A PART OF THE INSTITUTION

CHAPTER I

Adams College—"The Pioneer College of the Prairies"—had been founded some forty years ago by a little band of home missionaries from New England, dedicated to "the interests of Christianity and of the higher learning in the West." Then the campus had been prairie land—a few lonesome acres in the great expanse of rolling country. There had been one building, the old Recitation Hall of red brick, dingy and ugly, plain as a barracks, that stood in the east campus. The town had been a few houses, a church and two wooden stores.

Now—in the early nineteen hundreds—the town and the campus already had an established, mellowed look. The frame houses had wide lawns and lilac bushes; and some of them—square, painted white or brown, with shutters and a cupola—began to seem elderly. The elms were tall along the wide, pleasant streets, which were still unpaved. The campus had lost most of its old raw prairie look. The five buildings—Moorish and classic and conglomerate—were softened with ivy. Flowering bushes lined the cinder paths. The big oak that had stood alone in prairie days was ringed about with maples, catalpas and tulip trees. There was a great clump of evergreens which gave age, and shadow, to the campus on the south.

The college already had its traditions, fixed and sacred. The class scrap between the Freshmen and Sophomores, no dates on Sunday night, a man for class president in the fall and spring and a girl in the unimportant between months, chapel attendance, enmity with Billings (the Methodist school), that Ionian girls should "go in for society" and E. B. B. girls for "activities," the social value of Freshman class prayer-meetings. College bards had written hymns to "the Adams spirit." The spirit of "service," of "democracy," of "the good loser," of "ideals." There was an "Adams type." A man not too good-looking, a fair student but not in any alarmingly original way, athletic, a "clean Christian fellow," a good speaker, a good mixer and organizer, a member of the Glee Club and the Y. M. C. A., "the all-around man." A girl pretty, but in a girlish ingenuous way, not too well-dressed, popular with men but felt to be a conscientious student and an earnest Christian, full of enthusiasm, of "the Adams spirit," a worker in the Y. W. C. A., clever but not too intellectual, executive, "in everything," "the all-around girl." If this man and this girl became engaged to each other in their Senior year, then they had fulfilled the best Adams traditions and would be prominent alumni.

The town and college had grown up together. Adamsville—"The State Headquarters of Congregationalism," "Saints' Rest," "The Home of Adams College"—was a residence town. It had a population of about five thousand people, with prosperous banks, but in a business way it was rather slow. The only important industry was the implement factory owned by Josiah H. Porterfield, the leading citizen and chief trustee of the college. People moved there because the town was clean and pleasant, with the wide streets and big trees, "a nice place to live and bring up children." It was a place for retirement. Retired farmers and ministers, church officials, retired busi-

ness men who wanted the advantages of the college for their children.

To the old ministers and old-timers, the church was the center of the town. A big squat gray stone building on a corner, with a dark cavernous interior in which voices were lost. It, too, had fondly cherished titles. "The Convention Church of Iowa." Conventions of the Christian Endeavor, of the W. B. M. F. and the W. B. M. I., the State Ministerial Association, the Purity League. Houses were always ready for the entertainment of delegates. "A minister killer," it was sometimes less fondly called. The Adamsville church was still looking for "a man to satisfy everybody"—the right wing of ancient "saints" who held firmly by the Atonement, the left wing of "advanced" college professors, and the center of comfortable, prosperous, fairly educated people who went home to good Sunday dinners.

The town was really built around the college. The stores catered to the college trade, with desks for rent in the furniture store, a large stock of "wienies" on hand in the meat markets, a kodak department in the photograph and art gallery, a supply of blue and white felt in the dry goods stores. Houses were built large so that rooms could be rented. Furnaces were stoked by college boys. The restaurants and "Jack the Cleaner's" had college help. Washwomen flourished in the south part of town across the tracks.

College functions made the life of the town. In the fall the football games. Adams was too small to "do much in football." Big husky country boys went to the state agricultural college and the university. But the boys had speed and the Adams spirit. They prided themselves on being good losers. The town "grads" contributed to the football fund, and "Doc" Boardway bound up wounds free of charge. When the college beat Billings, the townspeople gathered in a dusky circle

around the athletic field to watch the bonfire celebration. It was not good form for the merchants to say too much when their dry goods boxes were stolen for fuel, although it was permissible to complain to the marshal when signs were taken down and tacked above the entrance of the Congregational church or the old pest-house. Then came basket ball, and later "track." A good track team was an Adams tradition. The merchants knew the names and nicknames, year after year, of the track athletes, could compare records since the founding of the college. Little boys held track meets all spring, and staggered theatrically into outstretched arms after a run across a fifteen foot lawn. The town had rain-stained bunting that was put up every year at the time of the State Meet.

Women followed social events with painstaking interest, as men did with athletics. They knew the names of the most popular girls, and who was going with whom. On the night of the Glee Club concert—the great social night of the year—they walked slowly back and forth in front of the chapel to see the dresses as the girls went in. They had their favorites—"the cutest girls." They were anxious to learn who was to be the heroine of the Dramatic Club play. Everett DeLong, '94, the editor of the Adamsville *Messenger*, "wrote up" the college plays, and compared the heroine of the current play to those of years back, as well as to Maude Adams and Julia Marlowe. His greatest praise was to say:

After last night's performance we must admit that Miss Hutchison takes her place among the brightest stars of the Adams dramatic galaxy, well in line with Helene Royce as Hermione in "A Winter's Tale" of '97, and with James Peacock as Shylock in the 1889 "Merchant of Venice" production, and second only to the superb performance of Daisy Lyons in the title part of the "Antigone" of Sophocles as performed in 1891.

Everett DeLong still kept alive the breathless tradition of Daisy Lyons as Antigone.

Everybody went to the Commencement events. The women of the town left their noon dishes and went over early to the campus on Class Day to get good seats in the rows of folding chairs in front of the outdoor platform, taking newspapers with them so that the varnish on the chair backs would not stick to their clothes in the heat. They made their husbands carry over cushions and camp stools to the campus on the last evening when the Glee Club sang. They knew all the old songs in the Club's repertoire—"Oh, I hope they sing 'Carry me back to old Virginny' next!" They marked their programs at the oratorical contests and agreed or disagreed hotly with the verdict of the judges.

There were snake dances, night shirt parades and hay rick rides through the main streets of the town. Caps and gowns in the spring. The two girls' literary societies—the Ionian and the Elizabeth Barrett Browning—mildly took the place of sororities in the school, fulfilling the Adams tradition of democracy. Housewives were accustomed to coming to their doors and calmly answering questions when initiates took the cat census of the town or the number of women who believed in Carrie Nation.

When school was over the town was "dead." There was nothing in the summer except an occasional baseball game between professors and business men. The town settled into a thick summer languor, under the great trees, in the moist heat of central Iowa. When fall came, and Harvey Higgins, the one lank drayman, carted trunks through the town, and there were hysterical greetings and embracings on the brick platform of the little station, people said, "Well, it seems pretty good to have them back after all."

CHAPTER II

There was only one girls' dormitory at Adams—"the Dorm"—a large brick building on a wide, sloping lawn, with fire escapes where town boys stole pans of candy set out to cool, and a gloomy reception hall where calling youths waited upon the "anxious bench." Freshman girls lived in the Dorm, as recommended by the Dean of Women, but the upper classmen lived in rooming houses on the three long streets that ran parallel to the campus. Some of these had traditions of greatness—the Wilson House, the Harris House, the Trombley House—either because great ones lived there, or because the landladies were good-natured. Everything depended upon "the bunch of girls." The importance of the men's rooming houses was more shifting.

The Harris House was one of the most famous. It was a tradition that some of the most prominent E. B. B. girls should room there, with one or two Ionians to keep away the dread name of sorority. It was an old barny two-story brown house with a narrow porch and big drafty rooms with battered furniture. Since the death of Mr. Harris, a few years ago, the house was in fearful repair. The furnace would not heat the big rooms, the bedrooms smelled like steam laundries in the mornings and the mirrors were dim with vapor; steam would suddenly come bursting through a wall, there were floods in the cellar when tubs and pails had to be collected and girls had to run over to the campus for masculine aid in stemming the torrents. The bathroom was unheated. But still, "nice girls had always stayed there." There were many male callers at the Harris House. It kept its popularity in spite of steam, floods and freezing. It stood on a corner of College Street across from the campus and from the new Carnegie library that was just being built. One large birch tree on the lawn threw a shadow over the porch where couples lingered on pleasant evenings.

The Harrises were one of the semi-important families of Adamsville. Mr. Harris had been a neat, insignificant little man. But Mrs. Harris was in some way related to the Adams family, so that she sometimes appeared in the less imposing reception lines, and as a helping hostess at teas. A little slender gentle, nervous woman, with bright, sweet eyes set in bony, darkened sockets, wearing always a black silk dress trimmed with black lace and a band of velvet around her little throat, making an appearance of appealing gentility. She was a cousin of the Mrs. Adrian Adams who had married her cousin, Adrian Adams, Jr., sole son of the Adrian Adams who had given the land for the campus of Adams College. Mrs. Adrian Adams lived in one of those square, white houses and had the only victoria and coachman in town. Adrian Adams wore the only Adamsville silk hat. A faint traditional glory glimmered about Mrs. Harris.

The older children, Alma and Russell, had both been graduated from Adams and had married classmates. They had been of "the Adams type." Perhaps a little more exclusively devoted to religion than the students of this day. Alma had been the president of the Y. W. C. A. in her Senior year, and an E. B. B. Russell had been in the Y. M. C. A. cabinet and on one of the gospel teams that were sent out to the surrounding small towns to preach Adams ideals and recruit new students for the college. "All-around fine students" and "in everything." Alma was now living in Montana, where her husband was a superintendent of schools, and Russell was in social service work in the East.

Hester, the youngest, had grown up in the shadow of the college. She adored the girls who stayed in the Harris House. Her mother, a shy little woman with delicate notions of gentility, would not permit her to "bother the girls." But sometimes she sat perched on a cot listening with shining-eyed, breathless awe to their talk of dates and classes and "Society."

Some of the girls were always active. Always about the campus, doing all their studying in the library. Others sprawled about their rooms, in kimonos or comfortable, sloppy undress, their hair down or hanging by two pins. They lay on their cots and talked, one girl's head in another's lap. About five o'clock there was a rush for the bathroom. These girls were the ones who "dolled up" for their evening dates, standing in front of the mirror and staring intently, then leaning forward to rub the powder out of their eyebrows with a moistened finger, putting on their corsets again and taking a deep breath as they clasped them.

At times they would suddenly pet and fondle Hester, praising her with school girl extravagance. "Hasn't this child the darlingest smile! I think she has the sweetest expression! Honestly, I think she's got the dearest disposition of any girl I ever saw."

Hester came up to see them when they were dressed for a function and stood adoring. Flowers were sent for the great event, the Glee Club Concert. She was given a bud or two when she helped to hook dresses and powder backs and offered eagerly to press petticoats at the last minute. She opened the door for swains and said shyly, "Won't you sit down? I'll call her"—then sped softly up the stairs to whisper in high excitement. "Somebody's come for Mildred!"

The girls' rooms—the cots piled with cushions, the fly-nets on the wall stuck full of photographs, the Indian heads of tinted plaster, the burnt-wood boxes, the pennants, the toilet things on the dressers, the chafing dishes and tea cosies. "A college girl's room." The girls at Adams took care of their own rooms—the boys, paying less rent, did not—but Hester was sometimes sent up with new castors or tacks. She slept with her mother in the old back parlor downstairs. She tried to make one corner of it look like "a college girl's room" with some of Alma's old pennants, all the kodak pictures that she

could gather—known and unknown—pasted on an oblong of shiny black cambric, a covered waist box and some cushions. Babe Dunkel—a girl with flying black fuzzy hair, "a caution"—had a cushion covered with the little colored silk bows from the inner rims of men's hats. Hester would have given anything in the world, she thought, for a cushion like that. But the boys that she knew still wore caps, and she was much too shy and awestruck by the college "men" to beg such trophies from them.

She admired all the girls—all the Harris House girls were "nice"—but she had special ones whom she worshiped. Daisy Lyons, the wonderful girl who had played the part of Antigone, whom Everett DeLong declared to be better than Julia Marlowe, had stayed there for a year. Then she had suddenly married an elderly widower in her home town and never reappeared at Adams. Hester had an old glove box of her mother's, of dark red plush lined with faded, tattered red satin, which she called "my most precious trophy box." In it she kept a little square photograph of Daisy Lyons—a girl with a severely classical face, with black hair combed up into a "psyche" and a square-necked white gown with enormous sleeves—a handkerchief that Mary Purcell had given her for Christmas, a faded sprig of lilac that had dropped from the coat of the 1897 football captain and that Hester had rescued from under the sofa when her mother was sweeping, a letter from Helen Garvis, an ancient bud from Helen's Glee Club flowers. Helen Garvis was her great adoration. She had been called "an ideal Adams girl." She had fluffy fly-away light hair, a sunny fresh-colored face, little soft hands. . . . Hester had worshiped her. She had "gone in for everything"—had been Y. W. president, in the Dramatic Club play, Senior president of E. B. B., had given the mantle oration. She had married John Fellows, the great man of her class—"an ideal Adams couple"—and they had gone to Asia Minor to found a new Adams among the

Turks. Professor Hildebrand called Helen Garvis "the incarnation of the Adams spirit." Helen Garvis . . . oh, she was the most wonderful, most perfect girl who had ever gone to Adams!

Hester was softly, wistfully, eagerly devout. She prayed:

"Oh, please dear Father, please make me grow up like my darlingest belovedest Helen. Oh, dear Father, I pray Thee, *please* make me like Helen, just as much as it is in Thy power for me to be like her—dear Father, and be taken into E. B. B.—if it pleases Thee that I should—but, oh, *please* dear heavenly Father, because I can't bear to live if I'm not. Oh, but *like Helen* . . . for Jesus' sake I ask it."

Then she sprang into bed, glowing with happy, secret shame, and snuggled down under the covers beside her mother who murmured, "Darling, mamma likes to see you good, but you make such long prayers when it's so cold. Your little feet are like ice. Can't you do part of your praying in bed?" "Oh, *no*, mamma!" "That furnace—I'm beginning to despair. I'll have to order coal again . . . eats up coal. . . ." Hester lay shivering and glowing, only half hearing. She was ashamed, far too shy and maidenly, to confess to God that she wanted to marry someone just like John Fellows. But that was in her prayers—and to go and start a new Adams in the most savage part of Africa, an even more glorious John and Helen . . . she wandered into sleep from a savage village filled with cocoanut palms where two noble people in white clothes were going about laying healing hands on the heads of little suffering savage children, braving terrible perils together. . . .

She knew Alma's and Russell's old Annuals—the "Pioneer"—by heart. The names of all the prominent students who had ever gone to Adams. She was sick if some popular Freshman girl turned down E. B. B. for Ionian. She went to every one of the Commencement events, and tried not to weep when one of her favorites crossed the platform of the

Congregational church to receive her diploma with a dipping bow. "Helen Geneva Garvis"—"John Warburton Fellows"—her emotion when those names were called. She lived through the summer until Harvey brought over the trunks in the fall.

She was in High School now. She "went in for" High School activities, because that was the Adams way. She yelled desperately at football games, helped edit "Pebbles," organized class parties, tried to make bright helpful little talks, like those of the college girls, at the Christian Endeavor. She "went with" various High School boys. All this was what the college girls did.

She wanted so fervently to be a real Adams girl. It was her religion, and Helen was her goddess. She believed with absolute trust in every aspect of the Adams ideals. She would die, she thought, if she weren't taken into E. B. B., if she didn't have a man for the Glee Club Concert. But she thought that these were mere selfish ambitions, that they shouldn't matter so violently as her young eager heart knew that they did, that what did matter was "service."

CHAPTER III

Hester was going to make a dear little Freshman, upper-class girls who lived in Adamsville said. She was slight and girlish, with a pretty early bloom—with light straight soft hair, a round delicately tinted face and slender throat, eager, innocent, responsive eyes. She had a lovely, wistful, tremulous, believing smile. The older girls were kind to her, and she repaid them with an utterly trustful, fervent and yet shy devotion.

College opened, and she was a part of it. She went actually to register with the two Freshman girls from the Harris House. She was one of the girls now—an Adams girl.

She was starting well—not through calculation, but through

the fervency of her belief and enthusiasm. She flung herself heart and soul, without reserve, into the activities of the Freshman class. Everything was going like a wonderful radiant dream come true. She had got "Pa" Taylor for Latin and "Bunny" Phelps for English, just as she had hoped. One of the Junior girls in the house was on the social committee for the Opening Reception, and she had "got a good man" for Hester—Randall Doty, a Junior who was a leading debater. There were fewer men than girls at Adams. Hester was one of the triumphant Freshmen who had a man all to herself. She wore her sheer white lace-trimmed graduating dress and the new long white gloves that Alma had sent her. Afterward, Randall Doty asked her for several dates, flattered by her little soft eager responsive laugh and her lovely smile. She was being rushed for E.B.B. Delight Peterson beckoned her into a corner of the library and murmured significantly: "Hester—if you get an Ionian bid don't take it until you hear from me." She was even being rushed tentatively for Ionian, although they knew that Alma had been an E.B.B. and that she went with the girls in the Harris House. That showed her eminence—that, and having dates with a prominent Junior.

She was one of the most popular Freshmen immediately. She and the other two Freshmen girls, Bess and Jinny, scarcely slept the night before the class scrap. They bound veils around their hair so that they need not comb it in the morning, but could dash straight over to the campus when the scrap began. Hester carried water for the fighters—a sign of social supremacy—and tore up three handkerchiefs to bind wounds. Afterward she eagerly handed out coffee and wiener sandwiches from the kitchen of the Harris House. At the first class meeting she was elected secretary by acclamation.

She was chosen to lead the first class prayer meeting, which sinners and all attended, youths eyeing the girls to whom they

would say with facetious nonchalance—"You seem to be going my way." She made an appealing, enthusiastic little talk on "Freshman Ideals." Afterward the girls crowded around her, exclaiming fervently, "Hester, you were wonderful! That was the *best* thing!"

"Oh, girls, was it?" she asked tearfully. "I was simply scared to death!"

They fell away respectfully as they saw that Jay Oehrle, a Freshman boy who was "showing up prominently," was lingering to walk home with Hester.

Jay carried Hester's testament and notes for her. He murmured,

"That was a great little speech, Miss Harris. I certainly wish I could do half as well when my time comes."

"Oh, you will!" Hester declared. "You'll do lots, lots better!"

He declared that it wasn't the kind of a night to go straight home. It was chilly, windy, raw. But they walked up and down the cinder paths in the blowing dusk, talking and pretending that they didn't feel the cold. Hester forced her teeth not to chatter and declared, "No, really I'm not cold."

"I don't want to make you catch cold or anything," Jay said, "but I certainly am enjoying this."

They talked about serious "real" things—about what college ought to mean to people, and what class prayer meetings "stood for," what the Adams spirit was, what girl would make the best class president for the winter term. When Jay finally left her on the worn porch of the Harris House, he declared earnestly,

"This certainly is the best talk I've ever had with a girl, Hester. I hope we can have lots more of 'em. I tell you, I think the people that have got the best interests of the class at heart ought to get together. It does a fellow good to talk with a girl that's got some ideals."

When she went into the house with eyes and nose red with cold, Jinny and Bess, who had been waiting for her, exclaimed disgustedly, "Well, he might at least have taken you to the Vienna and got you a sandwich to warm you up after keeping you out in the cold for three hours!" Jinny said she had picked Jay Oehrle "for that kind."

Jay usually took Hester home after class prayer meetings. She declared to Jinny and Bess,

"You know, girls, I like Jay *better* because he just talks about serious things to me, and doesn't take me to the Vienna afterward and everything, just like a regular date. Jay has the most wonderful ideas."

Jay Oehrle was a short slight boy with a thin dusky face and gray eyes, heavy black hair that fell in a thick lock over his forehead. He was going to be a minister. He led the Freshman yells with savage earnestness, screwing his face up into a tortured frenzy of bitter enthusiasm. There were already deep lines in his thin swarthy cheeks. He scolded the class bitterly for its lack of spirit.

There were more boys—"men," she learned to call them now. Some of the older girls told her that it was better not to stick to one in her Freshman year, but to "try them out." Such advice was too worldly for Hester. But she enjoyed with a bubbling recklessness under her earnestness the new delights of going with now this one, now that one, the exhilaration of her Freshman popularity. Of course, the older girls said she might lose out on the Glee Club concert and some other things this way—that was when it was an advantage to have "a steady man." Hester said, "Oh, I like all the boys so well, I think the Freshman class has the most wonderful bunch of boys ever got together!"

She loved the "serious talks" with Jay. And the first class president, Rob Alden, a rosy stocky boy with eyeglasses, was

"the grandest boy." Bunty Peterson was "loads of fun." She even went out once or twice with Big Bill Warren, because she was too tenderhearted to "turn him down forever" and he kept patiently asking her. Big Bill came from Winner, a tiny village a few miles from Adamsville. Big Bill from Winner was a joke in Freshman year. A huge awkward bony Freshman whose two long front locks of hair hung down to his heavy eyebrows and whose wrists and raw red hands dangled far out of the sleeves of his shiny coat, with deep-set mournful eyes and an enormous grinning mouth. He was tremendously solemn when he was with Hester, saying respectfully, "Yes, ma'am," but there were already rumors among the boys that that big gawk from Winner was "a regular clown." Of course he could not be taken seriously, like Jay Oehrle and Rob Allen, who seemed like real Adams boys.

Hester was naturally, instinctively among the "good bunch"—except for Jinny. Not necessarily the social belles, but the girls who were "active in Freshman affairs." Ellen, Bess, Margaret, Della, "Crazy Gertie" Bumstead. They asked her to the Dorm for meals and included her in spreads.

Bess Lake was in the Harris House because her Senior sister, Carrie, stayed there. Jinny Woodward had been recommended by a graduate from her home town. Jinny was tremendously popular for the first three weeks, was rushed by both societies—then she was felt to be "a mistake." She was pretty, she could sing and play, men liked her—but she was not the Adams type. She scoffed and would not go in for things unless she pleased. She was felt to be "a little too swift." She went to one of the town dances, with a "town fellow." Dancing was against the Adams traditions, although it was not damning to "be called up for dancing." But town dances were beyond the pale. Jinny always wanted to "do something reckless." She would not listen to the older girls.

She said rebelliously, "I don't know who appointed Carrie Lake my Dutch uncle. I don't care. Dad made me go here and if I'm sent home it's his own fault."

But Hester loved Jinny, although she "couldn't approve of all the things she did." She was fascinated by Jinny—her round, soft-featured, dark, rebellious face, her curling dusky hair and dark starry eyes and piquant uneven brows, strongly marked, one higher than the other. She mourned over Jinny and pleaded with her. Jinny had "another self." Why didn't she show it? Why did she do all these wild things that counted against her? She tried to "get Jinny into things." Jinny could do anything if she would.

As the year went on, and the older girls showed their disapproval more markedly, Jinny grew more reckless. Hester did things for her that tortured her sensitive conscience. She would not tell the other girls when Jinny went out with Dave Greenaway, a "fast" Junior against whom she had been warned. She stayed awake to let Jinny into the house after hours. She opened the upstairs window when she heard Jinny softly call, and, with smothered giggles, climb up the porch post to the balcony. When her own mother was responsible for the girls! She, Hester, who believed so earnestly the little speeches that she made in the Y. W., lying and helping another girl to lie! Yes, and about the things that Adams girls didn't do!

After the episode of the town dance, both societies dropped Jinny, although she did room at the Harris House. Hester got her bid to E. B. B. The upper class girls called her and Bess into Carrie's room and told them, with many ecstatic embraces, before the bids were out. They had a spread for them—cheese dreams and fudge. They said that they were sorry about Jinny but she'd killed her own chances. If she cut out Dave Greenaway and the town fellows, she might have a chance in the spring. Hester could not conceive of refusing an E. B. B. bid, but it was dreadful to go in without Jinny.

They had a queer friendship, disapproving and pleading on Hester's part, scoffing and then suddenly remorseful and affectionate on Jinny's.

"Jinny, if you'd only give yourself a chance, you'd *love* Adams."

Jinny said the whole thing was "too tame." She wrote verses about "purple adventure," furious when Hester found them in her English notebook and declared that they were "good enough to hand in to the *Adams Magazine*." What did she mean by adventure? She didn't know, but "something wild, something crazy."

Hester's friendship for Jinny was the only stain upon the clear shining purity of her Freshman record. She did all the things that Freshman girls should do. She started out on the committee for the first Freshman party, ladling out lemonade on the lawn of the house of the Dean of Women. She was on social committees, prayer meeting committees, committees to get up class yells and services for the Day of Prayer, the first Freshman girl to lead a meeting of the Y. W. C. A. She went with her Opening Reception man, Randall Doty, to the Glee Club concert. She seemed all the more a real Adams girl because she wore her little simple graduation dress. Randall added a touch of imposing elegance by having sent to Farwell City for her roses. Big Bill had asked her, too. She had turned him down, of course—gently, because Hester couldn't help being kind—but it was all the more glorious and exciting to have had two invitations.

Big Bill, in his old blue suit with a choker collar, officiated as an usher—a consolation prize given to single but respected youths. He started the evening in gloom, but his natural clownishness broke forth, his huge grin widened and widened, and he took great glee in seating a frivolous Freshman couple among the faculty and in leading Stub Parker to a seat beside his last year's girl. In the intermission he distributed, with

great applause, tiny bunches of artificial forget-me-nots to all the ushers. It was seen at once that Big Bill was coming to the front.

Hester was generously glad that on one occasion, at least, Jinny shone. She looked "glorious"—all the girls admitted it. She wore a pale green evening gown that showed her soft dusky-white shoulders and her black hair was piled and twisted into a psyche knot. Dave Greenaway had sent her two dozen American Beauty roses. Her cheeks and her lips had a dark glowing color. For once that night the girls exclaimed over her, approved her. Dave escorted her to the chapel in the one Adamsville hack. He wore the only dress suit outside of the Glee Club and the faculty circle. It was a night of imposing triumph for Jinny.

But she did not get into E. B. B. in the spring. She had no solid position in the Freshman class. Hester wept and pleaded with her to come back to Adams the next year. It hurt her desperately when Jinny broke into bitter, laughing, biting mockery of all that Hester felt that Adams "stood for," getting more and more reckless as Hester wept, finally calling the leading spirits of the Freshman class "a bunch of rubes varnished with religion."

"You know very well that Dottie Burroughs does as many wicked things as I've ever done. But she makes little sweetie talks in Y. W. and so it's all right. I don't pretend to, that's all. I don't sugar over what I do. People have such fits about Dave. 'Wild'—well, what if he is? Just the same, Dave's one of the most decent fellows I was ever with. I'd trust him any time before I would Jay Oehrle."

"Jinny! You've always been unjust to Jay. But I'm *not* going to listen to you when you say anything against Adams."

Jinny said too much for even Hester. Even when Jinny caught her in the hall the next day and pushed her into her room, throwing beseeching, remorseful, soft arms tightly

about her, and calling herself ridiculous extravagant names, Hester—although she smiled tremulously and let herself be embraced—found her tender, trusting, orthodox little heart wounded beyond speedy healing. She couldn't respond wholeheartedly to Jinny's coaxing and embraces and funny remorseful antics.

Not even when Jinny said,

"Hester, beloved. I don't doubt it's largely that I'm peeved because I haven't made good here and I know it."

Jinny cried, when she left.

"Oh, Hester, you're so *innocent*, anyone can make you swallow anything whole! I feel wicked going away and leaving you here."

Except for this one thing the Freshman year ended in radiant glory.

Jay Oehrle was staying on for a week at Adamsville to finish his work at Jack the Cleaner's. He and Hester went to all the trains to see "the last of the bunch" off. Then they sat out on the deserted steps of Blaine Hall in the moonlight until two o'clock, having the best and most serious of all their talks. Jay told her his ideals of a minister's career. He confided to her the details of a love affair with a girl in his home town who was teaching and sending him money to help him through college. Hester gave him earnest shy advice, with a delicious confidential feeling. They talked about what they meant to do next year.

Jay said,

"One thing I'm not going to do, I'm not going to kill time like I've let myself do sometimes this year, and I'm not going to stand for the other fellows in the house doing it. I tell you, we're here at Adams to *work*, and not to just work for ourselves but for the college—"

"Oh, I think that's *true*!" Hester cried eagerly, looking at him with shining trustful eyes in the ivy-shadowed moonlight.

Jay cleared his throat and looked out frowningly over the

slope of dewy campus to where the black cinder paths lay edged with laburnum and bridal wreath. Hester sat beside him with her hands tightly clasped, worshiping the beauty.

She said,

"I think you're *right*. I feel that way, too. I feel as if this year I've done too much, and thought too much—well, just for myself. I know I haven't thought enough about Adams."

Jay declared,

"Well, if *you* haven't Hester, I certainly don't know anyone who has. I think you've got more of the real Adams spirit than any girl in the Freshman class."

His thin, dark, tense hand closed over hers as he spoke. She could not say just why the clasp began to make her uncomfortable. She twisted her hand slightly, and felt his fingers reach higher on her wrist. She sprang up a little breathlessly, cried with forced gaiety,

"If we don't go home Prexie'll be getting the marshal after us!" and ran down the cinder path.

"Silly! What made me act like such a silly?" she berated herself afterward.

Her mother murmured, half awake, "Hester, where *were* you?"—moaned and turned back to sleep. Hester lay with open, radiant eyes, thrilling again over the talk with Jay, the partings, tears welling up when she thought of Jinny, and all the wonderful Seniors, gone . . . smelling again the odor of night and dew and bridal wreath on the campus . . . one beautiful year gone. . . .

CHAPTER IV

That summer seemed endlessly long and dull. Hot—every day worse than the one before. The nights were terrible. Hester and her mother did not pretend to do regular cooking.

After a little lunch, they each took a bath, put on their nightgowns, and tried to read and sleep in the darkened back parlor until the worst heat of the day was over. At night, Hester hooked the screen door and lay down on one of the old cot mattresses before it. The Harris House attic was full of cot relics.

The town was nothing without the college people. How could she ever stand it until fall? She went again to the Christian Endeavor. Humphrey Dilley walked solemnly home with her. She and Humphrey had been in school together since the day when they had both started into kindergarten in the basement of the old Universalist church. Humphrey was one of the banker Dilleys, an old, loyal, solid Adamsville family. Hester knew that Humphrey was "a dandy good fellow," but it wasn't easy to talk to him, as it was to Jay and Bunty. They discoursed about their classmates and the prospects for next year.

"I had a letter from Rob."

"Oh, *did* you? What did he say?"

"Well—I don't know as anything specially interesting."

She tried to talk over candidates for class officers and for next spring's *Pioneer* Board election with him; but although Humphrey was a good, solid member of the class, the kind who is elected treasurer, he could not exchange thrilling confidences over these things as Jay could. Humphrey was not a leader. Their talks always ended with:

"Well, it'll seem mighty good to see them all come back in the fall."

He tried with the most conscientious determination to keep in step with her as they went down the long tree-shadowed walk, frequently stopping to start over again. He was a big heavy-shouldered youth with a large, good, dull face and a massive wave of dark hair. A little too slow to make a football player. At the door he lingered and lingered, until he could

finally utter the parting word—"Well, I expect it must be getting late."

"But then," Hester thought as she went in yawning, "Humphrey is such a *good* fellow, and I know I ought to be ashamed."

Fall came at last. That hottest week of all in September, when she helped her mother to clean the house, wash all the bedding, put up the cots and get the girls' rooms ready.

Jay came three days early to get his old job with Jack the Cleaner. Hester spent those three evenings with him, wandering about the campus while he outlined to her his plans for the class during the year, and she broke in with,

"Oh, won't it be glorious to see everybody! Jay, I don't see how I've lived through this summer."

They both felt the glory of being important members of their class.

Hester was already in all the activities that she could manage. She was on the committee for the Opening Reception. She promised to give Jay his choice of the Freshman girls. She wore a badge saying "Old Girl," and ran down to all the trains to meet new people and old. She did want to make the Freshman girls feel at home, feel that they had a place in Adams. She took Freshman girls to their rooming houses. They looked at her with adoring eyes. They said, "If all Adams girls are like Hester Harris!"

She was so kind, so enthusiastic about everything, so full of the Adams spirit, telling them to think of her as a big sister and to ask her anything. She meant every word of this, meant it ardently. But she was wondering which ones would do for E. B. B., which was only second to Adams itself in her faith and love.

They were all pouring in now, more on every train. There was such a feeling now of old and tested intimacy with her classmates. Della, Ellen, Bess—Gertie more crazy than ever. Bob Alden cried,

"Hester, I've been watching for that smile all the way from Des Moines! How you was? I sure am tea-kettled stiff to see you."

They were all hilarious because the train had gone sailing past Big Bill on the platform at Winner, where only one local and one freight stopped. They told how he had tried to signal it frantically with a bandana. The boys said, grinning,

"Let's get up a reception gang, badges and horns and stuff, to meet old Bill when he comes into town in the caboose."

The station platform was stacked high with trunks, and everyone was trying to get a promise for quick delivery from Harvey Higgins. Embracings, shrieks—Hester had seen all this since she was a little girl, and now she was "in it."

All back but Jinny. She had thought that she would miss Jinny, and the Seniors, so terribly. But these first weeks were too full. Jinny had gone West suddenly and was teaching a country school, to which she had to ride six miles on horseback.

"Just to be doing something wild," she had written Hester. What a shame that Jinny hadn't come back and given herself a chance to make good.

Activities were so much more serious this year. It was the Adams ideal to go in for as many as possible, to sink the individual in the public good and so advance the school spirit. Hester plunged into them all. She scampered about the campus trying to get items for her "try-out" for the "Blue and White" staff. She tried for the Dramatic Club, very ambitiously with "The quality of mercy is not strained."

Her voice was light, of course. She said, "Oh, I don't expect to make it, but I think as many ought to try out as can for the sake of the club."

She was hurt because Wade Brunner, a Senior, said that she read Portia's speech as if she were giving a talk to the Y. W. But then, Wade Brunner was a "crab." No one liked him because he was "so sarcastic." He thought that no one knew

anything about dramatics but himself. Hester knew that she could not make the Girls' Glee Club (at this time an inferior organization, overshadowed by the Glee Club, as the men's organization was called). But she could sing well enough for the Oratorio Society, where all that was needed was to carry a tune, and she joined that. Even the German Club, made up largely of maidens who "had no other activities." She and Ellen had decided that some of the "girls who did things" ought to go into these organizations and raise the general tone. She was on every committee in the Sophomore class. It was "service," "doing something for Adams."

She worried a long time about joining the Volunteer Band. The German Club was merely obscure. But the Volunteer Band was "roasted in the Annual." She still kept her worship of Helen and John Fellows, still talked of going to China when school was over. She believed in carrying the Adams spirit to downtrodden lands. Then wasn't it her duty to join the Volunteer Band? She had long talks with Jay about it. He opposed it fiercely, with strong arguments.

"That's all very well, Hester. I honor you for feeling that way. I may decide to go to Asia or somewhere like that myself, although I think there's a big field right in this country. I tell you it would be about the grandest work a man could do to carry the spirit of Adams over the world. But I'm opposed to seeing you join the Volunteer Band. Its purpose is good—I honor that—but it hasn't much of a standing, as an organization, in Adams. It hasn't the right kind of people."

"Oh, but Jay," Hester cried anxiously, "don't you think then some of us that believe in what it's doing ought to join it?"

"No, because we're putting our service into other organizations. You're doing a whole lot right now for the school through the Y. W. and all, and you can do more there."

Rob said,

"Gosh! I think the heat must have turned your brain this

summer, girl. That bunch of pills. Leonard Stoner and Susie Dykes and Jesse Babcock. Wouldn't you look sweet among 'em? Well, maybe you could make a hit with Jesse. Is that your object?"

She felt guilty, but she was glad to have two fine earnest fellows like Jay and Rob, who had the best interests of the school at heart, advise her against joining the Band. There were Leonard Stoner and Susie Dykes, one of the school jokes as a couple—Leonard a little light wisp of a dried-up youth, Susie a big homely girl with flat feet and stiff black hair and prominent teeth. Jesse Babcock was the biggest "pill" in school, the one who was roasted in the *Pioneer*. Then there was that poor girl with the harelip—Hester always took special pains to "be nice to" her—and the little cripple, and other harmless but insignificant ones. She didn't belong with them, that was true. And of course she hadn't absolutely made up her mind to go to Asia—perhaps she oughtn't to bind herself.

After that eventless summer she wanted to go to everything. She accompanied the Harris House Freshman girls to the Dorm reception, which was chiefly useful for youths who wished to have a good view of the new girls.

Dorm receptions were always supposed to be dull. Hester went about "making people have a good time." She was really shy about approaching strangers, but for an old girl to sit and talk to a few people whom she already knew would be too selfish. Mrs. Potter, the matron, "counted upon her to keep things going." Her shyness kept her from being officious, and colored her soft cheeks delicately. One gloomy Freshman youth sat in a corner, and his dark eyes followed her half sulkily. He listened to her little high, sweet, eager voice that was just the least bit breathless.

Hester said to the other girls:

"That poor fellow's been sitting there all evening and I don't believe anyone's said a word to him."

"Why don't you, then?"

"Well, I do think that someone ought to."

She promised to help Mrs. Potter to get some games going. They were all to play Wink 'Em. "Now I want every boy in this room to get behind a chair, and every girl to sit in a chair. Only Dick Johns. He can't have any girl in his chair."

"Why do you pick on me?" Dick wailed.

The girls seated themselves in the chairs with the aid of Mrs. Potter. A dozen boys wanted Hester. She called on her courage and spirit and slipped softly into the chair behind which the lonesome youth was gloomily standing. She felt a kind of reluctant thrill from the dark strong hands that hovered over her shoulders, closing down with a fearful grip when bashful Freshman boys winked gratefully in response to her shining, helpful eyes.

Then later she found herself near him at the frappé table. He silently brought her a carefully held cup of the reddish frappé. She talked brightly to him, trying to penetrate his gloom. They sat down in one of the long red-cushioned window seats in the big reception hall. She clasped her hands lightly and smiled helpfully at him, ready to respond.

"Do you like your classes? Whom did you get in Freshman English? Oh, it's too bad you didn't get Bunny, he's so perfectly dear, I had him last year. But then, Professor Thurber's very good too. It's hard to start, isn't it? But then, I think Adams does more for its new students than any other school."

His silence intrigued her. She felt that she must enthuse, and rouse him from it. The beauties of the campus, the faculty, Prexie, the new crowd of girls in the Dorm, the fine spirit of the Freshman class. She was horrified when he said gloomily:

"Yes, it's all right if you just fall in with whatever anybody else does. It's all right if you get their 'attitude' but they don't want any fellow to have an attitude of his own."

"Oh, no! Oh, you don't understand Adams at all. They *want*

people to think for themselves. That's what they *teach* people to do."

"Yes, sure, if it's just what they think they ought to think."

She exclaimed: "Oh, but you mustn't start right in criticizing! How can you expect to like things, or to have people like you, if you do that? That isn't the Adams spirit—it's to help and not hinder."

"Yes, but I want to have a pretty darn good idea of what I'm helping first."

"I don't see how you could have listened to Prexie's chapel talk and not know what you're helping!"

"Oh sure, Adams ideals that they all talk about—but a fellow's got to think about and decide these things for himself."

Hester explained and defended Adams with loving enthusiasm. She was flattered in some obscure way by his silent gloomy regard which she could not quite fathom. And besides, she must not let a Freshman get the wrong idea of the school. He was a dark boy, with thick swart black hair and a wide mouth that seemed at the same time sensitive, hurt and bitterly satirical. He wore a cheap, black, ready-made suit and careless scuffed shoes. He told her that he had been working on a farm all summer. She could see that his dark sunburned hands were scarred. But he had none of the uncouthness that offended her in Big Bill. She did not learn his name. When she left the Dorm, she found him silently beside her in the dusk. The other girls went hurrying on ahead of them, and she heard giggles and whispers.

The girls were all waiting for her, in their kimonos, massed on the stairs.

They chorused: "Hester! Are you trying to do missionary work? Where did you pick him up?"

Hester said, a little nettled, "Why? isn't he all right? *I* don't know who he is—from Adam."

"That's that Joe Forrest. That's that nut that wouldn't join

the Y. M. and invited Summer Grant to leave his room. Is *that* what you pick up when we aren't there to take care of you! I never thought it of Hester."

"Girls, she was sitting on the window seat talking away to him—I thought she must be trying to convert him."

"Look out—you're getting her fussed."

"Well, I don't care," Hester said, "he wasn't a bit bad to talk to."

It made her feel foolish, though, that she had been so interested in him, and wondered so who he was. That Joe Forrest. She had heard the boys talking about him, saying that a little session with the Damme Club some dark night wouldn't hurt that guy. He might change his tune if they kept him up a tree for a while in his night shirt. He needn't think he could come here and criticize. Who was he anyway? His father was a preacher in a little burg named Pitt. Fred Loomis knew him. Said he'd always been like that—always been "ornery."

Hester felt strangely conscious when she heard the boys talking about him. Rob said he had only made that fuss about not joining the Y. M. to get some notoriety. All the fellows joined the Y. M.—it didn't necessarily mean they had to attend every meeting, or believe every word that was said, either. Lots of good fellows didn't take part. "But this guy had to show off."

Hester said nervously, "Oh, I'm not defending him. But I do think you boys ought to give him more of a chance before you do anything to him. If you'd go and talk to him—I don't think he really means all those things."

"Well, he's starting in with the wrong notions of what he's going to do, I'll tell you, and it wouldn't hurt him any to get a little of it licked out of him."

For a time the advent of Joe Forrest made quite a commotion. He was the only youth who had ever refused point-blank to affiliate with the Y. M. C. A. when he entered Adams—al-

most an automatic act. Even if a fellow "didn't take much active part" it "gave him a good standing." If Joe Forrest remained until his Junior year, he would be the sole youth who did not have the letters Y. M. C. A. printed after his name in the *Pioneer*, saving letters for those who could claim no other activity. Of course it wasn't that alone. He didn't have the right spirit. He was a knocker. Adams had no use for a fellow like that. For a time, whenever members of the Damme Club—the college punitive society—were seen in conclave, people said, "I bet they'll do something to that Joe Forrest tonight."

But Joe Forrest, after his spectacular entrance, slipped back into obscurity. People let him alone and he let them alone. He seemed to have retired into a state of gloomy silence and inaccessibility. The boys in his rooming house—an unimportant little house on the wrong side of the campus—declared that he was "a mighty good guy" and that "they liked old Joe." He was a good student, a "shark," and only occasionally asked disconcerting questions that made people remember that the Damme Club had never dealt with him. "Oh, he makes me tired," was what was said of him now. But he no longer seemed important enough to concern the Damme Club. He was simply a dark, shabby, taciturn boy, something of a grind, who didn't go out for athletics.

Hester sometimes saw him around the library or crossing the campus. He gave her a feeling of uneasiness, almost of guilt. She had never followed up that "earnest" talk she had had with him. She was ashamed. She would not admit, even to herself, the thrill that she felt when those dark hands had suddenly clamped down upon her shoulder and forced her back into her chair. How dreadful. . . .

Hester and Jay Oehrle took fewer walks and talks together this year. Jay was still prominent, but he had lost a little of his Freshman eminence. People "got tired of his trying to run everything." Hester was with Bunty Peterson oftener.

Big Bill had come into sudden and immense popularity among the other boys. The boys at his rooming house had "got him tamed down a little." His coat sleeves now reached his hands and his front locks were disciplined. Of course he was "always up to something" and couldn't be taken seriously. Hester—remembering John Fellows, slight, fair-haired, fine-featured—could not help feeling an uncouthness and disconcerting levity in Big Bill. She laughed at his practical jokes—as when he attended the Sophomore fancy dress party in the gym as the Bride of the Mistletoe—but still he was not quite what she thought of as the Adams type. There was still a good deal of "taming down" to be done. Oh, she liked Bill, no one could help liking him. But she was glad to accept Bunty's invitation for the Glee Club concert early in the year and fend off Bill's bid.

During the second semester she found that Joe Forrest was in her Poly. Sci. class. It was a sleepy class, conducted by an aged, learned and kindly man, and elected as a "snap" by a large medley of assorted students. No one was expected to do anything in it. But Joe Forrest, although he sat silent and bored most of the time, slumped far down in a chair and digging with his pencil at the initials and fancy designs carved in the desk arm, would sometimes come out startlingly with those sharp, disconcerting questions.

Hester made good grades in Poly. Sci. and kept up her notebook. She was always a conscientious student. It was a joke among the boys to flunk Poly. Sci.—almost an honor—but it would not have done for a girl. Of course she didn't take it seriously, like Major History and Applied Christianity. She was horrified at some of the statements that Joe Forrest made. He "liked to argue," as the boys said. But at the same time she was always conscious of him sitting in the back of the room among two rows of boys who handed about sacks of "red

hots" and looked on each others' notebooks. His face was dark against the light from the long windows.

She always had that uneasy feeling of guilt that had troubled her since the Dorm reception. She would try to speak to him. She did one day, a little breathlessly, as they were leaving class.

"Did you hear what Professor Duke assigned for Tuesday?"

He stared at her, and told her. She felt herself blush hotly, until she saw with what care he was opening his notebook and finding the assignment. A few days later he was near her when they left class. He lingered with an air of indifferent carelessness and walked down the long hall with her. Then he began walking back to the library with her.

The girls said lightly, "You must have made a hit with our friend the crab."

At the Glee Club concert, she looked brightly about, telling Bunty, "I wanted to see where Ellen and Tad were sitting" . . . Joe Forrest wasn't there, even as an usher.

He always sat across from her in the library now. When she left the building, he got up after a moment, still with that indifferent air, and followed her, coming up with her suddenly just as she paused on the stone steps outside. They discovered that they were in different divisions of the same Latin class. Hester was pleased to have Joe ask her questions about constructions, which she always worked out faithfully. Joe was "a shark," but only in things that "he could see some sense in taking." He could see no sense in taking Latin. Since he was required to take it, at least he wouldn't study the stuff, wouldn't pretend that he did. He and Hester began "getting their Latin together," she with the constructions all conscientiously learned, he with no preparation but frequently able to throw light upon something that had puzzled her. There was a grassy place beyond the library where Hester liked to sit to study in the spring.

Now Joe always sat there with her. She argued with him the value of ancient languages. There was a kind of fearful pleasure in hearing the statements that he made.

She knew that people were saying, "Honestly, is Hester Harris going with that Joe Forrest?"

Joe was no longer conspicuously obstreperous. He had the respect of several of his professors, the liking of a few boys who knew him intimately. But his reputation was settled as that of "a grouch," "a crab." He seemed to be absolutely the wrong person for Hester Harris.

Hester's arguments with him all settled now about the definition of the Adams spirit and of "Adams ideals."

"The Adams spirit is the spirit of 'pure democracy.' You know very well that you girls wouldn't take that poor kid with the harelip into E. B. B. You know that if any fellow got her name for a party he'd slide out of taking her."

He said, "It's all this simply falling in with things and talking about 'em as settled facts, when you don't know what they are or whether you believe 'em or not, that I'm talking about. . . . You girls at the Y. W., you just repeat the same stuff over and over and never stop to find out whether you understand a word of it. Winnie Parker, down on the poster to lead your Y. W. on the subject of 'Honesty in Little Things,' and then goes and sits by poor old Susie Dykes every day in German so that she can copy her written work."

Hester made an almost tearful defense. She knew what the others would say. "Why do you take the trouble to argue with a grouch like that? What do you care what he says?"

But she was most ardently anxious to convert Joe. She cried, "Well, I know some of the girls do things like that—we all do things we shouldn't—but then, most of them *are* sincere. Winnie's just one instance."

"Sure. But it's this taking things for granted that gets me."

She tried to defend her own sincerity.

He looked at her. "Gosh! I know you believe the whole business, Hester. You believe everything, don't you? Poor kid."

"Why, Joe! I do believe it—of course I do. I just wish I could make you see what I mean by these things."

She knew that the right was on her side—that he was just using little unimportant instances to put her off—but she hated this constant pinning her down to exact definitions. "Well, what do you mean by 'democracy'—if it isn't that? Just what do you mean? What are 'Adams ideals'? 'Service'—serve what? And how and why, and where's it going to get you?" Hester cried in despair, "You have to *feel* these things, Joe. You can't define them in so many words."

"Well, how you going to make me feel them?"

Once he burst out: "Gosh! People can act the way they please for all I care. It's this damn sugaring things over that gets me, all around here. It was just the same in my dad's church. Have to hit every nail just a little on the slant."

But she liked Joe so well, "in spite of the way he talked." She wanted to "change his viewpoint about these things," to "make him see things in a better light." A kind of intimacy had unconsciously grown between them. Joe told her things that made her feel that she could understand him better. He was the alien among four stepbrothers and sisters. He "wasn't happy at home." His father wanted him to do one thing and he wanted to do another. He hated Pitt, but he loved the woods and the river.

She was more than flattered—touched and stirred—by these confidences. They sat out in their own little grassy spot near the cool stone foundation of the "lib," Joe looking down at the ground and poking at it with a little stick as he talked. He said that she was "the only one he'd tell about these things." She felt his sensitiveness and loneliness under his armor of hurt callow cynicism and "orneriness." And yet there was something mature about Joe, something that the minds of

the other boys didn't have. His cynicism, his occasional rudeness, his angry bluntness, wounded her. He told her, when she was elected to the *Pioneer* Board, "You know you don't even pretend to write. Susie Dykes can write a darn sight better than you can, Hester, and you know it. You got on on the platform of general compliance." Yet there was something almost childlike, oddly grateful and shy, in the way that he turned to her softness and gentleness and responsiveness. That little eager, trustful way of hers. It seemed to soften the harsh, bleak outlines of things, and he wanted it even while he mocked at it. There was all the special pleasure, too, of being the chosen one of someone who cared for few people.

"Hester Harris and Joe Forrest! What's Hester thinking of! What on earth does she see in him!"

But with the spring, it was seen to be "a case." They were constantly together. The girls in the Harris House declared that it was no use trying to talk Hester out of it, they believed Joe had a kind of power over her. She did the things that he loved to do—went with him on long tramps into the woods near Adamsville, instead of driving out in picnic parties of four. She read the books that he picked out for her in the library, although some of them seemed "terrible." He would not stay in the parlor of the Harris House, declaring that he could not stand Dolly Rowen and Fred Davis, who had "a terrible case" and sat in the corner in melting-eyed silence. He and Hester walked until they were tired, and then stayed out under the birch tree talking.

He was going to come back next year because of Hester.

CHAPTER V

Joe went out through Iowa and South Dakota during the summer selling paring knives. He made enough to start him at

Adams the next year. He wrote Hester letters with little odd, appealing strains of boyishness cropping out. She agonized over whether she "ought to keep on going with him next year." When he came back, his dark, thin, strong face with the black hair fascinated her as it had done before. Joe got a job working in the Vienna Café, one long room with a counter and stools and a row of "drug store tables," the ceiling festooned with ancient red and green tissue paper.

Their career as "a couple" was stormy and fitful this year. Hester was always breaking it off, to the satisfaction of the girls. Then after a period of lonely agonized weeping, it would be on again.

Hester had looked forward to the *Pioneer* Board as the pinnacle of her college course. She could never forget the glorious times that Alma's Board had had, that had seemed so wonderful to a small sister. That was when Alma had got to know Herschel, whom she had later married. That little sacred room on the third floor of Recitation Hall where the Annual Board met had been her goal. '03 had a wonderful Board. Gertie, Ellen, Bess, Bunty. Rob Alden was editor-in-chief. Bunty Peterson was business manager. Big Bill was on the Board. He was editor of the joke department. If it had not been for Joe, Hester might have "gone with" Bunty. He was a slim alert boy with "lots of the right spirit," a leader of mass meetings. More personally attractive than Jay, not such a clown as Bill. Everyone said that he and Hester would "make a grand couple." Why did she have to stick around with Joe?

The boys talked to her, when she and Joe were temporarily "off." They told her that they had nothing against Joe Forrest, that he had brains, but he was a knocker, a crab, not her kind. A fellow like that did nothing to help the school. It "made them tired" that she had always turned down Big Bill, and then would go with a fellow like Joe who wasn't anything in school.

She knew that everything was different this year because of Joe. She had got him to "go in for debate," but she sometimes felt that he had had more influence with her than she with him. She could not go in for things as fervently and innocently as she had always done. Echoes of Joe's sarcasms stayed with her. She did not enjoy the *Pioneer* Board as she had expected to do. Joe was jealous of Bunty, even while he scorned him, declaring that Bunty was the worst bluffer in school, that he'd talk just the same about any "set of ideals" that happened to be on tap where he happened to be, that he was out for Bunty Peterson and nothing else. "Bluff" was Joe's great word that year. He was seeing bluff everywhere. He worried Hester by declaring that debates were mostly bluffing, too.

"You want to be smart, not wise, to win a debate," he said. "Sure it's bluff—isn't your whole object to pretend there's no truth on the other side, when you know there is?"

Junior year, with all its importance and prestige, was not at all what she had thought it would be. Their tempestuous career was followed with disapproval, but intense interest by the girls in the Harris House. The few of these whom Joe liked stood up for him violently, the others detested the sight of him. But they all agreed that he and Hester were "a queer couple." Hester and Joe had desperate disputes. When they were at enmity, Hester could not study, could not work, burst into strange fits of weeping. He was always wounding her most cherished beliefs—bitterly and consciously, she thought in agony—and then being sorry when it was too late.

"Joe, it seems to me that you deliberately try to hurt one of the deepest beliefs in my life."

"Belief—but why do you believe it?"

"Why, because—why, because I *do*."

"That's just what I'm saying. You've never thought about it at all. You just take all they cram down your throat. Gosh,

Hester, you'd believe anybody. What I'm objecting to is acting as if Prexie was the Pope, sitting on the chapel platform sending out bulls. Prexie's a darn good chapel speaker, and he's a darn good money-getter, too. Has to be. His right hand and his left aren't always on speaking terms. Well, that's all right, it's his job—but don't try to make him infallible."

"Joe Forrest! You don't understand Prexie. No wonder you've got the reputation of being a knocker."

"Sure! That's just what I'm talking about. Slide over everything and never take a straight look at anything—might see something. That's my point exactly. Fellow doesn't swallow everything in one big lump, and then he's a knocker."

"Well, you are a knocker. I try to say you aren't when people call you that—"

"Well, why should you say I'm not if you think I am?"

"Joe! Oh, this is hopeless. Why do we ever try to agree?"

He answered gloomily, "Why do we?" But after that he would show his contrition for hurting her. He would say, "You believe things so darn hard, Hester. I'm afraid you're going to get an awful jolt some day. It scares me."

The Adams way was to trust fervently, without reserves. Joe had to question into everything. He "couldn't let anything alone." Criticism was "crabbing," and he was always criticizing. He said that he wasn't going to be fed with pre-digested ideals, like Mellins Food, whether they were good for him or not. That it wasn't the business of a college to "teach ideals," anyway—just to lay the facts before you and let you make your own deductions. That you weren't here to "do things for the school"—that stood to reason—but to make use of the school.

He criticized the Adams heroes and great men. Jay Oehrle was his pet aversion—and Joe took pleasure in his aversions. Jay—slender, dark, intense—rubbed Joe all the wrong way.

Jay's ferocious earnestness about class politics and "spirit," his political maneuvering, his speeches, his officiousness—Joe hadn't a good word for him.

"Look at his mouth," he said once to Hester, "if you want to find out what the Reverend Jay is like."

The worst of it was that she couldn't help noticing Jay's mouth. She knew that it had that vague something that had always repelled her. A kind of tortured sensuality—poor Jay, it told all too much about him. Although Hester didn't recognize it as that, only as "something she didn't like." It made her remember that night on the steps of Blaine Hall. Hester tried to defend Jay against Joe—but after that she shrank from having Jay near her. Joe's comments were always affecting her that way, and she thought that it was wrong, that she wasn't "seeing the best in people" as she should.

But Joe was not one of those who rejoiced when Jay Oehrle failed by three votes to make the *Pioneer* Board, a thing for which he had been maneuvering since his Freshman year. He said that it was mean to beat a fellow out of something he'd set his heart on. Sure, he was "a politician." Only not so slick as some of the others.

Joe and Hester had some wonderfully happy hours in the fall, when Joe rented one of the old livery teams and they went out to Sandy Creek for an all-day picnic. They sat in the long coarse grass on the shaggy bank of the creek, in an open place ringed about with oak trees. Joe brought out of his pocket a small, thumbed copy of "The Rubaiyat," which was then his Bible. Hester would not admit that she liked the sentiment—she didn't think it was "a sorry scheme of things" and she didn't want to smash it—but the rhythm was lovely. "A book of verses underneath a bough"—that she liked. Joe told her about the times when he had camped out in the woods "when he was a kid." They had a bonfire and roasted wieners and marshmallows, and then Joe blew up the sacks.

Joe was "a kid still" in some ways, in spite of his maturity in others. When Hester quarreled with him, he had to do something to prove how bad he was. It was one of those silly, childish things that caused the final trouble. Joe had scoffed at the idea of activities being "service." He told Hester that she went into activities because it was the thing to do, and she couldn't bear not to be approved and popular. And that was all right, if she felt that way—only why call it "service"? Poor Hester denied, and then agonized over whether there wasn't truth in it. They went on to quarrel. She charged Joe with callousness and showy defiance. The next day, to prove her case, he appeared upon the campus smoking a big cigar.

Men were permitted to smoke in their rooms—unless their landladies banished them to the cellar—but not on the streets or campus. Joe was summoned to the President's office. It was not just the offense—his "attitude was wrong." There was no rule about chapel attendance—merely a tradition—but Joe was never there. He had openly scorned the Y. M. C. A. It was the "attitude" which all these things revealed. "Prexie Jim" was a warmhearted, impulsive, autocratic man whose attitude was wholly personal. Joe knew that he could have "worked Prexie's sympathies," he saw clearly and coolly the exact way to do it—but some perversity, perhaps a little disdain, held him back. He felt uncomfortably that he liked Prexie, liked even his hastiness, if he hated to admit it. He had "knocked" Prexie because Hester thought she must worship him as a god.

Joe went back across the campus to his little room and began packing immediately. When the other boys came in he told them coolly that he was "canned." Oh, of course Prexie called it "suspension," but he was not coming back, so why not simply say "canned"?

But he was not cool. His hands—red from the dishwater at the Vienna Café—shook a little. His old feeling of being a "lone wolf" had forced him into defiance. He had said that he

hated Adams—but it was not easy to leave it. He had a queer underlying, unspoken love for the campus, the cinder paths, the big, dark clump of evergreens on the south, the little pale-green birches on the north, the tree-lined road to Sandy Creek, the big birch in front of the Harris House, even the noisy, smelly Vienna Café, where the boys shouted—"Hey, Joe! Hurry up with those sandwiches!" He could not believe that he was going. He would not believe anything until he had talked with Hester. He had a feeling that she would force him out of his perversity, that that would give him an excuse for going back to Prexie. He wanted to tell her that he had been a crazy fool.

The first that Hester heard of it was in the library—"Joe Forrest is canned for smoking on the campus!" She was in an agony of humiliation. If Joe could deliberately get into trouble for such a silly thing as that, he could not care for her. Everyone was eyeing her, wondering how she was taking it, whether she sympathized with Joe. People were "called up"—for dancing, for Sunday dates. Even Rob. There was no disgrace, even a little swaggering glory, in that. She, too, felt that it was Joe's "general attitude." He didn't care for Adams or for its ideals, he was bitter and a pessimist and a crab, as the boys had told her. He had hurt her too terribly.

When she came hurrying off the campus from her 3:15 class, she saw Joe, with pretended carelessness, hanging about near the big oak. She knew that he was waiting to speak to her. She was instantly aware, as always, of his dark eyes and carelessly tossed black hair. But she was still too terribly hurt to look at him. She went straight on past, talking vivaciously with the other girls, pretending that she hadn't seen him, although her cheeks were flushed. She knew when he turned sharply away and went off across the campus.

He left town that night without a word to her. He preferred to consider his suspension "canning," and did not come back.

The other girls, and the boys on the *Pioneer* Board, were kind to Hester. She was grateful for their trying to show her that they were glad to have her back as one of them. They speculated as to whether Hester and Joe had been engaged—whether she heard from him. But to her they never mentioned Joe. She did not speak of him.

She flung herself again into "activities" that spring, with a kind of revulsion against Joe and all that he had said. She had a feeling of having returned to the fold. She went passionately back to her old beliefs. She entered into things feverishly, trying not to give herself time to remember last spring. There was the day when the *Pioneers* came out. She helped Bunty and Big Bill "get up the stunt." They got an old covered wagon, and the boys scoured the country for oxen, renting them finally from an old farmer near Sandy Creek; and they made a gratifying commotion driving upon the campus, the girls dressed in calico and old sunbonnets, the boys in broad-brimmed hats. They handed out the *Pioneers* from the back of the wagon. Big Bill wore a false beard and overalls, with an enormous plug of tobacco sticking out of his pocket, and he led the oxen. "The cleverest *Pioneer* stunt ever pulled off." Afterward, the Board, still in wide-brimmed hats and sunbonnets, went to the Vienna Café for refreshment. Hester talked and laughed animatedly to smother that feeling that Joe must come in a moment from the swinging kitchen door. She let Big Bill take her home—he was now the only unattached male member of the *Pioneer* Board—and they sat on the steps of the Harris House all evening, refusing to move to let anyone pass them.

There was such a comfort in going back into orthodoxy, in being "one of the bunch" again.

Commencement was so beautiful—the lilacs, the bridal wreath, the girls in white, the June evenings. Hester returned to it all in passionate devotion. How could anyone criticize

Adams? She felt the Adams spirit all about her. She served frappé at the President's reception, on the lawn of his old yellow stone house, she ushered at the Commencement exercises in the Congregational church. She won second prize in the Girls' Extemporaneous Speaking Contest, with "What Adams Ideals Mean to Its Women." She did not have a good voice for speaking, but her devotion, and her ardent, shining eyes, her almost tearful earnestness, made one of the judges mark her first.

She "went to things alone" this Commencement. Bunty was now devoted to Ellen, who was the most prominent girl in the Junior class. Big Bill was going to sell "The Century Book of Facts" that summer and did not stay for Commencement. Hester went with her mother to hear the Glee Club sing on the campus. The Glee Club sat on the steps of Blaine Hall, and on the grassy slope before them was a scattered mass of people. The great trees stood duskily motionless. There was a scent of flowers and dew. Hester sat on the cushion that her mother had urged her to bring, pulling at the cool grass blades and listening silently to the cadences of the songs in the evening air. Tears kept welling up in her eyes. This was the first night when she had admitted that she was lonely for Joe. She had been with him last year. He had spread down his coat for her. She remembered the line of his shoulders as he sat beside her, and his dark lifted profile.

There was the long, hot, dull summer. She felt that she must struggle, that she must put Joe out of her heart. She could not bear to see the grassy place beyond the library, across the street, where she and Joe had sat to "get their Latin together." She felt a dry agony of waiting, every morning, until the postman came. But when he finally did bring a letter from Joe she half hated to open it.

For a while they wrote constantly. Joe had gone to Des

Moines and got a newspaper job. The newspaper business was "all bluff," but then so was about everything else. He wanted to come to Adamsville and see Hester. He knew that he had acted like a fool in going off that way. Hester decided and re-decided, lay awake at night and agonized. She was torn between Joe and her beliefs. She wrote him finally that "it had been a mistake." She cried through half the night, but after that she felt a kind of peace. She had returned to her old loyalties. Next year would be her Senior year. She had conquered herself. She would give the college, this year, all that she had.

CHAPTER VI

Senior year.

Hester took her old place in the class. Everyone knew now that "it was all off between her and Joe." She did not have the presidency of the Y. W. C. A. Ellen had that. But she was given an important position on the cabinet. It was service that counted, not what she had for herself. She had lost prestige a little because of Joe. But she got it back now as one of the prominent Senior girls. She tried to make devotion to her class and college take the place of Joe. She had more than she could do, which was one of the Adams ideals. She was overworked, as a prominent Senior should be. A little thin now, her early bloom already fading, girlish but without the appealing, innocent, joyous trustfulness of her Freshman days. Her enthusiasm was a little less spontaneous now, her smile—"Hester's smile"—just the least bit conscious, and there were two fine curved lines beside her lips. Most of the Freshman girls admired her. With her spirit, enthusiasm, loyalty, sweetness, she was "an ideal Adams girl." There were a few, however, who spoke slightingly of "the Y. W. smile."

Hester was the only girl chosen to speak at the mass-meeting before the Billings game. In spite of the lightness of her voice, and her slight presence, every one told her that the speech was "wonderful." It was her spirit, her belief in what she said. A slim figure in a blue sweater and a dark skirt, so girlish up there on the platform in the big, echoing gym—leaning slightly toward her audience, her eyes shining with eager enthusiasm, her fine light hair fastened with amber combs, her lips parted, speaking with such ardor that her slender throat tightened, "giving herself out." . . .

"People, it isn't just the team that's going to win this game—it's every one of us. The team will do their best—we know that—but they must feel, we must *make* them feel—that every man and every girl in Adams is right there back of them—every minute. And I know they will be, because they're Adams men and women. And people, if we want our team to win for us, it isn't enough to *feel* enthusiasm—we must *show* it. Girls, *don't* be afraid to yell tomorrow. What if you do make your throats a little sore? A sore throat will be a badge of honor after that game! We girls can't go into the game—we can't risk broken collarbones and broken arms—well, then, we oughtn't to be afraid to risk our voices!

"People, we know our team is light. They haven't the weight that some other teams have; they haven't the brute strength. But they do have one thing that no other team can boast. They have the Adams spirit. And *that's* what will win tomorrow's game!

"People"—her voice quivered—"when I look at our boys, I don't feel that I'm simply looking at eleven men—I feel that I'm looking at the Adams spirit made visible."

She turned quickly and stretched out her arms to the football team, sitting rigid and shamefaced on the platform. Her eager voice broke as she quoted, in the breathless silence of the building:

"Our hearts, our hopes are all with thee—
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant over fears—
Are all with thee, are all with thee!"

Jay Oehrle leaped upon the platform. His voice was already strained and husky from four years of yell-leading, but he forced it fiercely into service. Small, thin, dusky-sallow, a lock of black hair tumbling over his wildly screwed forehead, waving his arms frantically, he led the cheering with even more than his old savage ardor. His strained, hoarse voice, that was at times only a harsh breath, added to the effect.

"Now, people, all together—oh, *yell*, YELL—you aren't YELLING!

Adams we cry!
Adams we cry!
Adams! Adams!
Do or die!

". . . And now for Hester, people, YELL!"

It was a serious, responsible year. The Y. W., E. B. B., the college spirit, were all felt to rest upon the shoulders of the chosen few—Ellen, Hester, Bess, Margaret, Gertie.

Jay was still a leader, but he was not liked. Rob had steadily kept his popularity, and so had Bunty. Everyone liked Big Bill. Now that he was sure that "there was nothing between her and Joe," his old devotion to Hester began to crop up again. But—besides his being so immense and awkward—it seemed to her that he was not earnest enough over things, that he turned the most serious things into a joke. Of course, Adams had improved Bill immensely, as everyone said. But he did not seem quite the type of Adams man. There were still crudities about him, and there was that love for "acting the fool."

Bunty and Ellen were engaged. Rob was rushing a Freshman girl. Hester had scattering dates, but no longer her reckless Freshman popularity. She felt that she had climbed into a region of grave responsibilities. She knew that Jay wanted to confide in her again, tell her about the mysterious girl at home—but somehow, since what Joe had said, she evaded Jay.

It was time to "begin thinking about next year." Hester wanted, as they all did, to use her Adams ideals for the service of humanity. She thought of a dozen things—of "going into Y. W. work," of social settlements. Just teaching wasn't enough. Prexie meant more than that when he spoke of "going out to larger service." Her brother Russell was out of social service work now and in the insurance business. He wrote her "for the Lord's sake not to get into anything like that." She and her mother felt that Russell was not the same. Something had embittered him. Perhaps he was not happy in his second marriage. Frances, his first wife, his Adams classmate, had died. Her old ideal of taking the Adams spirit to Asia had been founded upon the vision of herself as helpmate for a John Fellows, as Helen had done. To go alone was so lonely and perilous, and it was not what girls like herself did. But she did want to "really do something."

It was so hard to find just the thing—to find it and do it. There seemed to be nothing but teaching, after all. She put in her teaching application with the other girls, had her picture taken looking very severe to impress superintendents of schools with her dignity. She and the other girls mourned: "Oh, girls! Just three months and it'll be all over! What shall we do?"

It seemed to her that she had never really contemplated anything beyond college. How could she leave Adams? She had grown up, really, in the school.

She went with Bill to the Glee Club concert that year. He said that he'd realized one ambition, at least, before he left

school. He was proud of her little girlish, simple semi-evening dress. She still fulfilled his honest notions of what he called "the *i*-deal Adams girl." With her eagerness, her earnestness, her sweet smile, her innocence, her girlish slightness. After the maidens of Winner, she was a vision of refinement and "culture" to him. Some of the Freshman girls thought that "he wasn't the one for her," but still they made "a grand Senior couple."

The Glee Club "stunt" that year included a song of the Senior girls, among other local hits. All the favorites—Ellen, Margaret, Bess, Jessie, Hester. Pride shone all over Big Bill's face when they sang:

"Oh, Hester Harris,
Sweetest of all we know,
Your smile shines brighter
Far than the sunshine's glow."

It was not possible that she was going away from it all. Her last Glee Club concert—it could not be.

But she must do something. She was just debating whether or not to accept a position at Hobart, Minnesota, when Prexie called her into his office. She came out with shining, ecstatic eyes, dove into the crowd of Senior girls who were standing near the library steps, threw her arms around Bess and Della and swayed them rapturously back and forth.

"Oh, girls! I'm not going away, I'm not going away!" she chanted.

Prexie had asked her to stay and teach Latin in the Academy. Her salary would be small—smaller than at Hobart—but she would be serving the college. She would be *here*, she could stay at Adams! Wasn't it wonderful! The girls exclaimed, envied her. Next year they would all be gone, and lucky Hester would be here still.

She had had the most wonderful talk with Prexie. He had shown her all his charm, all his sympathy, when she had told him of her vague but ardent aspirations, of how she wanted to do something "real." He had made her see how much she would be helping by taking this work in the Academy. The old Academy was running down, and he wanted her young enthusiasm to put new life into it. Of course she would want "enough money for hair ribbons," he told her playfully. The college could not afford to pay much for the Academy work. But she would have the honor of serving it. He wanted someone who lived in Adamsville, who understood the school. He did not mention the fact that the position did not pay enough for anyone who had board to pay. He assured her that even if she did feel young and inexperienced it would be the spirit of her work that counted.

Commencement came—her own Commencement. Hester had no part in the class play. Ellen was to give the Mantle Oration. But Hester must have something. She was chosen to give the Ivy Oration when the class ivy was planted with vain hopes of growth beside the chapel wall. Her name figured prominently in the class history and the prophecy.

"And Hester, having married our other loyal citizen of Adamsville, Humphrey Dilley, remained to welcome back the class of '03 with her own sunny smile to old Adams."

Her smile was a little set and strained when she was called forward to receive her class gift from Gertie on the campus, in the less serious part of the Class Day exercises, when local hits were given. A photograph of trees—"a souvenir of the Forest," Gertie said. She thought that that was a little cruel of Gertie.

Her own Commencement Day exercises, in the hot, gloomy cavern of the church. It seemed only half real when she went through the long, familiar ceremony. "The candidates for the

degree of Bachelor of Arts may rise." Then the roll of the well-known names—"Robert Burns Alden" . . . until Prexie came to "Hester Grace Harris." She crossed the platform, made her dipping bow.

When the exercises were over, the graduating class lingered outside the church. The boys took off their black gowns and the stiff mortarboards from their perspiring foreheads. Big Bill was there with his mother and father, who had come from Winner "to see him graduate." The father a huge, gaunt, bent, old countryman, the mother a tiny scared, prim, bright-eyed woman in neat, old-fashioned clothes. Big Bill had asked Hester and her mother to go with him and his parents to the Glee Club singing on the campus. There was something very conscious and solemn about Bill that night, so that Hester tried nervously to stay near the older people. Yet she could not help admiring Bill's simple, genuine manner with his old-fashioned parents, his big-boy affection for his mother.

She was with Bill at the Senior Picnic the next day, out at Adams Grove. They were on the social committee together. They buttered dozens of buns and roasted beefsteak over a blazing fire. She had never liked Bill so well as that day. In his shirt sleeves, his great arms glistening with heat, his hair rumpled, his huge mouth grinning. He set her up on the bough of a tree and helped her to climb fences and to ford the creek. It was hot in the woods under the oak trees, where bushes of wild gooseberries and the leaves of May apples grew among the long grass. Hester was exhausted when the committee was through with its work. She and Bill went off to the bank of the creek and sat there to rest.

They talked about what they meant to do in the future. Bill said it was all right for Hester to stay, but she wasn't to wear herself out teaching Preps. He was going to teach and save money to study law some day. He'd been offered a job teach-

ing and coaching athletics, but he hadn't made up his mind yet whether to take it. It depended on something else. He might decide to go out West and try his luck out there.

He rolled over, found a pebble, took aim elaborately and made it "skip" the creek. She knew that something was coming, from the rigid, conscious line of his big shoulders, the husky note in his voice when he spoke.

"Hester, I'd be mighty glad if you'd tell me just how much there is between you and Joe."

She said, a little tremulously, "What makes you think there's anything?"

"Meaning there isn't? Well, I'd kinda figured that out, I'm glad. I always liked Joe myself, and I could kinda understand his orneriness. He had a lot more to him than folks gave him credit for, if he ever does anything with it. Joe kinda started in wrong—I don't know. But he's a good guy. I don't think he'd ever make you happy, though, Hester. He looks at things too different."

Hester was silent.

Bill said: "I guess you know what I've always thought of you, Hester. I don't see how you could help it the way I've more or less camped on your trail. I guess you've always thought I was pretty much of a roughneck."

"I don't think you're a roughneck, Bill. I think you're an old peach. Everyone thinks so."

"Sure, I'm a Winner!" he laughed huskily. "But then I don't blame you if you did think I was a gawk. I guess I was about the crudest thing that ever struck Adams. Bad enough now—but I feel a lot different about things, even if I don't show it. This school has sure meant a lot to me. You have too, Hester, a lot more than you know. You were the only girl that was decent to me when I blew in at that first Freshman party on Mrs. Lewis' lawn. You were so darn nice to everybody. You've always seemed like—well, the *i*-deal Adams girl to me."

She tried to murmur something deprecatingly. She wished nervously that he wouldn't go on. There was something pitiful to her about his great, awkward body, his big hands and feet, his big mouth and his deep-set, mournful eyes.

He tried to grin at her. "Well—if you could stand it to take me in hand, Hester, I might turn out the pride of the college yet."

Hester slowly shook her head. Her eyes filled with tears. She wanted anxiously to soften her refusal, to tell Bill how much she did like him, almost to give in, after all. But the others broke in on them. "Hey, you two! Come out of that. You're wanted." They had to pretend as much as they could that nothing had happened, and go back to the rest. Just before they left, Bill managed to whisper to her:

"Sure you won't change your mind? . . . Well, that's all right, I don't pretend I'm good enough for you, Hester."

Tears filled her eyes again.

They all rode back in a bumping hay rick. Bill was solemn and gloomy, would not be roused to retort by any jest. Glances were exchanged among the others. Hester did not sit beside him when they drove out of the woods, but in the back of the hay rick with the other girls. They dangled their feet over the soft, cloudy dust of the road as they bumped back to town between the trees and the fields in the late afternoon.

Hester went to the two evening trains to see them all leave. At the familiar station, with the long, covered brick platform and the row of box elder trees bordering the vacant lot, they talked about their next Commencement.

"Oh, people, you *must* all of you come back!" Hester cried.

Big Bill had not appeared at the station. He had jumped off the hay rick before they got into town and disappeared. Hester was remorseful at the memory of the tragic look on his big, gloomy face, with the heavy eyebrows and the deep-set eyes and the two long front locks of parted hair. He would go back

to Winner later on the freight. She tried nervously not to let anyone speak of his disappearance, not to hear when the boys said, "What'd you do to Bill, Hester?"

There were all the good-byes, hurried at the last. "Take care of the school, Hester. Don't let it run away. Be good to the Preps. We expect you to be waiting here for us next spring."

The last train went. The plume of pale gray smoke melted into the paler sky. The station had that too familiar summer emptiness—more than that. They could hear the humming rails and the evening sound of insects from the vacant lot. There was only Humphrey Dilley left. He and Hester walked solemnly down College Street together. They made plans for the return of the kitchenware they had rented from the china store for the Senior picnic. Hester did not care if Humphrey did see the tears that kept coming weakly into her eyes.

He stood awkwardly on the porch of the Harris house, not knowing how to leave, as always.

"Well," he said finally, "guess we'll be here, anyway, next year."

CHAPTER VII

Hester was tired out during the summer, so that at times her mother declared anxiously that she was "not fit to teach" next year. Hester would not listen to that. But she was apathetic for a while. Something vital was gone. She let her mother take her to old Dr. Burns, who said gruffly that she'd been doing a hundred or so too many things, like all these college girls, and that she must "keep outside all she could, forget about these other things." He tried to get her interested in the study of botany afield, but after spending one morning in the pasture north of town with Russell's old botany handbook, she gave

that up. She drank a tablespoonful of olive oil after every meal and lounged through the hot weather.

For a time it seemed to her that everything was over. But there was "next year" still to look forward to. She would still be a part of things, she would not lose interest just because she had her diploma. Humphrey escorted her from some of the Christian Endeavor meetings again, and they talked over plans for the first '03 reunion. She talked over prospective members with E. B. B. girls who lived in town, and did a little discreet rushing of flattered high school girls who would soon enter college.

When fall came she was fully alive again, and, although her mother still complained over her thinness, she impatiently refused to keep on with the olive oil or to "take things easily this year." She was not going to lose all her spirit just because she was out of school now, as so many people did. It seemed strange and lonely at first not to have her own classmates back. It seemed that she must come upon them in the old familiar haunts—the library reading room, the cinder paths. But there were so many things to do. And the Harris House was full of girls again.

Much of her old Senior glory still hung about her. She was given a Freshman man for the Opening Reception. She was welcomed at E. B. B. meetings and helped with rushing. She was asked to lead an early meeting of the Y. W. C. A. She had a few dates with Senior boys. She was "not going to lose interest in a single thing." She still felt herself as more or less a member of the student body. "Prep" teachers were not really considered among the faculty. She felt that she loved Adams more deeply than ever this year.

She went with the consecration of an acolyte to her work among the "Preps." She tried to put her old enthusiasm into her class work in the Academy. She was not going to belie Prexie's trust in her. She would "build up the Academy," she

would "give it all that she had." It might be hard at first, but she would not let herself be discouraged.

"Prep" classes met on the third floor of Recitation Hall—"the roof garden" it was facetiously called. There were three flights of steep battered stairs, with little square landings, to climb. The dingy, high-ceilinged rooms were cut up into strange shapes and sizes. They were so cold that Hester wore her coat in her classroom all winter. The old radiators banged and pounded. Little hailstorms of plaster fell suddenly from the ceilings.

In former days, when high schools were few, the Academy had flourished. It had been lively and overflowing, with its own literary and debating societies, its own singing society and baseball team, which had occasionally beat the college team. Now only a dwindling number of raw-boned boys and dowdy girls came from the little nearby "burgs," such as Winner, where full high school courses were not offered. The Preps were like the Volunteer Band, in general a sorry lot, except for a few faculty children whose parents felt that the college expected them to patronize the Academy. "Prep" was a joke now to the college. Its few little activities were swallowed up by the glory of college affairs. About the most that could be mustered were a Prep picnic in the spring, and an annual German play which none but the members of the class attended.

The Latin classes were the largest, but also the least hopeful. They were filled with bored, superior and disgruntled college youths who were "making up credits" in Cæsar or Cicero. They meant simply to get their credits, no more. Hester's enthusiasm flung itself day after day against this stony row of youths sitting slumped down upon the ends of their spines in the ancient chairs that had been relegated to the roof garden. She would not believe that they could not be aroused, that she "might as well give them their credits and let them get out." She worked and worried over her teaching that year. She

meant to "put spirit into Prep." She wanted to "make Latin interesting." She was conscientious about grammar and constructions, however, as she had been when she had "got her Latin" with Joe.

She meant to do all kinds of things for her Preps, although, of course, she couldn't start everything this first year.

She still felt that she was a part of things. Of course she no longer held offices or made speeches at mass meetings. But there was a new pleasure in being turned to for advice by the E. B. B. and the Y. W. girls. She promised the Junior girls to "help think up things for the *Pioneer*." She helped them to steal snapshots from the other girl's rooms. Humphrey Dilley took her to the Glee Club concert. Of course it wasn't very exciting going with Humphrey; but she would not have liked to stay at home when all the girls were going.

All year she could look forward to the first class reunion. Hester had been chosen secretary at their last class meeting, as at their very first. That meant she heard from every one. She sent out the class letter. She wrote the '03 items for the Alumni Bulletin. She was the one to start the circle letter which her old "bunch of girls" had agreed to keep going as long as they should live—Bess, Ellen, Della, Margaret, Crazie Gertie. To think of seeing them all back at Commencement, of hearing about their teaching experiences, of their plans for the next year!

She wanted '03 to "get up a grand stunt" for their first Alumni Day to show that their spirit was still alive. There was no one but Humphrey with whom to talk it over. Humphrey could always be depended upon to help, but he wasn't the one to be looked to for ideas.

Under her anxiety for the reunion was a secret, unadmitted thought of Big Bill. Sometimes when she was crossing the campus from the roof garden in the chilly late afternoon she would suddenly realize that Big Bill was gone, that he wouldn't come,

huge and grinning, from around the corner of Recitation Hall to walk home with her. She wondered how Bill would seem to her at Commencement time this year. Where was he?—he hadn't sent in his class letter.

So that she felt a strange twinge of disappointment when she met them all at the station and heard that Big Bill would not be back. He was teaching, the boys said, in a Colorado mining town—having a pretty hard time of it, too. They looked at Hester.

Of course it was glorious. The girls were full of teaching tales. Della was engaged to her superintendent. Ellen wore a diamond, and she and Bunty were constantly together. Ellen was to stay at home the next year. She had "broken down" and had to leave her teaching. Her pretty, vivacious face had a languid, spiritless look. She didn't seem to take her old interest in things. Bess was going with her family to California and was going to take her master's degree at Berkeley. They all united in begging Hester to tell them everything that had happened at Adams this year. She was their link with the old school. They told her that she must never leave, so that they would always feel that '03 had a place there.

They had the "grand talks" for which she had been hungering. Some of the girls said that the Adams ideals meant more to them now than ever before, now that they saw how the world was. But they despaired of ever putting them to practice in their teaching. All but Hester. But Hester, they declared, had always understood them better than anyone else. Hester would keep her enthusiasm.

Hester murmured, contrite:

"Oh, girls! And I feel that I haven't accomplished a thing with my Prep people this year."

She felt that she hadn't tried hard enough. She was ashamed that she had ever had that feeling of looking down on Prep—instead of trying to lift Prep *up*.

Well, she would see them all again next year—oh, they *must* come, they must have '03 better represented again than any class on Alumni Day.

She was not given a name for the Opening Reception the next fall. But at the last moment one of the Junior girls in the house could not go, and Hester took her place. She felt very motherly toward the Freshman boy whom she took under her protection—a very engaging, eager little fellow with blue eyes and a funny grin. He called on her several times and she "advised him about his college course." Then he suddenly sprang to eminence in the Freshman class and became the possessor of a popular Freshman girl. Goodness, she hadn't been expecting to go with a Freshman at this late day! But she missed the boys whom she had known.

She couldn't help feeling just a little more out of college things this year. They didn't ask her to lead a Y. W. until the year was half over and they ran out of leaders. There was no one but Humphrey again to take her to the Glee Club concert.

She turned to her Preps. She tried to make them realize that they, too, were a part of Adams. She wanted them to have more of a place in the college life. She urged them to go to mass meetings and to the Billings game.

There were fewer at the reunion this year. The second reunion was not so important. Their five-year reunion was what they must be planning for now. Think of having been five years out of college! Two seemed bad enough. Still she heard nothing from Big Bill.

Her third year she felt that she was no longer a real part of the college undergraduate life. The Seniors had been Freshmen in her day. The others had known her only as a teacher in the Academy. She felt that she hardly knew the girls at E. B. B. now. She was asked to lead the Y. W. only as a last resort when someone failed. No one thought of assigning her a Freshman man for the Opening Reception.

This was the first year that she had not had a man for the Glee Club concert. Humphrey, who was in his father's bank now, had gone out of town. But would he have kept on asking her, anyway? To stay at home on the night of the Glee Club concert! She said gayly to the girls in the house: "Oh, no, I'm not going this year. I think it's time for me to quit."

She was very helpful in pressing clothes, opening the door, telling whether petticoats showed, as she had done before she entered college. She kept smiling when the girls went off, bright-eyed, carrying their flowers. She exclaimed over the flowers, helped the girls to clip the stems and put them in water the next day. She went into their rooms after the concert to have them tell her all about it. As she sat smiling and eagerly listening, her mind was repeating and clinging to those maxims: "It is more important to learn how to take a defeat than a victory"; "It isn't whether you win or lose, it's the spirit with which you do it." There was a consolation in the effort to take this with the Adams spirit.

There was another consolation, that showed that perhaps all these little defeats had a purpose. They made her turn to her Preps with renewed enthusiasm. She tried to reorganize the old literary society, to make it as important as the college societies. She entertained the Prep teachers at a little tea—the English, History and Commercial teacher, of the Susie Dykes type, the Principal and his wife, a little elderly woman who taught everything that was left over. She tried to discover latent genius among the Preps. She declared to the girls in the circle letter that the Preps were wonderful when you came to know them. She was young, alive, "sweet-looking." Awkward Prep girls declared that they adored Miss Harris, that she had the most wonderful smile. Her old smile, that was a little defensive now when she went to E. B. B., could beam out warm, encouraging for her Preps. Even if she couldn't do much with her Latin classes, she might rouse the Preps to take part in

activities. And that was where spirit was developed. She urged them to get up parties, and she acted as chaperon. She said to the other teachers: "We mustn't *let* Prep run down." The bashful adoration of the girls who waited to walk home with her from the roof garden consoled her for the growing tendency of the girls in the Harris House to look on her as simply the landlady's daughter, almost a member of the faculty. They did not invite her to spreads very often.

The next year she still kept her ambition for Prep. She tried heroically to keep the literary society running. She could not hope quite so much from her Latin classes. She hinted that she might not stay, but no one would hear of that. Prexie praised her, convinced her that she was doing something after all. Of course her salary was small. But she wasn't working for money. She was working to "serve the college." She was the only one who was really trying to do something for Prep.

Every spring brought the five-year reunion just that much nearer.

She had at last given up thinking of herself as still one of the student body. She suddenly found a new interest among the "Scrub Faculty." They were inclined to look down on the Prep teachers, who had only A. B. degrees. Hester was not with them at the Faculty Boarding Club, where the college students who acted as waiters reported gay times. But a little new instructor in the English Department showed a sudden interest in Hester, whom he met at a faculty tea. He insisted that she be included in the Scrub picnics and parties. She was starved for pleasures, and wrote the girls that "the Scrubs were a wonderful crowd, more fun than she had ever dreamed."

You couldn't help having a good time with Mr. Willius, although no one could really take him seriously. Hunter Hollingsford Willius. He had come from the East somewhere. He was a strange, vivacious, irrepressible little man, very light, very pale, with an exaggerated Harvard accent. He flew about,

the women of the faculty said, as if he were being pulled by wires. Nothing could "faze" him. He proudly exhibited the new *Pioneer* in which he had received more "roasts" than any member of the faculty—even than old reliable "Strongpipe" Jones who cut the grass on the campus and smoked the only pipe seen in those precincts. "Little Willie" was the campus joke.

Hester said that sometimes she felt rather "funny" going with Willie to things. But it meant nothing. He was all kinds of fun on a picnic. There wasn't a thing the man couldn't cook. He rented two rooms in the old Beasley house, where he sometimes gave dinners cooked and served entirely by himself. He had a flattering, caressing, restless, irrepressible manner. Faculty men professed to despise him. He was attentive to nearly every woman on the faculty, married or single, for at least one day. But Hester, surprisingly—for the new French instructor, Miss Wylie, with be-curled hair and much jewelry, ogled him shamelessly—was his favorite. He called her "Merry Sunshine" in public, and in private—under his breath sometimes when they went to the spring for water at picnics—"Little Buttercup." Of course he was foolish, but you could have fun with Willie.

The astonishing thing was that he should be a good teacher under his flippancy. He did far more modern reading than any member of the faculty. He gave good advice on themes. But he "didn't fit in at Adams." The students did not have the right respect for him. He smoked cigarettes incessantly. All Eastern men did that, though, Miss Wylie said. He was a "lightweight." Imagine his leading the chapel exercises! No one was surprised that he was not asked to come back the next year. After he had gone it was learned that he had been engaged to some girl in the East all the time—and think how he had run around with the women on the faculty!

It was silly to really miss Willie. But now the Scrub Faculty good times languished.

The fifth reunion. Over half the class was back—a wonderful showing. There were changes now. Some were married, many were engaged. They were getting into different work than the first inevitable teaching.

Jay Oehrle made the great sensation of the class. He was only one year out of the theological seminary to which he had gone, presumably with the help of the girl in his home town—for the boys asserted that Jay "didn't have a red." He had taken an assistant pastorship in a large church. And after three months there he had married, not the girl from his home town, but a wealthy spinster nineteen years older than Jay himself, who was a member of his congregation. She was working strenuously for his clerical advancement. Jay had brought her to the Commencement exercises, at all of which she stared with an elaborate graciousness through the first lorgnette seen in Adamsville, except in a Dramatic Club play. She had a strange, admonishing and yet ingratiating manner toward Jay, whom she considered as a youthful genius of humble origin whom she had discovered and whose career she would "make." Jay was more dark and savagely earnest than ever, but he had developed an impressive mysterious silence and an entirely new manner. Adeline—"Gosh! Sweet Adeline!" Rob Alden said, rolling his eyes and leaning faintly against a tree—was much concerned for the "delicacy" of Jay's throat. It had never recovered from his efforts as yell-leader, although its huskiness still had a queer impressiveness of its own. She was always appearing at his side with a silken scarf whenever he strayed from her. Well, they had always known that Jay would "do something," would "get ahead somehow"—but who in his wildest dreams could have pictured this!

Rob Alden was much more himself, although just the least

bit bald. Bunty had not come. Ellen was still at home, still trying to gather enough strength to marry him. The girls said that they were afraid she never would.

No one had heard from Big Bill. He seemed to have dropped out of sight. Only his old roommate said that Bill was still in the West and that he had gone through some pretty hard times. He believed that Bill had to support his old parents. But they needn't worry, old Bill would come through, he "had the stuff in him."

Some of the girls were better dressed than they had been in school. They were earning their own money now. Hester still dressed in the old girlish Adams way, still fastened her light, straight hair with amber combs, wore shirtwaists such as she had worn in her college days. She "looked just the same," they all said.

CHAPTER VIII

Hester admitted that she got discouraged sometimes. In spite of all that she could do, the Academy was dwindling year by year. There was less and less interest in it. The brief enthusiasm that she had managed to instil for activities, and for parties, was gone. She thought of leaving, of getting away. But she hated to add one more burden to those that "Prexie Jim" already had. There was a faction now among the trustees and the faculty who wanted to get Prexie Jim out. He was not doing enough for the advancement and broadening out of the college. There was a party working for President Heller of little Southern Iowa College, a man of determination and vision, of less personal charm than Prexie Jim, but with more of a business head. Prexie Jim could get money, but he could not use it to advantage. His were all the small personal methods that did not suit the present growth of the institution. It would

be hard for Prexie Jim to find someone to take her place. She would stay as long as he needed her. He had never wanted to give up the old Academy in which he had once taught years ago.

Yet it seemed as if she were doing so little. She thought about social service work again, about applying for a place in the college in Asia Minor. John and Helen Fellows came back to Adams that year, partly to make a plea for more funds for the college. John made "a wonderful talk" in chapel, everyone said. But he was smaller than Hester had remembered him as being, and with something thin, hard and strained about him. He could no longer think, talk or dream of anything but his work. The life of that little precarious missionary college overshadowed the life of everything else in the world. Helen was spoken of as "his devoted wife and most valued helper." At first Helen seemed curiously unchanged. She still had a look of belated girlishness, her hair was combed as it had always been, her way of talking was as eager as ever. It was just that the old charm had mysteriously evaporated from her person and her manner. The old soft, sunny look was gone. That fly-away fluffy hair was somehow dead-looking now. As Hester talked to Helen her desire to "take part in the work," that she had been feeling, ended in a kind of ache of obscure disappointment. Yet she wanted to "do something."

Leonard Stoner and Susie Dykes had married and gone as assistants to the college in Asia Minor. John Fellows spoke of them impressively in chapel as the stand-bys of the school.

Yet, when she really thought of it, how could she leave Adams? Not to be a part of it any more, not to enter into its life and help to keep even a small and seemingly unimportant part of it going? Not to see her classmates when they came back, not to be here to hold her class together. . . . How could she ever live apart from these things? Where could any place be found as wonderful, and as nearly perfect?

When Prexie Jim finally was forced to resign, when President Heller was appointed in his place, when there was nothing to keep her from going if she really wished—she knew that she did not want to go. She clung to her place in the Academy with increasing loyalty and fear. To have to leave Adams would be like being sent into a cold and unknown waste. She could never love anything again as she had loved the college.

There was her mother. Poor little Mrs. Harris was very frail. They had had to give up the Harris House and take the two rooms that "Little Willie" had once had—small, low, gloomy rooms, with the addition of a kind of overgrown closet for a kitchen. These were some of the only light-housekeeping rooms for rent in Adamsville. They took what was not too battered of the old Harris House furniture, with the pieces and the treasures that had grown to have special meanings to them. The house and the girls had "got to be too much for mamma." The old Harris House was more of a wreck than ever now. For a year or two they managed to rent it to a club of boys. After the girls' and boys' quadrangles were built, they sold the lot to the Dean of Men and the house was torn down.

Their friends said, with tactful intent:

"I'm so glad you and your mother are so cosy up there in your little rooms, and haven't that big house to look after. It must have been quite a burden. I always wondered how your mother could do it, she looked so frail."

Hester said, "Oh, yes, indeed, it's so much better for mamma."

But she missed the house and the girls—the house as it used to be—the old shabby rooms where so many eventful things had happened in the lives of herself and of other Adams girls. To think of boys living in the Harris House! She hated to go past that corner, past the big birch tree. Its glory had finally

passed from it, and the Harris House was no longer a factor in college affairs.

People wondered: "Do Hester and her mother both live on that little salary? Perhaps Russell sends them something."

"Russell! Not if that wife of his is what everyone says she is. It will take more than Russell Harris can ever make to support her."

Mrs. Harris had a tiny bit of independent income. Hester paid most of their living expenses out of her little salary. It was hard for them to dress as they were expected to do, to contribute to this and that. But people worked for the college for its own sake, and not for the sake of money. They felt the shame of mentioning the money side. The college paid in other things than in money.

Now that the Academy was in actual danger, Hester felt how dear it had become to her, how much she had hoped from her work there. And perhaps she hadn't failed. Her students, few as they were, still liked her. They said, "Oh, Miss Harris, don't you leave or Prep won't be anything!"

She still went to college functions. Now she went to the Opening Reception with Miss Howell, the other Academy teacher besides the little elderly one, and with Miss Keats, who worked in the registrar's office. She went to basket-ball games with them, and with some of "the older town girls." The teas, the games, the receptions, meant much to her, as her other pleasures and activities dwindled. There was what Miss Keats called "a snippy crowd" among the Scrub Faculty now. They scorned to have anything to do with the supernumeraries around the college, from the Academy and the President's office.

Humphrey Dilley, of course, was still in Adamsville. Hester saw him only when they were planning something for '03. He still kept his old loyalty. He was now vice-president of the Ad-

amsville State Bank—his father had died—and one of the important bachelors in the town, a stand-by in the college and the Congregational church. He would be a trustee in both organizations when he was a little older.

The ten-year reunion made a happy break. Hester had been writing letters all year urging people to come back. With her old spirit, she worked to have a splendid, big reunion. She boosted for '03. "Boosting" was almost as important a word now as "serving." She rejoiced ecstatically over every letter announcing that another member of the class planned to come. She would see people that she hadn't seen since her own Commencement!

Fewer and fewer of her classmates wrote to her now—none of the men. Sometimes it would be months before the circle letter reached her. She wondered if this time she would see Bill—what he would be like. She thought of him with a little excitement. She thought back, with a kind of gratitude, to his old devotion.

She declared that she was absolutely praying for good weather. She would weep if it dared to rain Alumni Day. They were planning the grandest stunt!

She felt a grateful return of the old sense of importance and value in the class in writing all the letters and knowing just who planned to come.

Not Jay this time. His Adeline had won for him a parish in the East. Rob had seen Jay on a recent trip. He reported that Jay wore a clerical coat and his collar "wrong side before, kind of like one of these Catholic priests," although he still seemed to be a Congregational minister. There were rumors of trouble between him and his Adeline, although she was as ambitious for him as ever.

Bunty would not come. Nor Ellen. Poor Ellen had never regained her health, had never married Bunty, and only a little while after the fifth reunion she had died in California.

But Rob was there, of course, stocky, rosy, really bald this time. Rob seemed to keep track of everyone. He had seen Bill, too. The old fellow had begun to make really good now, out there in the West. Bill was going to be a big man out there some day. And you ought to have seen him, Rob said. Actually, old Bill was a fine-looking man now. He had grown up to those hands and feet of his. He still had his old jokes, but Bill had changed, he had got a lot more dignity, too. There was a rumor—Rob didn't know how true it was, couldn't get much out of the old fellow—that Bill was going to be married to some girl out there. Rob himself had married an '07 Adams girl.

Hester wanted eagerly to show them all the new buildings, the improvements on the campus. The new chapel, the science hall. They declared that she was the most familiar thing at Adams, that she was just as she had always been, that she had the same old Hester smile.

She was still slender, girlish. She dressed as she had always done, in the simple, fresh, not too fashionable way that Adams girls had affected in her day. She wore the amber combs still. But the old soft look had left her face. Her small features were a little sharpened. She had no color. Her smile had in it a bright, strained sweetness, not exactly forced, but over-eager. Thin, fine, curved lines were etched sharply about the corners of her mouth.

They said that Hester was as enthusiastic as ever. She kept the old spirit. She had held close to her ideals—more than the rest of them had been able to do. But then she had stayed right at Adams.

She cried, "Oh, people, do you think so? I've—honestly, I have—got so discouraged sometimes."

"Oh, Hester, I've never seen you discouraged."

Some of them said afterward: "What makes Hester stick there in the Academy? I should think she'd want to get out."

The next year did see the end of the old Academy. It could

no longer compete with the High Schools. The time for it was gone.

Hester had long been expecting this. The Academy had been doomed when Prexie Jim had asked her to stay. And yet it was like tearing something out of her life, she felt, to have it go.

And what would happen now? Would she have to leave Adams?

She felt that she could not go into public school work. It lacked the prestige, the atmosphere, of anything connected with a college. But if she did go she would have to take her mother with her, and then what else was there for her to do?

Carrie Lake, '00, had been asked to come back to the college this year as Dean of Women. Miss Keats said angrily to Hester, "Why couldn't they have given you a decent job like that? It's just that you've been here so long that they don't really know how to appreciate you. It's always the folks around here that do the most that get the least credit for it." Hester would not have said such things. But sometimes she did enjoy having Miss Keats say them for her. Martha Keats was redhaired, with a kind of roughness and a tendency to sputtering that had at first offended Hester. But she had found that Martha was "really more loyal than those that said less." She had developed a kind of angry protecting affection for Hester, whom she believed that the college had used and not rewarded. Martha Keats herself was not a graduate, except for a short course in commercial work at the Academy. But she always admitted, too, after a spasm of sputtering, that she supposed she had got too much attached to the place to leave it, like all the rest of them. She supposed that she would go right on putting up with everything.

There were only a few things about which Hester did wish to complain. She still accepted with fervor. And these were such little personal things, she said, compared to the institution itself. Think of all it gave them! Think of the wonder-

ful chapel talks, and the beautiful Vesper services in the new chapel. The institution was so much greater than themselves. All that they could do for it would be little enough.

She did not leave. President Heller—"Prexie" now—had a new place for her. The big million-dollar endowment campaign was beginning now. Many extra helpers would be needed at Adams and it was desirable to have those who need be paid as little as possible. Hester was to work in the President's office. In the feeling that she was really doing something for Adams, she did not feel so keenly the closing of the Academy, the turning of the old roof garden into office rooms. For those three years she lived for the endowment campaign. She hunted up statistics, kept records. Think what success would mean to the school! The new dormitories could be built, there would be a new organ in the chapel, a new men's gymnasium. This was something to which she could "give everything" again.

She became now one of the staunchest devotees of Prexie Heller. Oh, of course she worshiped him from afar. He was not like Prexie Jim, who called her "Hester" and held her hand warmly while he spoke to her. Prexie Heller was grand, sublime, distant, Miltonic. She transferred to him the devotion that had once been given to Daisy Lyons and Helen Garvis. She felt that she was in the presence of a great man.

"Well, I wish I could believe in things the way you do," Miss Keats told her. "But I'm such an old grouch I can't help seeing the other side of things. You're the least selfish person I ever saw."

There was the glorious night when the college bell was rung and all the whistles were blown, when men threw silver dollars upon the platform of the chapel to make up the last five hundred dollars of the endowment fund. The speeches and the yells, the singing of the new Adams song that a Junior boy had written:

"Spirit of Adams,
We give to thee
Our hearts, our faith,
Our loyalty."

She went home exalted, uplifted. What did any personal life matter beside the immortal spirit of Adams? What did it matter if she was cramped next year, if she had promised every cent that she could wring from her little salary for the next five years, in answer to very definite solicitations? It was all for Adams. It was so little—if she could only have done more!

CHAPTER IX

Immediately after the endowment campaign was concluded, another was begun. Only half the things could now be done that were included in Prexie's great vision of Adams. Adams could not stand still. A few "pessimists," "croakers," declared that the change was all on the outside, that new buildings couldn't make up for the loss of the old free life. But that wasn't the spirit which got things done. The campus, certain aspects of the college life, were transformed. Everything in Adams had gone forward except the salaries of its professors. Hester was still contributing to succeeding endowments from her princely wage.

She stayed on. She would probably have a permanent place in the President's office. She was getting to be one of the fixtures in the college. Of course she would stay, Miss Keats said grimly. People couldn't be picked from bushes that would do all that Hester was doing for sixty-five dollars a month. That was her salary, a chastely guarded secret which only Miss Keats certainly knew. Miss Keats knew all the salaries. She "could have told some things," she sometimes remarked. When

she saw old Strongpipe driving leisurely over the campus with his grass-cutting machine, she would remark with grim pleasure, "You'll never get the salary that he's getting, my girl! Oh, well, what's a simple A.B. compared with a degree in Smokeology!"

Martha Keats still did all the grumbling for both of them. Hester could never bring herself to more than a wistful "Well, I do think that I ought to be getting more than I am getting. But then I know how in need of money the college is." Her affections, her whole life, were too closely entwined with the thought of the college for her to really complain. She kept up the idea that it was better to work for little or nothing at Adams than for millions elsewhere. The college could give something that mere money could not give.

Hester would never criticize Prexie Heller, whom she associated with the college in her devotion. She defended him hotly when she heard people say that "it was personal ambition on Prexie's part." If they had seen Prexie as she had seen him! He lived for the college. He hadn't a thought, he hadn't a desire outside of it. He had more than taken the place of Prexie Jim in her worship. But it wasn't a personal feeling, she always told Miss Keats. Prexie was too aloof and awe-inspiring and grand. When she saw him in his doctor's gown slashed with orange and his mortarboard with the silken tassel, a splendid figure, the embodiment of all for which Adams stood, she felt that she was worshiping an ideal, not a person. But these people—Martha Keats was one—who said that Prexie was too grand to be human, were wrong. She had seen Prexie almost discouraged, almost heartbroken at moments over the terrible disappointments and difficulties of the campaigns. She cherished these instances of his precious humanity in her secret heart, and they made him infinitely more beloved.

Because of her loyalty to Prexie she would not admit that the spirit of the campus life was changing. Oh, in accidentals,

of course, but Adams could never change in fundamentals. Of course there were things that seemed strange. The dormitory life couldn't help spoiling some of the old free companionship between men and girls, such as there had been when they ate together at hilarious boarding clubs. There was all this new formality and "red tape" at Adams. It was a shock at first to have dances upon the Adams campus.

But then the privilege of belonging to such a splendid institution! The pride of feeling that it was unique. A little, beautiful world of its own, sheltered, keeping to its own standards, not heterogeneous and miscellaneous like the great universities.

If she had ever felt that some of the old "spirit of service" was dying out, during war times it flamed gloriously to life again. She thought of what Prexie said: "The spirit of Adams is the spirit of democracy, of service for humanity, and the spirit of democracy and service is the spirit of America."

At first, Adams could not believe in the war. It had seemed like the defeat of the Adams ideals. The whole spirit of Adams was "against conflict." Great things were hoped from the peace ship. The professors sent a petition to the President.

But when the United States became involved, it was seen that Adams had stood for peace when peace was possible, but not for the dread name of pacifism. Now the professors who had signed the petition scrambled for positions with relief commissions, with the Y. M. C. A. It had been whispered for a time that Prexie had made "pacifistic utterances." Strange rumors filled the campus. But these were stopped when Prexie was given a post of importance in the Government service. Adams rose valiantly and proved its spirit when the day of testing came.

Not Carlson, "the most brilliant man on the campus," to whose chair Josiah Porterfield had given an extra endowment to keep him at Adams, was chosen as Acting President during

Prexie's absence. Instead, Dr. Seeley, from the science department, a good, safe, solid, not too brainy man. Dr. Seeley had always seemed a pleasant, quiet, serious man. Now strange things came to light. The submerged jealousies and resentments of years ran rampant. Now had come the happy day, long despaired of by Dr. Seeley and his colleagues, when Carlson could no longer have things all his own way, when it was proved that brains were not all that made a man, when this talk of "originality" was shown for what it was, when evidences of disturbing intelligence were revealed in all their danger. Now was the day when the old guard came into its own, and heresy received its just punishment.

They were "after Carlson," in faculty meeting, where he was questioned by a band made strong by unity. It was a serious matter, of course—he had a wife and family—but his strongly cut lips twitched a little as he saw the childish joy which these men took in their new ferocity, like little boys playing Indian. This was better even than dressing up in plumes and swords and parading with the Knights Templar if it wasn't at the same time a display so infinitely sad. Documents were circulated to be signed, there were investigations by trustees. To be able to strike at Carlson, almost in the open, and with motives of glorious and exalted patriotism!

But they did not "get Carlson." "Carlson can run circles around those old boys, he's a wise guy," the students said. But their thirst was slightly appeased by running down a few other instances of "dangerous opinions."

The little old lady who had taught in the Academy and was now teaching a few extra classes and assisting the Dean of Women. She would not sign one of the documents, declaring with tears that "Christ had said to turn the other cheek, to love one's enemies, to do unto others as ye would have others do unto ye." She wavered a little when the now favorite text of chapel and pulpit was brought forward—"I come not to bring

peace but to bring a sword." But that was only one instance, and Christ was called "the Prince of Peace." People regretted it—but an example like that, however harmless it might seem, could not be passed by. There was a young German instructor with a tubercular wife. He must go. Fraülein Hoeffner, who taught violin, a large and buxom person suspected to be fond of beer in the privacy of her room but forgiven for the past six years because of her efforts with the Girls' Glee Club, left in a storm. People shuddered when it was discovered what a viper they had been cherishing unsuspected in their midst.

Hester saw none of this. There were regrettable things—but life was great and exalted. Adams was glorious. There was a new, fascinating severity and suggestion of danger in the sight of boys in uniform on the Adams campus. The terrible sorrow, that both thrilled and hurt her, was that these beautiful boys might go away to be killed. Hester, as always, believed fervently.

And there was an exciting stirring-up and change in the Adams life. So many professors were gone. She was set to teaching Freshman Latin classes. She helped with the Red Cross. No one knew what might happen.

Yet how quickly things settled down into sameness again. The old interests came back. The breath from the great world which returning professors were to bring back with them was only a breath. Dr. Seeley stepped back into the chemistry department. Carlson, after showing that he could remain if he wished, accepted a position with a large university. Hester was put back into the President's office, where she now had the noble work of keeping war records.

Her youth was now definitely gone. She was a fixture on the campus—"Hetty G." the students called her. They laughed at her little enthusiasms, at her ardent middle-aged manner, at her sidecombs and the coat that she wore year after year. In the Annual, she had taken an insignificant place among the

other worthies who were subjects for "roasts"—that band of whom Strongpipe Jones was head. They wondered if she took off her smile at night.

She still religiously attended college functions with Miss Keats and Miss Crowley and Miss Summerson. She went to the Opening Reception in the evening dress that she had worn for eight years. Cream-colored, trimmed with wide lace, semi-low-necked, with a skirt that was lengthened or shortened according to mode, but never quite enough of either. She belonged to a decorous town club. She assisted at teas held by connections of the Adams family, her mother now being too frail. To Miss Keats and Miss Crowley she had a faint traditional family glory. One thing that hurt her dreadfully was the discovery that she and some of the other Adamsville "girls" were no longer welcome at E. B. B. But they still loved their little old plain gold pins better than these expensive pearl-encrusted ones that the girls were now wearing. At least she had never lost her loyalty. She would still do anything for E. B. B. She still rejoiced, unselfishly and without personal resentment, when popular new girls joined E. B. B. But her smile was defensive when she met the girls at teas.

She was still excited over the results of the Billings game. Those in the President's office had early intelligence of the Phi Beta Kappa appointments. They were sometimes asked to be judges at oratorical contests. They held hot discussions as to who best deserved the medal that was now being given for "The most distinguished service to Adams during the four years." They knew minutely the achievements of all the prominent undergraduates, they had favorites over whom they "simply raved"—"Oh, I think she's the loveliest girl! She has the most wonderful voice that was ever heard at Adams."

She must take her pride in the growth and advancement of the college.

The town, too, was so changed, although she did feel that

in spite of her pride in it she could mourn over its lost aspects a little. It had long been paved. It had more asphalt than any other town of its size in Iowa. The character of the houses was changing. Those that had been built in the early nineteen hundreds—large frame houses with big, plain porches rounded at the corners—now looked elderly. There were new bungalows and stucco houses with hot, red splashes of geraniums at the windows. The character of the stores was different, with the little new ready-to-wear shops. The old Vienna Café had long passed away; giving place first to "Wick's," with its one long, dusky room with oaken compartments and yellow-shaded lights, where chocolate pie *à la* modes were consumed; and now to tea rooms and an "inn."

Hester's personal life, beyond the religion of the college, was fed by her worship of Prexie and her loyalty to her class. She was still the Alumni Secretary of '03. She wrote letters indefatigably, gathered the class news for the *Alumni Bulletin*. She felt that the old, precious class spirit was in her keeping. It was, in a way, a principle with her to wear her hair as she had done in the old days, to be in every way "the same Hester." Miss Keats, who had had "no chance for such things," liked to have Hester tell of the girls and boys of her own class, the "stunts they had pulled off," the flowers she had had for the Glee Club concerts. Miss Keats knew all about Big Bill. She was going to look for him at that twentieth reunion, to "see what he looked like."

Humphrey, of course, was still in Adamsville. He was as loyal and dependable as ever. These qualities now quite overshadowed his slowness. Her meetings and talks with Humphrey made her think of the old happy importance of committee meetings. Humphrey had married, a few years before, a woman whom he had met at Lake Okoboji. She was a social leader, "not just the Adams type." But his old class was still

nearer to Humphrey's heart than any later acquisition. He was a trustee and a solid citizen now, still chosen as treasurer of organizations. Heavy, with creases in his chin, a grayish skin, and hair that he still tried to keep in its own massive wave. He too was a fixture.

Hester and her mother lived in their three small rooms. Hester did practically all of the housework and the cooking now. Little Mrs. Harris was nearly blind. The brightest time of the year for her, as well as for Hester, was Commencement, when some of "her dear girls" who had stayed in the Harris House came to see her and talk to her, holding her frail, wrinkled little hands tenderly in theirs. She could remember the girls, but she could no longer remember their classes: '95 and 1915—they were all the same to her.

Hester was living now for her twenty-year reunion.

CHAPTER X

That Commencement feeling in the town. The long cement walks burning through light shoe soles, but over the walks and over the asphalt a dappling of grayish elm shadows. Girls and boys going endlessly up and down. Cars purring over the asphalt, parked at the south of the campus, hot light flashing off the smooth black hoods and steel radiator caps. Downtown eating-houses crowded and warm—the dining-room of the old Adams House, the Wild Rose Tea Room and Pickwick Inn. Warm, moist green June grass on the wide lawns of the big frame houses; and along the cinder drives lilac bushes that gave the scent and feeling to the days.

Little touches: Professor Hendries' dog, Collie Prince, strolling in through the open, sunlit doorway of the chapel. A doctor's gown thrown over the big lilac bush on the lawn of the

little old-fashioned house, with sharp white gables, where old "Pa" Taylor—long retired—lived. Humphrey Dilley meeting speakers and prominent graduates with his Cadillac.

Now Commencement was half over. Baccalaureate and Class Days—sunny, perfect days. Showers, but brief, sparkling, summery showers that sent people scurrying over the campus with hastily folded chairs, and left the green June grass and the lilacs fresher and richer scented.

Then Alumni Day. Old grads thick on the campus. '96 wore little purple and gold hats. Girls and boys wandering down the cinder paths watched these antics with tolerant, superior, amused and careless eyes.

A little group of idle girls came down College Street, their arms about each other. Hester passed them.

"Good-morning, girls."

"Good-morning," they chorused.

Their eyes followed the figure hurrying past them.

"Where's Hetty G. going in such a hurry?"

"I suppose she has to arrange everything for Commencement. Didn't you know Commencement couldn't be pulled off in this institution without Hetty G.?"

"She's going to her reunion, girls."

"What reunion—for heaven's sake!"

"Didn't you know Hetty was graduated in naughty-three?"

"Didn't know Hetty had ever been graduated! Thought she'd always been here, like Recitation Hall—"

"Like Bunny's straw hat."

One of them called softly,

"Hurry, Hetty old dear! She's running to 'get things started,' girls. There's Humphrey—girls! Don't they make a darling, frisky little couple?"

They giggled with light, unconscious cruelty, and loitered in the sunlight through the elm trees dappling their shin-

ing heads and smooth, entwined arms and pretty frocks with shadows.

Hester hurried on, with an eager, wistful look on her face. Now that she had passed the girls she was not smiling, but the imprint of the smile remained in the fine set lines about her mouth.

She thought she had never seen the campus so beautiful. The green grass and the dusky evergreens; the flowering bushes along the black cinder paths; the little, delicate, silver-stemmed birches. Oh, lovely, lovely. . . .

She was almost late for her class meeting on the lawn of the Quad. She had had to help with the diplomas, post notices, order the little parasols for the class stunt. She hadn't seen half of those dear people. Bill Warren was coming from Seattle, Leonard and Susie Stoner. She had just heard this morning that Jinny Woodward—*Jinny*—would be here! They were all to carry little scarlet and white parasols. And the horns, what about the horns?

Humphrey Dilley caught up with her.

"Oh, Humphrey, you *do* have the horns!"

Good old Humphrey. He performed a stately little foot dance on the cinder path trying to get in step with her hurrying feet.

"Oh, isn't it all beautiful!"

Her glance took in the ivied buildings, the leafy trees, the grassy, open spaces, as they went on together down the paths that were so much more than familiar to both of them. They saw the shade-dappled lawn of the Quad, sloping to the path, a little group of people. . . .

She began to smile and to hurry. She left Humphrey several steps behind as she climbed the grassy slope, waving excitedly and calling, "Hello, you aught-threes!"

"Why, it's Hester!" . . . "Hester Harris!" . . . "Well, well,

well—welcome to our circle!" "Hester and Humphrey—isn't that exactly like old times!"

She was in the midst of the happiness for which she lived—being greeted, and kissed, welcomed and welcoming . . . with misty eyes . . . catching sight of one face after another, with little gasps of remembrance. . . .

"Bill! Of course I know you." Bill—think of it! She felt a little consciousness. "Rob! Margaret, my dear, I'm so *glad* to see you!" Poor darling Margaret, she was so changed, so terribly changed. "Gertie Bumstead! Yes, I do." But there was nothing except the familiar brown glint of eyes in that large, massaged face to identify the old Crazy Gert.

"Do you know who this is?"

A low, beautiful voice, a fleeting touch on her arm, a dark face with soft contours and dark, starry eyes—one strange dash of silver in dusky hair—

"Jinny Woodward!"

They embraced. The contact with Jinny was thrilling—with her soft, fragrant arms and breast, the touch of her exquisite garments. But Hester drew back from it somehow shaken with a disquieted sense that changed into excited admiration as she took in the loveliness of this half-strange, half-familiar Jinny—her manner of laughing ease, her indefinable splendor. There was time only for a breathless glimpse—

"People, here are your parasols. *Please* like them, because Humphrey and I have scoured the country for them."

She laughed excitedly while Humphrey, with his solemn air, unwrapped the absurd toy parasols with their scarlet ruffles and rosettes—

"Oh, boy!" Big Bill shouted. "Will my mamma let me out?"

He seized one in his enormous hand and went mincing down the lawn, simpering and bowing to the laughing Quadrangle girls who passed. Bill *was* still the same—although he had seemed at first so different, with his long locks shorn and

the new, easy, well-fitting clothes, the new manner. "Same old Bill," the laughing, pleased glances said. But Bill was the leader at once.

"Hester, are we actually to carry these things? Goodness, I feel so foolish!" Della was half shocked. "If my Sophomore son should see me—"

"Oh, but let him see you! Show him you're a good aught-three!" Hester cried. "They've never balked at anything."

"Right! And never will. Every man shoulder his parasol—forward, march!"

Big Bill led them off, stalking at the head, carrying the little absurdity in martial style, they all following after, some embarrassed and laughing, Della protesting, all of them conscious and hilarious, carrying it off gayly before the laughing eyes of undergraduates. Hester went along happily, not seeing the glances and the nudges of the students who passed her—"Look at Hetty G.! Isn't she having the time of her young life?" Hester moved up and down the line, distributing the little knots of scarlet and white ribbon that she had sat up to make the night before.

"Still on the job, Hester!"

"Still on the job."

She saw in a kind of dazzle of light the sunlit campus, the big group of people under the birches, the colors, streamers, badges, the old gymnasium standing red and solid in the sunshine.

'03 had a lovely level spot in the shade of the tallest birch. "How splendid—Hester, I know we owe this to you." People clapped them as they sat down. The smiling faces were all irradiated. The class of 1903—Hester's heart swelled with proud appreciation. She looked about—she saw the classes each in its own place. The two dear old white-haired members of '79; '96 with their absurd hats; last year's graduating class back in full force, radiantly excited; her own class, the dear old bunch, '03.

She thought of those who weren't here. Of Ellen. Bunty had married—"My dear, a regular flapper type, I nearly fell over when he introduced us!" Had they heard about Jay? He had run off with another woman in his congregation—or something—anyway, he had got into a terrible mess and Adeline was suing him for divorce, he had lost his church—it was all in the papers.

Horns were being tooted and trumpets blown, class yells were being fervently given, boys and girls were darting about with paper plates soggy with yellow potato salad. Big Bill led their own yell—

Osky-wow-wow!
Skinny-wow-wow!
'03!
Wow! Wow!

Hester yelled so enthusiastically that the tears stood in her eyes.

Hester must help with the picnic luncheon. She was in and out of the gymnasium, urging the girls to make more sandwiches, sending the boys on hurried errands, running about. "Hetty G.'s all excited—what would the Pioneer College of the Prairies do without her?"

She did not hear that.

"People, what can I get you?"

Her thin, delicate face was flushed and glistening with heat, her light hair escaped from the amber combs in fine damp strands.

"Aren't you dead, Hester?"

"Oh, no," she gasped happily.

She looked up with shining gratitude when Big Bill took her gently but firmly by the shoulders and forced her down upon the thick green grass. He fanned her with a paper plate

with exaggerated fervor. She had thought that there might be some discomfort in meeting him, that he might hold resentment. She glanced up—saw in his face only a kind of special gentleness, something a little pitiful, as she had seen in Jinny's face. She smiled her brave determined smile.

The luncheon was over. The grass was littered over with bits of paper, ribbons, scraps—work for Strongpipe. Martha Keats would be delighted with that. It was hot. People stirred and whispered through the last of the speeches. But there was the class meeting to look forward to. In that, again, she had a place.

"Well, people," Humphrey began ponderously, "I suppose it's time we were adjourning for a little business meeting."

Della moaned that it was too hot for business.

"Humphrey!" Hester cried eagerly. "That little clump of evergreens behind the gym! It's always cooler there."

"I remember no such place in my day of campus perambulations," Bill asserted.

"Oh, well, there's lots you don't remember!" . . . Heavens! She hoped he didn't think she was referring to *that*!

When they all sat down, with groans of pleasure, on the brown needle-matted ground under the evergreens close to the cool stone wall, they were suddenly silent. Humphrey sat down facing them, clearing his throat in his old deliberate way. Hester could see from the eyes, some looking intently, brightly at him, some turned consciously, with pretended carelessness, away, that they were realizing Humphrey—his dependability through twenty years. Twenty years . . . the sunlight, cooled and darkened by the evergreens, fell upon them, voices sounded remotely from the campus, the June air touched their faces poignantly.

Humphrey was beginning, with that look of dumb agony that always came into his eyes when he tried to make a speech:

"Fellow classmates . . . of the class of nineteen-aught-three

. . . I feel as if on this occasion . . . something ought to be said. As I believe you know, I am not a speaker. But our friend Bill Warren always did like to talk—" A gust of appreciative laughter, "so I've asked him to say a few words to you. Bill . . ."

The eyes turned toward Bill, sitting hunched over tailor-fashion, poking at the pine needles with a little stick—they took in his big, pleasant, ungainly figure, that was impressive in some strange new way, the smile curving his wide mouth, the air of exuberance that made them say he was still the same Bill. He looked up slowly, they felt the gray glow of his deep-set, mournful eyes. Then he began to speak in an easy, deep-toned, direct way:

"Well, fellow classmates, naughty-three's more naughty than ever—after the base insinuations cast upon me by our talkative friend Humphrey, that I—I—a grave man, a silent man—"

The same Bill—no, not the same, more changed than any of them. She had heard them say, "how wonderfully Bill had developed," that "Bill had come into his own." She felt with a strange pain that it was true. Hester sat listening to the deep tones. In a kind of fear she realized how long and how intensely she had been looking forward to this—now it was happening. She forced herself, smiling, to follow Bill's words:

"Well, classmates, I hate to stop talking, but I see you're all sitting on edge to get in a word—especially our friend Humphrey, here. Well, that's a little of what I wanted to say."

"The secretary will read the minutes of the last evening."

Everything seemed breathlessly still. Her fingers trembled a little as she opened the familiar red-and-black book, holding down the leaves that flapped in the soft June wind. Her voice went thinly through the words that were like food to her—"The class of 1903 met June nine, nineteen twenty-two, and was called to order by the president—"

"If there is no correction to these minutes they stand approved."

"Mr. President!"

"Mr. Warren."

Big Bill leaped to his feet. "Not a correction exactly, but I would like to make a motion—resolution—whisper to me, Gertie, what do you call it?—resolution, *she* says, to be incorporated, by force if necessary, in the record of today's meeting. Fellow classmates, there's one member of this band of the faithful who's more faithful than all the rest, who's been largely instrumental in making this day a tumultuous success. Boys and girls, I move we give three rousing cheers for Hester."

They gave them. "Speech! Speech!"

Hester's heart seemed to pound and stop. Her smile quavered tremulously on her lips. This was her tribute. Her work, her loyalty had been worth while. For the first time in years her heart had again its own food.

There were other speeches.

"I move we hear from Leonard and Susie Stoner, brethren and sistern."

Leonard Stoner, just as he had always been, little, with a wave of lightish hair and an Adam's apple, not much more dried up than he had always been, talked somewhat pompously of the work of himself and his wife in Asia Minor, speaking patronizingly of "the corner in their hearts that they would always keep for dear Almas Mater." He would have been glad to have spoken more. Susie Dykes Stoner—big, plain, homely, with the same black hair and protruding teeth—had now an air of mature authority before which Hester felt uncertain. She had brought up, besides the Asia Minorites, a family of young Stoners, all of whom would receive their training at Adams. The Stoners were full of their great work "establishing the ideals of Adams College among the down-

trodden peoples of Asia Minor." John Fellows had had a nervous breakdown, and the Stoners were now in power. They were listened to with respect. They had gone far afield; they had seen "conditions."

Jinny laughingly refused to speak. She declared that she was too black a sheep. Hester learned that she was here because her husband, James Broderick, the geologist, had been asked to speak before the Scientific Society. Jinny had "got out," as she used to darkly threaten. The music of her voice thrilled and disquieted Hester with its suggestion of experience, of some unknown richness and plenitude of life. Her dusky, cloudy hair with that one sharp dazzle of silver, her brows piquantly uneven, the shadowy, deeply dented corners of her mouth, her light, exquisite gown . . . Jinny had defied everything that Hester counted best. But she was more wonderful than ever.

It was so soon over. They seemed to have held the meeting and then dismissed it—an event in their lives, but only one event among others. They were sitting about talking of other things. The Stoners of Asia Minor to whoever would listen. Humphrey seemed a little out of it. Embarrassment came over Hester. They knew each other and the place so well. It meant so much to them. They were both at the disadvantage of caring more than the others. It was like a guilty secret between them.

Her warm sense of gratitude toward Bill left her. He was taking it all so easily. He had given her her tribute—and now it was over. She had met all the slow closing-in, the insidious disappointment of her life, with the same smile. Now it seemed carved upon her mouth, as if she could not move her lips out of their set painful, valiant line.

She felt a faint deep resentment. It was she who had kept the faith. But those most listened to—Big Bill, Jinny, even the Stoners—were those who had not been the "real Adams

people." Her heart began to feel chill and wonderingly depressed.

Prexie's reception was a welter of light dresses, black coats, frappé and afternoon shadows. She was useful again—running off on her aching feet to find chairs for tired ladies, going in search of people for other people. There was even a martyred exaltation in having no time to see her own "dear people." A crowd surrounded Jinny. They had no chance to talk together, although Jinny pulled Hester gently to her side and held her there, conspicuously. She had one sharp, amazed vision of Big Bill's wife. She was young, a radiant and assured person, gowned and made up with delicate exquisiteness. Not like his "*i*-deal Adams girl."

Hester got away just in time to go down to the seventeen train. The little, dingy brick station with the arcade, the trunks, the boys and girls in laughing groups, the late-afternoon sunshine. Her own group she found near the door of the baggage room laughing at a tale told jointly by Bill and his wife. They waved—"Here's Hester! Bless her heart; I knew she'd get here." She hurried up to them on tired, aching feet, valiantly eager, helpful and smiling.

Humphrey came out of the depot room. "Ten minutes late."

"Then you'll be here that much longer!"

"Isn't Hester wonderful! She never loses her enthusiasm."

Big Bill was looking at her thoughtfully. She strove to say, with wistful appeal, "*Has* the day gone off well, people?"

"Perfect!"

They were leaving again—and she was watching them go. There were so many things unsaid. Jinny left her husband and stood near Hester, taking Hester's hand in her own, warm and vital through the light silk glove. Jinny seemed trying to convey a kind of comfort.

"How is dear Mrs. Harris? I wish I might have seen her."

"Well," Hester answered brightly. "Frail, of course, and she doesn't see well."

"And you're not in the old Harris House!"

"Oh, no, that's gone. But we're very cozy in our little rooms, just mamma and I."

The talk included them again.

Rob was saying, "Coming back next year, folkses?"

"Of course they are," Hester cried.

They shook their heads doubtfully. "No, I imagine it will be a little harder to get back every year from now on."

The little group of people, the station, the well-known row of box elder trees seemed to recede and waver. She could not hold them.

With the sound of the whistle they were eager to be off. The women gave Hester hasty, preoccupied embraces. She made no effort this time to press forward, but let the surging crowd of careless young people have their way. She stood back until the train was gone.

The rails still shook. A thin plume of smoke drifted across the pale clear June sky. The dray man—a new one—said, "Well, I'll be glad to be rid of the last of them darn trunks." Hester looked back and saw Humphrey close behind her; and with inner reluctance, with that sense of a guilty secret, they walked sedately down College Street together.

"Well—it's over again."

"Yes," she said bravely, "but we'll see them again. Now there's our thirty-year reunion to look forward to."

CHAPTER XI

Humphrey had left her. Her steps sounded loud on the wide cement walk. The tall elms stood up thick-leaved, motionless, as they would stand all through the long hot summer, throw-

ing gray dappled shadows on the asphalt. There was that after-Commencement feeling—a growing languor, a sadness and a uselessness in the fragrance that floated out over the thick, moist, solid mid-June heat.

She hated to go back up to those three small rooms. But suddenly she wanted to see Martha Keats. She had never really admitted Martha. But all at once she wanted to talk to her, to feel her blunt, affectionate, admiring interest, to explain to her, for instance, how she had felt about Joe Forrest and Bill Warren and to feel the consolation of her loyalty.