was the sorrow which had fallen upon him. But Bob knew that Jethro hated his father, must hate him now, because of Cynthia, with a hatred given to few men to feel. He thought that Jethro would crush Mr. Worthington and ruin him if he could; and Bob believed he could.

What was he to say? He did not fear Jethro, for Bob Worthington had courage enough; but these things were running in his mind, and he felt the power of the man before him, as all men did. Bob went to the window and came back again. He knew that he must speak.

"Mr. Bass," he said at last, "did Cynthia ever mention me to you?"

"No," said Jethro.

"Mr. Bass, I love her. I have told her so, and I have asked her to be my wife."

There was no need, indeed, to have told Jethro this. The shock of that revelation had come to him when he had seen the trotters, had been confirmed when the young man had stood before the portrait. Jethro's face might have twitched when Bob stood there with his back to him.

Jethro could not speak. Once more there had come to him a moment when he would not trust his voice to ask a question. He dreaded the answer, though none might have surmised this. He knew Cynthia. He knew that, when she had given her heart, it was for all time. He dreaded the answer, because it might mean that her sorrow was doubled.

"I believe," Bob continued painfully, seeing that Jethro would say nothing, "I believe that Cynthia loves me. I should not dare to say it or to hope it, without reason. She has not said so, but —" the words were very hard for him, yet he stuck manfully to the truth; "but she told me to write to my father and let him know what I had done, and not to come back to her until I had his answer. This," he added, wondering that a man could listen to such a thing without a sign, "this was before — before she had any idea of coming home."

Yes, Cynthia did love him. There was no doubt about it

in Jethro's mind. She would not have bade Bob write to his father if she had not loved him. Still Jethro did not speak, but by some intangible force compelled Bob to go on.

"I shall write to my father as soon as he comes back from the West, but I wish to say to you, Mr. Bass, that whatever his answer contains, I mean to marry Cynthia. Nothing can shake me from that resolution. I tell you this because my father is fighting you, and you know what he will say." (Jethro knew Dudley Worthington well enough to appreciate that this would make no particular difference in his opposition to the marriage except to make that opposition more vehement.) "And because you do not know me," continued Bob. "When I say a thing, I mean it. Even if my father cuts me off and casts me out, I will marry Cynthia. Good-by, Mr. Bass."

Jethro took the young man's hand again. Bob imagined that he even pressed it — a little — something he had never done before.

"Good-by, Bob."

Bob got as far as the door.

"Er — go back to Harvard, Bob?"

"I intend to, Mr. Bass."

"Er — Bob?"

"Yes?"

"D-don't quarrel with your father — don't quarrel with your father."

"I shan't be the one to quarrel, Mr. Bass."

"Bob — hain't you pretty young — pretty young?"

"Yes," said Bob, rather unexpectedly, "I am." Then he added, "I know my own mind."

"P-pretty young. Don't want to get married yet awhile — do you?"

"Yes, I do," said Bob, "but I suppose I shan't be able to."

"Er — wait awhile, Bob. Go back to Harvard. W-wouldn't write that letter if I was you."

"But I will. I'll not have him think I'm ashamed of what I've done. I'm proud of it, Mr. Bass."

In the eyes of Coniston, which had been waiting for his

reappearance, Bob Worthington jumped into the sleigh and drove off. He left behind him Jethro Bass, who sat in his chair the rest of the morning with his head bent in revery so deep that Millicent had to call him twice to his simple dinner. Bob left behind him, too, a score of rumors, sprung full grown into life with his visit. Men and women an incredible distance away heard them in an incredible time: those in the village found an immediate pretext for leaving their legitimate occupation and going to the store, and a gathering was in session there when young Mr. Worthington drove past it on his way back. Bob thought little about the rumors, and not thinking of them it did not occur to him that they might affect Cynthia. The only person then in Coniston whom he thought about was Jethro Bass. Bob decided that his liking for Jethro had not diminished, but rather increased; he admired Jethro for the advice he had given, although he did not mean to take it. And for the first time he pitied him.

Bob did not know that rumor, too, was spreading in Brampton. He had his dinner in the big walnut dining room all alone, and after it he smoked his father's cigars and paced up and down the big hall, watching the clock. For he could not go to her in the school hours. At length he put on his hat and hurried out, crossing the parklike enclosure in the middle of the street; bowed at by Mr. Dodd, who always seemed to be on hand, and others, and nodding absently in return. Concealment was not in Bob Worthington's nature. He reached the post-office, where the partition door was open, and he walked right into a comparatively full meeting of the Brampton Club. Ephraim sat in their midst, and for once he was not telling war stories. He was silent. And the others fell suddenly silent, too, at Bob's entrance.

"How do you do, Mr. Prescott?" he said, as Ephraim struggled to his feet. "How is the rheumatism?"

"How be you, Mr. Worthington?" said Ephraim; "this is a kind of a surprise, hain't it?" Ephraim was getting used to surprises. "Well, it is good-natured of you to come in and shake hands with an old soldier."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Prescott," answered honest Bob, a little abashed, "I should have done so anyway, but the fact is, I wanted to speak to you a moment in private."

"Certain," said Ephraim, glancing helplessly around him, "jest come out front." That space, where the public were supposed to be, was the only private place in the Brampton post-office. But the members of the Brampton Club could take a hint, and with one consent began to make excuses. Bob knew them all from boyhood and spoke to them all. Some of them ventured to ask him if Harvard had bust up.

"Where does Cynthia live?" he demanded, coming straight to the point.

Ephraim stared at him for a moment in a bewildered fashion, and then a light began to dawn on him.

"Lives with me," he answered. He was quite as ashamed, for Bob's sake, as if he himself had asked the question, and he went on talking to cover that embarrassment. "It's made some difference, too, sence she come. House looks like a different place. Afore she come I cooked with a kit, same as I used to in the harness shop. I l'arned it in the army. Cynthy's got a stove."

It was not the way Ephraim would have gone about a love affair, had he had one. Sam Price's were the approved methods in that section of the country, though Sam had overdone them somewhat. It was an unheard-of thing to ask a man right out like that where a girl lived.

"Much obliged," said Bob, and was gone. Ephraim raised his hands in despair, and hobbled to the little window to get a last look at him. Where were the proprieties in these days? The other aspect of the affair, what Mr. Worthington would think of it when he returned, did not occur to the innocent mind of the old soldier until people began to talk about it that afternoon. Then it worried him into another attack of rheumatism.

Half of Brampton must have seen Bob Worthington march up to the little yellow house which Ephraim had rented from John Billings. It had four rooms around the big chimney in the middle, and that was all. Simple as

it was, an architect would have said that its proportions were nearly perfect. John Billings had it from his Grandfather Post, who built it, and though Brampton would have laughed at the statement, Isaac D. Worthington's mansion was not to be compared with it for beauty. The old cherry furniture was still in it, and the old wall papers and the panelling in the little room to the right which Cynthia had made into a sitting room.

Half of Brampton, too, must have seen Cynthia open the door and Bob walk into the entry. Then the door was shut. But it had been held open for an appreciable time, however, — while you could count twenty, — because Cynthia had not the power to close it. For a while she could only look into his eyes, and he into hers. She had not seen him coming, she had but answered the knock. Then, slowly, the color came into her cheeks, and she knew that she was trembling from head to foot.

"Cynthia," he said, "mayn't I come in?"

She did not answer, for fear her voice would tremble, too. And she could not send him away in the face of all Brampton. She opened the door a little wider, a very little, and he went in. Then she closed it, and for a moment they stood facing each other in the entry, which was lighted only by the fan-light over the door, Cynthia with her back against the wall. He spoke her name again, his voice thick with the passion which had overtaken him like a flood at the sight of her — a passion to seize her in his arms, and cherish and comfort and protect her forever and ever. All this he felt and more as he looked into her face and saw the traces of her great sorrow there. He had not thought that that face could be more beautiful in its strength and purity, but it was even so.

"Cynthia — my love!" he cried, and raised his arms. But a look as of a great fear came into her eyes, which for one exquisite moment had yielded to his own; and her breath came quickly, as though she were spent — as indeed she was. So far spent that the wall at her back was grateful.

"No!" she said; "no — you must not — you must not — you must not!" Again and again she repeated the words, for she could summon no others. They were a mandate — had he guessed it — to herself as to him. For the time her brain refused its functions, and she could think of nothing but the fact that he was there, beside her, ready to take her in his arms. How she longed to fly into them, none but herself knew — to fly into them as into a refuge secure against the evil powers of the world. It was not reason that restrained her then, but something higher in her, that restrained him likewise. Without moving from the wall she pushed open the door of the sitting room.

"Go in there," she said.

He went in as she bade him and stood before the flickering logs in the wide and shallow chimney-place — logs that seemed to burn on the very hearth itself, and yet the smoke rose unerring into the flue. No stove had ever desecrated that room. Bob looked into the flames and waited, and Cynthia stood in the entry fighting this second great battle which had come upon her while her forces were still spent with that other one. Woman in her very nature is created to be sheltered and protected; and the yearning in her, when her love is given, is intense as nature itself to seek sanctuary in that love. So it was with Cynthia leaning against the entry wall, her arms full length in front of her, and her hands clasped as she prayed for strength to withstand the temptation. At last she grew calmer, though her breath still came deeply, and she went into the sitting room.

Perhaps he knew, vaguely, why she had not followed him at once. He had grown calmer himself, calmer with that desperation which comes to a man of his type when his soul and body are burning with desire for a woman. He knew that he would have to fight for her with herself. He knew now that she was too strong in her position to be carried by storm, and the interval had given him time to collect himself. He did not dare at first to look up from the logs, for fear he should forget himself and be defeated instantly.

"I have been to Coniston, Cynthia," he said.

"Yes."

"I have been to Coniston this morning, and I have seen Mr. Bass, and I have told him that I love you, and that I will never give you up. I told you so in Boston, Cynthia," he said; "I knew that this — this trouble would come to you. I would have given my life to have saved you from it — from the least part of it. I would have given my life to have been able to say 'it shall not touch you.' I saw it flowing in like a great sea between you and me, and yet I could not tell you of it. I could not prepare you for it. I could only tell you that I would never give you up, and I can only repeat that now."

"You must, Bob," she answered, in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper; "you must give me up."

"I would not," he said, "I would not if the words were written on all the rocks of Coniston Mountain. I love you."

"Hush," she said gently. "I have to say some things to you. They will be very hard to say, but you must listen to them."

"I will listen," he said doggedly; "but they will not affect my determination."

"I am sure you do not wish to drive me away from Brampton," she continued, in the same low voice, "when I have found a place to earn my living near — near Uncle Jethro."

These words told him all he had suspected — almost as much as though he had been present at the scene in the tannery shed in Coniston. She knew now the life of Jethro Bass, but he was still "Uncle Jethro" to her. It was even as Bob had supposed, — that her affection once given could not be taken away.

"Cynthia," he said, "I would not by an act or a word annoy or trouble you. If you bade me, I would go to the other side of the world to-morrow. You must know that. But I should come back again. You must know that, too. I should come back again for you."

"Bob," she said again, and her voice faltered a very

little now, "you must know that I can never be your wife."

"I do not know it," he exclaimed, interrupting her vehemently, "I will not know it."

"Think," she said, "think! I must say what I have to say, however it hurts me. If it had not been for — for your father, those things never would have been written. They were in his newspaper, and they express his feelings toward — toward Uncle Jethro."

Once the words were out, she marvelled that she had found the courage to pronounce them.

"Yes," he said, "yes, I know that, but listen —"

"Wait," she went on, "wait until I have finished. I am not speaking of the pain I had when I read these things, I — I am not speaking of the truth that may be in them — I have learned from them what I should have known before, and felt, indeed, that your father will never consent to — to a marriage between us."

"And if he does not," cried Bob, "if he does not, do you think that I will abide by what he says, when my life's happiness depends upon you, and my life's welfare? I know that you are a good woman, and a true woman, that you will be the best wife any man could have. Though he is my father, he shall not deprive me of my soul, and he shall not take my life away from me."

As Cynthia listened she thought that never had words sounded sweeter than these — no, and never would again. So she told herself as she let them run into her heart to be stored among the treasures there. She believed in his love — believed in it now with all her might. (Who, indeed, would not?) She could not demean herself now by striving to belittle it or doubt its continuance, as she had in Boston. He was young, yes; but he would never be any older than this, could never love again like this. So much was given her, ought she not to be content? Could she expect more?

She understood Isaac Worthington, now, as well as his son understood him. She knew that, if she were to yield to Bob Worthington, his father would disown and disin-

herit him. She looked ahead into the years as a woman will, and allowed herself for the briefest of moments to wonder whether any happiness could thrive in spite of the violence of that schism — any happiness for him. She would be depriving him of his birthright, and it may be that those who are born without birthrights often value them the most. Cynthia saw these things, and more, for those who sit at the feet of sorrow soon learn the world's ways. She saw herself pointed out as the woman whose designs had beggared and ruined him in his youth, and (agonizing and revolting thought!) the name of one would be spoken from whom she had learned such craft. Lest he see the scalding tears in her eyes, she turned away — and conquered them. What could she do? Where should she hide her love that it might not be seen of men? And how, in truth, could she tell him these things?

"Cynthia," he went on, seeing that she did not answer, and taking heart, "I will not say a word against my father. I know you would not respect me if I did. We are different, he and I, and find happiness in different ways." Bob wondered if his father had ever found it. "If I had never met you and loved you, I should have refused to lead the life my father wishes me to lead. It is not in me to do the things he will ask. I shall have to carve out my own life, and I feel that I am as well able to do it as he was. Percy Broke, a classmate of mine and my best friend, has a position for me in a locomotive works in which his father is largely interested. We are going in together, the day after we graduate; it is all arranged, and his father has agreed. I shall work very hard, and in a few years, Cynthia, we shall be together, never to part again. Oh, Cynthia," he cried, carried away by the ecstasy of this dream which he had summoned up, "why do you resist me? I love you as no man has ever loved," he exclaimed, with scornful egotism and contempt of those who had made the world echo with that cry through the centuries, "and you love me! Ah, do you think I do not see it — cannot feel it? You love me — tell me so."

He was coming toward her, and how was she to prevent

his taking her by storm? That was his way, and well she knew it. In her dreams she had felt herself lifted and borne off, breathless in his arms, to Elysium. Her breath was going now, her strength was going, and yet she made him pause by the magic of a word. A concession was in that word, but one could not struggle so piteously and concede nothing.

"Bob," she said, "do you love me?"

Love her! If there was a love that acknowledged no bounds, that was confined by no superlatives, it was his. He began to speak, but she interrupted him with a wild passion that was new to her. As he sat in the train on his way back to Cambridge through the darkening afternoon, the note of it rang in his ears and gave him hope — yes, and through many months afterward.

"If you love me I beg, I implore, I beseech you in the name of that love — for your sake and my sake, to leave me. Oh, can you not see why you must go?"

He stopped, even as he had before in the parlor in Mount Vernon Street. He could but stop in the face of such an appeal — and yet the blood beat in his head with a mad joy.

"Tell me that you love me, — once," he cried, — "once, Cynthia."

"Do — do not ask me," she faltered. "Go."

Her words were a supplication, not a command. And in that they were a supplication he had gained a victory. Yes, though she had striven with all her might to deny, she had bade him hope. He left her without so much as a touch of the hand, because she had wished it. And yet she loved him! Incredible fact! Incredible conjury which made him doubt that his feet touched the snow of Brampton Street, which blotted, as with a golden glow, the faces and the houses of Brampton from his sight. He saw no one, though many might have accosted him. That part of him which was clay, which performed the menial tasks of his being, had kindly taken upon itself to fetch his bag from the house to the station, and to board the train.

Ah, but Brampton had seen him!