went about the house making fast the doors, as was his custom, while Cynthia sat staring through the bars at the dying embers in the stove. He knew now, and it was inevitable that he should know, what she had made up her mind to do. It had been decreed that she, who owed him everything, should be made to pass this most dreadful of censures upon his whole life. Oh, the cruelty of that decree!

How, she mused, would it affect him? Had the blow been so great that he would relinquish those practices which had become a lifelong habit with him? Would he (she caught her breath at this thought) — would he abandon that struggle with Isaac D. Worthington in which he was striving to maintain the mastery of the state by those very practices? Cynthia hated Mr. Worthington. The term is not too strong, and it expresses her feeling. But she would have got down on her knees on the board floor of the kitchen that very night and implored Jethro to desist from that contest, if she could. She remembered how, in her innocence, she had believed that the people had given Jethro his power, — in those days when she was so proud of that very power, — now she knew that he had wrested it from them. What more supreme sacrifice could he make than to relinquish it! Ah, there was a still greater sacrifice that Jethro was to make, had she known it.

He came and stood over her by the stove, and she looked up into his face with these yearnings in her eyes. Yes, she would have thrown herself on her knees, if she could. But she could not. Perhaps he would abandon that struggle. Perhaps — perhaps his heart was broken. And could a man with a broken heart still fight on? She took his hand and pressed it against her face, and he felt that it was wet with her tears.

"B-better go to bed now, Cynthy," he said; "m-must be worn out — m-must be worn out."

He stooped and kissed her on the forehead. It was thus that Jethro Bass accepted his sentence.

CHAPTER XIII

CYNTHIA BECOMES A TEACHER

At sunrise, in that Coniston hill-country, it is the western hills which are red, and a distant hillock on the meadow farm which was soon to be Eben's looked like the daintiest conical cake with pink icing as Cynthia surveyed the familiar view the next morning. There was the mountain, the pastures on the lower slopes all red, too, and higher up the dark masses of bristling spruce and pine and hemlock mottled with white where the snow-covered rocks showed through.

Sunrise in January is not very early, and sunrise at any season is not early for Coniston. Cynthia sat at her window, and wondered whether that beautiful landscape would any longer be hers. Her life had grown up on it; but now her life had changed. Would the beauty be taken from it, too? Almost hungrily she gazed at the scene. She might look upon it again — many times, perhaps — but a conviction was strong in her that its daily possession would now be only a memory.

Mr. Satterlee was as good as his word, for he was seated in the stage when it drew up at the tannery house, ready to go to Brampton. And as they drove away Cynthia took one last look at Jethro standing on the porch. It seemed to her that it had been given her to feel all things, and to know all things: to know, especially, this strange man, Jethro Bass, as none other knew him, and to love him as none other loved him. The last severe wrench was come, and she had left him standing there alone in the cold, divining what was in his heart as though it were in her own. How worthless was this mighty power which

he had gained, how hateful, when he could not bestow the smallest fragment of it upon one whom he loved? Some one has described hell as disqualification in the face of opportunity. Such was Jethro's torment that morning as he saw her drive away, the minister in the place where he should have been, at her side, and he, Jethro Bass, as helpless as though he had indeed been in the pit among the flames. Had the prudential committee at Brampton promised the appointment ten times over, he might still have obtained it for her by a word. And he must not speak even that word. Who shall say that a large part of the punishment of Jethro Bass did not come to him in the life upon this earth?

Some such thoughts were running in Cynthia's head as they jingled away to Brampton that dazzling morning. Perhaps the stage driver, too, who knew something of men and things and who meddled not at all, had made a guess at the situation. He thought that Cynthia's spirits seemed lightened a little, and he meant to lighten them more; so he joked as much as his respect for his passengers would permit, and told the news of Brampton. Not the least of the news concerned the first citizen of that place. There was a certain railroad in the West which had got itself much into Congress, and much into the newspapers, and Isaac D. Worthington had got himself into that railroad: was gone West, it was said on that business, and might not be back for many weeks. And Lem Hallowell remembered when Mr. Worthington was a slim-chested young man wandering up and down Coniston Water in search of health. Good Mr. Satterlee, thinking this a safe subject, allowed himself to be led into a discussion of the first citizen's career, which indeed had something fascinating in it.

Thus they jingled into Brampton Street and stopped before the cottage of Judge Graves — a courtesy title. The judge himself came to the door and bestowed a pronounced bow on the minister, for Mr. Satterlee was honored in Brampton. Just think of what Ezra Graves might have looked like, and you have him. He greeted Cynthia, too, with a warm welcome — for Ezra Graves, — and ushered them into a best parlor which was reserved for ministers and funerals and great occasions in general, and actually raised the blinds. Then Mr. Satterlee, with much hemming and hawing, stated the business which had brought them, while Cynthia looked out of the window.

Mr. Graves sat and twirled his lean thumbs. He went so far as to say that he admired a young woman who scorned to live in idleness, who wished to impart the learning with which she had been endowed. Fifteen applicants were under consideration for the position, and the prudential committee had so far been unable to declare that any of them were completely qualified. (It was well named, that prudential committee!) Mr. Graves, furthermore, volunteered that he had expressed a wish to Colonel Prescott (Oh, Ephraim, you too have got a title with your new honors!), to Colonel Prescott and others, that Miss Wetherell might take the place. The middle term opened on the morrow, and Miss Bruce, of the Worthington Free Library, had been induced to teach until a successor could be appointed, although it was most inconvenient for Miss Bruce.

Could Miss Wetherell start in at once, provided the committee agreed? Cynthia replied that she would like nothing better. There would be an examination before Mr. Errol, the Brampton Superintendent of Schools. In short, owing to the pressing nature of the occasion, the judge would take the liberty of calling the committee together immediately. Would Mr. Satterlee and Miss Wetherell make themselves at home in the parlor?

It very frequently happens that one member of a committee is the brain, and the other members form the body of it. It was so in this case. Ezra Graves typified all of prudence there was about it, — which, it must be admitted, was a great deal. He it was who had weighed in the balance the fifteen applicants and found them wanting. Another member of the committee was that comfortable Mr. Dodd, with the tuft of yellow beard, the hardware

dealer whom we have seen at the baseball game. Mr. Dodd was not a person who had opinions unless they were presented to him from certain sources, and then he had been known to cling to them tenaciously. It is sufficient to add that, when Cynthia Wetherell's name was mentioned to him, he remembered the girl to whom Bob Worthington had paid such marked attentions on the grand stand. He knew literally nothing else about Cynthia. Judge Graves, apparently, knew all about her; this was sufficient, at that time, for Mr. Dodd; he was sick and tired of the whole affair, and if, by the grace of heaven, an applicant had been sent who conformed with Judge Graves's multitude of requirements, he was devoutly thankful. The other member, Mr. Hill, was a feed and lumber dealer, and not a very good one, for he was always in difficulties; certain scholarly attainments were attributed to him, and therefore he had been put on the committee. They met in Mr. Dodd's little office back of the store, and in five minutes Cynthia was a schoolmistress, subject to examination by Mr. Errol.

Just a word about Mr. Errol. He was a retired lawyer, with some means, who took an interest in town affairs to occupy his time. He had a very delicate wife, whom he had been obliged to send South at the beginning of the winter. There she had for a while improved, but had been taken ill again, and two days before Cynthia's appointment he had been summoned to her bedside by a telegram. Cynthia could go into the school, and her examination would take place when Mr. Errol returned.

All this was explained by the judge when, half an hour after he had left them, he returned to the best parlor. Miss Wetherell would, then, be prepared to take the school the following morning. Whereupon the judge shook hands with her, and did not deny that he had been instrumental in the matter.

"And, Mr. Satterlee, I am so grateful to you," said Cynthia, when they were in the street once more.

"My dear Cynthia, I did nothing," answered the minister, quite bewildered by the quick turn affairs had

taken; "it is your own good reputation that got you the place."

Nevertheless Mr. Satterlee had done his share in the matter. He had known Mr. Graves for a long time, and better than any other person in Brampton. Mr. Graves remembered Cynthia Ware, and indeed had spoken to Cynthia that day about her mother. Mr. Graves had also read poor William Wetherell's contributions to the *Newcastle Guardian*, and he had not read that paper since they had ceased. From time to time Mr. Satterlee had mentioned his pupil to the judge, whose mind had immediately flown to her when the vacancy occurred. So it all came about.

"And now," said Mr. Satterlee, "what will you do, Cynthia? We've got the good part of a day to arrange where you will live, before the stage returns."

"I won't go back to-night, I think," said Cynthia, turning her head away; "if you would be good enough to tell Uncle Jethro to send my trunk and some other things."

"Perhaps that is just as well," assented the minister, understanding perfectly. "I have thought that Miss Bruce might be glad to board you," he continued, after a pause. "Let us go to see her."

"Mr. Satterlee," said Cynthia, "would you mind if we went first to see Cousin Ephraim?"

"Why, of course, we must see Ephraim," said Mr. Satterlee, briskly. So they walked on past the mansion of the first citizen, and the new block of stores which the first citizen had built, to the old brick building which held the Brampton post-office, and right through the door of the partition into the sanctum of the postmaster himself, which some one had nicknamed the Brampton Club. On this occasion the postmaster was seated in his shirt sleeves by the stove, alone, his listeners being conspicuously absent. Cynthia, who had caught a glimpse of him through the little mail-window, thought he looked very happy and comfortable.

"Great Tecumseh!" he cried,—an exclamation he

reserved for extraordinary occasions, — "if it hain't Cynthy!"

He started to hobble toward her, but Cynthia ran to him.

"Why," said he, looking at her closely after the greeting was over, "you be changed, Cynthy. Mercy, I don't know as I'd have dared done that if I'd seed you first. What have you b'en doin' to yourself? You must have seed a whole lot down there in Boston. And you're a full-blown lady, too."

"Oh, no, I'm not, Cousin Eph," she answered, trying to smile.

"Yes, you be," he insisted, still scrutinizing her, vainly trying to account for the change. Tact, as we know, was not Ephraim's strong point. Now he shook his head. "You always was beyond me. Got a sort of air about you, and it grows on you, too. Wouldn't be surprised," he declared, speaking now to the minister, "wouldn't be a mite surprised to see her in the White House, some day."

"Now, Cousin Eph," said Cynthia, coloring a little, "you mustn't talk nonsense. What have you done with your coat? You have no business to go without it with your rheumatism."

"It hain't b'en so bad since Uncle Sam took me over again, Cynthy," he answered, "with nothin' to do but sort letters in a nice hot room." The room was hot, indeed. "But where did you come from?"

"I grew tired of being taught, Cousin Eph. I — I've always wanted to teach. Mr. Satterlee has been with me to see Mr. Graves, and they've given me Miss Goddard's place. I'm coming to Brampton to live, to-day."

"Great Tecumseh!" exclaimed Ephraim again, overpowered by the news. "I want to know! What does Jethro say to that?"

"He — he is willing," she replied in a low voice.

"Well," said Ephraim, "I always thought you'd come to it. It's in the blood, I guess — teachin'. Your mother had it too. I'm kind of sorry for Jethro, though, so I be. But I'm glad for myself, Cynthy. So you're comin' to Brampton to live with me!"

"I was going to ask Miss Bruce to take me in," said Cynthia.

"No you hain't, anything of the kind," said Ephraim, indignantly. "I've got a little house up the street, and a room all ready for you."

"Will you let me share expenses, Cousin Eph?"

"I'll let you do anything you want," said he, "so's you come. Don't you think she'd ought to come and take care of an old man, Mr. Satterlee?"

Mr. Satterlee turned. He had been contemplating, during this conversation, a life-size print of General Grant under two crossed flags, that was hung conspicuously on the wall.

"I do not think you could do better, Cynthia," he answered, smiling. The minister liked Ephraim, and he liked a little joke, occasionally. He felt that one would not be particularly out of place just now; so he repeated, "I do not think you could do better than to accept the offer of Colonel Prescott."

Ephraim grew very red, as was his wont when twitted about his new title. He took things literally.

"I hain't a colonel, no more than you be, Mr. Satterlee. But the boys down here will have it so."

Three days later, by the early train which leaves the state capital at an unheard-of hour in the morning, a young man arrived in Brampton. His jaw seemed squarer than ever to the citizens who met the train out of curiosity, and to Mr. Dodd, who was expecting a pump; and there was a set look on his face like that of a man who is going into a race or a fight. Mr. Dodd, though astonished, hastened toward him.

"Well, this is unexpected, Bob," said he. "How be you? Harvard College failed up?"

For Mr. Dodd never let slip a chance to assure a member of the Worthington family of his continued friendship.

"How are you, Mr. Dodd?" answered Bob, nodding at him carelessly, and passing on. Mr. Dodd did not dare to follow. What was young Worthington doing in Bramp-

ton, and his father in the West on that railroad business? Filled with curiosity, Mr. Dodd forgot his pump, but Bob was already striding into Brampton Street, carrying his bag. If he had stopped for a few moments with the hardware dealer, or chatted with any of the dozen people who bowed and stared at him, he might have saved himself a good deal of trouble. He turned in at the Worthington mansion, and rang the bell, which was answered by Sarah, the housemaid.

"Mr. Bob!" she exclaimed.

"Where's Mrs. Holden?" he asked.

Mrs. Holden was the elderly housekeeper. She had gone, unfortunately, to visit a bereaved relative; unfortunately for Bob, because she, too, might have told him something.

"Get me some breakfast, Sarah. Anything," he commanded, "and tell Silas to hitch up the black trotters to my cutter."

Sarah, though in consternation, did as she was bid. The breakfast was forthcoming, and in half an hour Silas had the black trotters at the door. Bob got in without a word, seized the reins, the cutter flew down Brampton Street (observed by many of the residents thereof) and turned into the Coniston road. Silas said nothing. Silas, as a matter of fact, never did say anything. He had been the Worthington coachman for five and twenty years, and he was known in Brampton as Silas the Silent. Young Mr. Worthington had no desire to talk that morning.

The black trotters covered the ten miles in much quicker time than Lem Hallowell could do it in his stage, but the distance seemed endless to Bob. It was not much more than half an hour after he had left Brampton Street, however, that he shot past the store, and by the time Rias Richardson in his carpet slippers reached the platform the cutter was in front of the tannery house, and the trotters, with their sides smoking, were pawing up the snow under the butternut tree.

Bob leaped out, hurried up the path, and knocked at the door. It was opened by Jethro Bass himself.

"How do you do, Mr. Bass," said the young man, gravely, and he held out his hand. Jethro gave him such a scrutinizing look as he had given many a man whose business he cared to guess, but Bob looked fearlessly into his eyes. Jethro took his hand.

"C-come in," he said.

Bob went into that little room where Jethro and Cynthia had spent so many nights together, and his glance flew straight to the picture on the wall,—the portrait of Cynthia Wetherell in crimson and seed pearls, so strangely set amidst such surroundings. His glance went to the portrait, and his feet followed, as to a lodestone. He stood in front of it for many minutes, in silence, and Jethro watched him. At last he turned.

"Where is she?" he asked.

It was a queer question, and Jethro's answer was quite as lacking in convention.

"G-gone to Brampton—gone to Brampton."

"Gone to Brampton! Do you mean to say—? What is she doing there?" Bob demanded.

"Teachin' school," said Jethro; "g-got Miss Goddard's place."

Bob did not reply for a moment. The little schoolhouse was the only building in Brampton he had glanced at as he came through. Mrs. Merrill had told him that she might take that place, but he had little imagined she was already there on her platform facing the rows of shining little faces at the desks. He had deemed it more than possible that he might see Jethro at Coniston, but he had not taken into account that which he might say to him. Bob had, indeed, thought of nothing but Cynthia, and of the blow that had fallen upon her. He had tried to realize the multiple phases of the situation which confronted him. Here was the man who, by the conduct of his life, had caused the blow; he, too, was her benefactor; and again, this same man was engaged in the bitterest of conflicts with his father, Isaac D. Worthington, and it was this conflict which had precipitated that blow. Bob could not have guessed, by looking at Jethro Bass, how great