington's name startled her.

"Well, Jethro," Mr. Merrill was saying, "you certainly nipped this little game of Worthington's in the bud. Thought he'd take you in the rear by going to Washington, did he? Ha, ha! I'd like to know how you did it. I'll get you to tell me to-night — see if I don't. You're all coming in to supper to-night, you know, at seven o'clock."

Ephraim laid down his knife and fork for the first time. Were the wonders of this journey never to cease? And Jethro, once in his life, looked nervous.

"Er — er — Cynthy'll go, Steve — Cynthy'll go."

"Yes, Cynthy'll go," laughed Mr. Merrill, "and you'll go, and Ephraim'll go." Although he by no means liked everybody, as would appear at first glance, Mr. Merrill had a way of calling people by their first names when he did fancy them.

"Er — Steve," said Jethro, "what would your wife say if I was to drink coffee out of my saucer?"

"Let's see," said Mr. Merrill, grave for once. "What's the punishment for that in my house? I know what she'd do if you didn't drink it. What do you think she'd do, Cynthy?"

"Ask him what was the matter with it," said Cynthia, promptly.

"Well, Cynthy," said he, "I know why these old fellows take you round with 'em. To take care of 'em, eh? They're not fit to travel alone."

And so it was settled, after much further argument, that they were all to sup at Mr. Merrill's house, Cynthia stoutly maintaining that she would not desert them. And then Mr. Merrill, having several times repeated the street and number, went back to his office. There was much mysterious whispering between Ephraim and Jethro in the hotel parlor after dinner, while Cynthia was turning over the leaves of a magazine, and then Ephraim proposed going out to see the sights.

"Where's Uncle Jethro going?" she asked.

"He'll meet us," said Ephraim, promptly, but his voice was not quite steady.

"Oh, Uncle Jethro!" cried Cynthia, "you're trying to get out of it. You remember you promised to meet us in Washington."

"Guess he'll keep this app'intment," said Ephraim, who seemed to be full of a strange mirth that bubbled over, for he actually winked at Jethro.

Cynthia's mind flew to Bunker Hill and the old North Church, but they went first to Faneuil Hall. Presently they found themselves among the crowd in Washington Street, where Ephraim confessed the trepidation which he felt over the coming supper party: a trepidation greater, so he declared many times, than he had ever experienced before any of his battles in the war. He stopped once or twice in the eddy of the crowd to glance up at the numbers, and finally came to a halt before the windows of a large dry-goods store.

"I guess I ought to buy a new shirt for this occasion, Cynthy," he said, staring hard at the articles of apparel displayed there. "Let's go in."

Cynthia laughed outright, since Ephraim could not by any chance have worn any of the articles in question.

"Why, Cousin Ephraim," she exclaimed, "you can't buy gentlemen's things here."

"Oh, I guess you can," said Ephraim, and hobbled confidently in at the doorway. There we will leave him for a while conversing in an undertone with a floor-walker, and follow Jethro. He, curiously enough, had some fifteen minutes before gone in at the same doorway, questioned the same floor-walker, and he found himself in due time walking amongst a bewildering lot of models on the third floor, followed by a giggling saleswoman.

"What kind of a dress do you want, sir?" asked the saleslady, — for we are impelled to call her so.

"S-silk cloth," said Jethro.

"What shades of silk would you like, sir?"

"Shades? shades? What do you mean by shades?"

"Why, colors," said the saleslady, giggling openly.

"Green," said Jethro, with considerable emphasis.

The saleslady clapped her hand over her mouth and led the way to another model.

"You don't call that green — do you? That's not green enough."

They inspected another dress, and then another and another, — not all of them were green, — Jethro expressing very decided if not expert views on each of them. At last he paused before two models at the far end of the room, passing his hand repeatedly over each as he had done so often with the cattle of Coniston.

"These two pieces same kind of goods?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Er — this one is a little shinier than that one?"

"Perhaps the finish is a little higher," ventured the saleslady.

"Sh-shinier," said Jethro.

"Yes, shinier, if you please to call it so."

"W-what would you call it?"

By this time the saleslady had become quite hysterical, and altogether incapable of performing her duties. Jethro looked at her for a moment in disgust, and in his predicament cast around for another to wait on him. There was no lack of these, at a safe distance, but they all seemed to be affected by the same mania. Jethro's eye alighted upon the back of another customer. She was, apparently, a respectable-looking lady of uncertain age, and her own attention was so firmly fixed in the contemplation of a model that she had not remarked the merriment about her, nor its cause. She did not see Jethro, either, as he strode across to her. Indeed, her first intimation of his presence was a dig in her arm. The lady turned, gave a gasp of amazement at the figure confronting her, and proceeded to annihilate it with an eye that few women possess.

"H-how do, Ma'am," he said. Had he known anything about the appearance of women in general, he might have realized that he had struck a tartar. This lady was at least sixty-five, and probably unmarried. Her face, though not at all unpleasant, was a study in character-development: she wore ringlets, a peculiar bonnet of a bygone age, and her clothes had certain eccentricities which, for lack of knowledge, must be omitted. In short, the lady was no fool, and not being one she glanced at the giggling group of saleswomen and — wonderful to relate — they stopped giggling. Then she looked again at Jethro — and gave him a smile. One of superiority, no doubt, but still a smile.

"How do you do, sir?"

"T-trying to buy a silk cloth gown for a woman. There's two over here I fancied a little. Er — thought perhaps you'd help me."

"Where are the dresses?" she demanded abruptly.

Jethro led the way in silence until they came to the models. She planted herself in front of them and looked them over swiftly but critically.

"What is the age of the lady?"

"W-what difference does that make?" said Jethro, whose instinct was against committing himself to strangers.

"Difference!" she exclaimed sharply, "it makes a considerable difference. Perhaps not to you, but to the lady. What coloring is she?"

"C-coloring? She's white."

His companion turned her back on him.

"What size is she?"

"A-about that size," said Jethro, pointing to a model.

"About! about!" she ejaculated, and then she faced him. "Now look here, my friend," she said vigorously, "there's something very mysterious about all this. You look like a good man, but you may be a very wicked one for all I know. I've lived long enough to discover that appearances, especially where your sex is concerned, are deceitful. Unless you are willing to tell me who this lady is for whom you are buying silk dresses, and what your relationship is to her, I shall leave you. And mind, no evasions. I can detect the truth pretty well when I hear it."

Unexpected as it was, Jethro gave back a step or two before this onslaught of feminine virtue, and the movement did not tend to raise him in the lady's esteem. He felt that he would rather face General Grant a thousand times than this person. She was, indeed, preparing to sweep away when there came a familiar tap-tap behind them on the bare floor, and he turned to behold Ephraim hobbling toward them with the aid of his green umbrella, Cynthia by his side.

"Why, it's Uncle Jethro," cried Cynthia, looking at him and the lady in astonishment, and then with equal astonishment at the models. "What in the world are you doing here?" Then a light seemed to dawn on her. "You frauds! So this is what you were whispering about! This is the way Cousin Ephraim buys his shirts!"

"C-Cynthy," said Jethro, apologetically, "d-don't you think you ought to have a nice city dress for that supper party?"

"So you're ashamed of my country clothes, are you?" she asked gayly.

"W-want you to have the best, Cynthy," he replied. "M-meant to have it all chose and bought when you come, but I got into a kind of argument with this lady."

"Argument!" exclaimed the lady. But she did not seem displeased. She had been staring very fixedly at Cynthia. "My dear," she continued kindly, "you look like some one I used to know a long, long time ago, and I'll be glad to help you. Your uncle may be sensible enough in other matters, but I tell him frankly he is out of place here. Let him go away and sit down somewhere with the other gentleman, and we'll get the dress between us, if he'll tell us how much to pay."

"P-pay anything, so's you get it," said Jethro.

"Uncle Jethro, do you really want it so much?"

It must not be thought that Cynthia did not wish for a dress, too. But the sense of dependence on Jethro and the fear of straining his purse never quite wore off. So Jethro and Ephraim took to a bench at some distance, and at last a dress was chosen — not one of the gorgeous models Jethro had picked out, but a pretty, simple, girlish gown which Cynthia herself had liked and of which the lady highly approved. Not content with helping to choose it, the lady must satisfy herself that it fit, which it did perfectly. And so Cynthia was transformed into a city person, though her skin glowed with a health with which few city people are blessed.

"My dear," said the lady, still staring at her, "you look very well. I should scarcely have supposed it." Cynthia took the remark in good part, for she thought the lady a character, which she was. "I hope you will remember that we women were created for a higher purpose than mere beauty. The Lord gave us brains, and meant that we should use them. If you have a good mind, as I believe you have, learn to employ it for the betterment of your sex, for the time of our emancipation is at hand." Having delivered this little lecture, the lady continued to stare at her with keen eyes. "You look very much

like some one I used to love when I was younger. What is your name?"

"Cynthia Wetherell."

"Cynthia Wetherell? Was your mother Cynthia Ware, from Coniston?"

"Yes," said Cynthia, amazed.

In an instant the strange lady had risen and had taken Cynthia in her embrace, new dress and all.

"My dear," she said, "I thought your face had a familiar look. It was your mother I knew and loved. I'm Miss Lucretia Penniman."

Miss Lucretia Penniman! Could this be, indeed, the authoress of the "Hymn to Coniston," of whom Brampton was so proud? The Miss Lucretia Penniman who sounded the first clarion note for the independence of American women, the friend of Bryant and Hawthorne and Longfellow? Cynthia had indeed heard of her. Did not all Brampton point to the house which had held the Social Library as to a shrine?

"Cynthia," said Miss Lucretia, "I have a meeting now of a girls' charity to which I must go, but you will come to me at the offices of the *Woman's Hour* to-morrow morning at ten. I wish to talk to you about your mother and yourself."

Cynthia promised, provided they did not leave for Coniston earlier, and in that event agreed to write. Whereupon Miss Lucretia kissed her again and hurried off to her meeting. On the way back to the Tremont House Cynthia related excitedly the whole circumstance to Jethro and Ephraim. Ephraim had heard of Miss Lucretia, of course. Who had not? But he did not read the *Woman's Hour*. Jethro was silent. Perhaps he was thinking of that fresh summer morning, so long ago, when a girl in a gig had overtaken him in the cañon made by the Brampton road through the woods. The girl had worn a poke bonnet, and was returning a book to this same Miss Lucretia Penniman's Social Library. And the book was the "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Uncle Jethro, shall we still be in Boston to-morrow morning?" Cynthia asked.

He roused himself.

"Yes," he said, "yes."

"When are you going home?"

He did not answer this simple question, but countered.

"Hain't you enjoyin' yourself, Cynthy?"

"Of course I am," she declared. But she thought it strange that he would not tell her when they would be in Coniston.

Ephraim did buy a new shirt, and also (in view of the postmastership in his pocket) a new necktie, his old one being slightly frayed.

The grandeur of the approaching supper party and the fear of Mrs. Merrill hung very heavy over him; nor was Jethro's mind completely at rest. Ephraim even went so far as to discuss the question as to whether Mr. Merrill had not surpassed his authority in inviting him, and fully expected to be met at the door by that gentleman uttering profuse apologies, which Ephraim was quite prepared and willing to take in good faith.

Nothing of the kind happened, however. Mr. Merrill's railroad being a modest one, his house was modest likewise. But Ephraim thought it grand enough, and yet acknowledged a homelike quality in its grandeur. He began by sitting on the edge of the sofa and staring at the cut-glass chandelier, but in five minutes he discovered with a shock of surprise that he was actually leaning back, describing in detail how his regiment had been cheered as they marched through Boston. And incredible as it may seem, the person whom he was entertaining in this manner was Mrs. Stephen Merrill herself. Mrs. Merrill was as tall as Mr. Merrill was short. She wore a black satin dress with a big cameo brooch pinned at her throat, her hair was gray, and her face almost masculine until it lighted up with a wonderfully sweet smile. That smile made Ephraim and Jethro feel at home; and Cynthia, too, who liked Mrs. Merrill the moment she laid eyes on her.

Then there were the daughters, Jane and Susan, who welcomed her with a hospitality truly amazing for city people. Jane was big-boned like her mother, but Susan

was short and plump and merry like her father. Susan talked and laughed, and Jane sat and listened and smiled, and Cynthia could not decide which she liked the best. And presently they all went into the dining room to supper, where there was another chandelier over the table. There was also real silver, which shone brilliantly on the white cloth — but there was nothing to eat.

"Do tell us another story, Mr. Prescott," said Susan, who had listened to his last one.

The sight of the table, however, had for the moment upset Ephraim.

"Get Jethro to tell you how he took dinner with Jedge Binney," he said.

This suggestion, under the circumstances, might not have been a happy one, but its lack of appropriateness did not strike Jethro either. He yielded to the demand.

"Well," he said, "I supposed I was goin' to set down same as I would at home, where we put the vittles on the table. W-wondered what I was goin' to eat — wahn't nothin' but a piece of bread on the table. S-sat there and watched 'em — nobody ate anything. Presently I found out that Binney's wife ran her house same as they run hotels. Pretty soon a couple of girls come in and put down some food and took it away again before you had a chance. A-after a while we had coffee, and when I set my cup on the table, I noticed Mis' Binney looked kind of cross and began whisperin' to the girls. One of 'em fetched a small plate and took my cup and set it on the plate. That was all right. I used the plate.

"Well, along about next summer Binney had to come to Coniston to see me on a little matter and fetched his wife. Listy, my wife, was alive then. I'd made up my mind that if I could ever get Mis' Binney to eat at my place I would, so I asked 'em to stay to dinner. When we set down, I said: 'Now, Mis' Binney, you and the Judge take right hold, and anything you can't reach, speak out and we'll wait on you.' And Mis' Binney?

"'Yes,' she said. She was a little mite scared, I guess. B-begun to suspect somethin'.

"'Mis' Binney,' said I, 'y-you can set your cup and sarcer where you've a mind to.' O-ought to have heard the Judge laugh. Says he to his wife: 'Fanny, I told you Jethro'd get even with you some time for that sarcer business.'"

This story, strange as it may seem, had a great success at Mr. Merrill's table. Mr. Merrill and his daughter Susan shrieked with laughter when it was finished, while Mrs. Merrill and Jane enjoyed themselves quite as much in their quiet way. Even the two neat Irish maids, who were serving the supper very much as poor Mis' Binney's had been served, were fain to leave the dining room abruptly, and one of them disgraced herself at sight of Jethro when she came in again, and had to go out once more. Mrs. Merrill insisted that Jethro should pour out his coffee in what she was pleased to call the old-fashioned way. All of which goes to prove that table-silver and cut-glass chandeliers do not invariably make their owners heartless and inhospitable. And Ephraim, whose plan of campaign had been to eat nothing to speak of and have a meal when he got back to the hotel, found that he wasn't hungry when he arose from the table.

There was much bantering of Jethro by Mr. Merrill, which the ladies did not understand — talk of a mighty coalition of the big railroads which was to swallow up the little railroads. Fortunately, said Mr. Merrill, humorously, fortunately they did not want *his* railroad. Or unfortunately, which was it? Jethro didn't know. He never laughed at anybody's jokes. But Cynthia, who was listening with one ear while Susan talked into the other, gathered that Jethro had been struggling with the railroads, and was sooner or later to engage in a mightier struggle with them. How, she asked herself in her innocence, was any one, even Uncle Jethro, to struggle with a railroad? Many other people in these latter days have asked themselves that very question.

All together the evening at Mr. Merrill's passed off so quickly and so happily that Ephraim was dismayed when he discovered that it was ten o'clock, and he began to

make elaborate apologies to the ladies. But Jethro and Mr. Merrill were still closeted together in the dining room: once Mrs. Merrill had been called to that conference, and had returned after a while to take her place quietly again among the circle of Ephraim's listeners. Now Mr. Merrill came out of the dining room alone.

"Cynthia," he said, and his tone was a little more grave than usual, "your Uncle Jethro wants to speak to you."

Cynthia rose, with a sense of something in the air which concerned her, and went into the dining room. Was it the light falling from above that brought out the lines of his face so strongly? Cynthia did not know, but she crossed the room swiftly and sat down beside him.

"What is it, Uncle Jethro?"

"C-Cynthy," he said, putting his hand over hers on the table, "I want you to do something for me — er — for *me*," he repeated, emphasizing the last word.

"I'll do anything in the world for you, Uncle Jethro," she answered; "you know that. What — what is it?"

"L-like Mr. Merrill, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed."

"L-like Mrs. Merrill — like the gals — don't you?"

"Very much," said Cynthia, perplexedly.

"Like 'em enough to — to live with 'em a winter?"

"Live with them a winter!"

"C-Cynthy, I want you should stay in Boston this winter and go to a young ladies' school."

It was out. He had said it, though he never quite knew where he had found the courage.

"Uncle Jethro!" she cried. She could only look at him in dismay, but the tears came into her eyes and sparkled.

"You — you'll be happy here, Cynthy. It'll be a change for you. And I shan't be so lonesome as you'd think. I'll — I'll be busy this winter, Cynthy."

"You know that I wouldn't leave you, Uncle Jethro," she said reproachfully. "I should be lonesome, if you wouldn't. You would be lonesome — you know you would be."

"You'll do this for me, Cynthy. S-said you would, didn't you — said you would?"

"Why do you want me to do this?"

"W-want you to go to school for a winter, Cynthy. Shouldn't think I'd done right by you if I didn't."

"But I have been to school. Daddy taught me a lot, and Mr. Satterlee has taught me a great deal more. I know as much as most girls of my age, and I will study so hard in Coniston this winter, if that is what you want. I've never neglected my lessons, Uncle Jethro."

"'Tain't book-larnin' — 'tain't what you'd get in book-larnin' in Boston, Cynthy."

"What, then?" she asked.

"Well," said Jethro, "they'd teach you to be a lady, Cynthy."

"A lady!"

"Your father come of good people, and — and your mother was a lady. I'm only a rough old man, Cynthy, and I don't know much about the ways of fine folks. But you've got it in ye, and I want you should be equal to the best of 'em. You can. And I shouldn't die content unless I'd felt that you'd had the chance. Er — Cynthy — will you do it for me?"

She was silent a long while before she turned to him, and then the tears were running very swiftly down her cheeks.

"Yes, I will do it for you," she answered. "Uncle Jethro, I believe you are the best man in the world."

"D-don't say that, Cynthy — d-don't say that," he exclaimed, and a sharp agony was in his voice. He got to his feet and went to the folding doors and opened them. "Steve!" he called, "Steve!"

"S-says she'll stay, Steve."

Mr. Merrill had come in, followed by his wife. Cynthia saw them but dimly through her tears. And while she tried to wipe the tears away she felt Mrs. Merrill's arm about her, and heard that lady say: —

"We'll try to make you very happy, my dear, and send you back safely in the spring."