

1

It was the year 1525—a beautiful October evening in the village of Weisslingen, Switzerland. As Regina Strahm stepped briskly through the dry fallen leaves she could hear the familiar tink-a-tink of cowbells floating down from the high mountainsides. It was milking time, and from each native pine chalet, weathered to a rich golden brown, a boy or girl with a milk can could be seen walking toward a neighboring farm outside the village. This evening Regina with her milk can was on her way to the Rheinhardt barn outside of Weisslingen.

Regina often sang and yodeled as she walked along the bending road to the farm. Her rosy cheeks and quick steps were proof of her love for the fresh mountain air and simple Swiss life. Regina was now seventeen, contented and a bit merry, but unpretentious and with a brightness about her blue eyes. As she walked along a light evening breeze blew the soft blonde hair about her face and high forehead.

This evening Regina was not singing or yodeling. She did not see the rolling hills toward the north painted in rich autumn reds, golds, rusts, and deep blues; nor the pines and cedars that stood majestic and black and formed an irregular horizon against the blue sky.

When she came to the little rustic wooden bridge, she stopped and watched the rushing water splash against the white stones and twist in little whirlpools.

Why do they do it and who is right? This question was constantly turning about in her mind. She had been a member of the Reformed Church at Weisslingen for almost as long as she could remember, the church of Ulrich Zwingli who lived in Zurich, eleven miles northwest. It was the Reformed Church of which the government said everyone must be a member. Why were some disobedient to the church and to the government? Why were people being baptized again? Why must there be so much argument over what to believe? Since people were beginning to read the Bible, why must the disagreement be so great? Who really is right? Why is it dangerous even so much as to talk about who the heretics are and what they believe?

Regina wasn't in the habit of loitering, so she hastened across the bridge and soon was near the Rheinhardt barn.

"I saw the young pastor from Kyburg go past the other day." Rheinhardt spoke first. "Was he at your place?" he asked rather seriously.

"He came to order material for a new suit," said Regina.

"A new suit? I see. He chose the best woolen weaver in Weisslingen when he came to your father, Friedrich Strahm. Your father is as thrifty and honest as your grandfather. If only more people were as kind and trustworthy as your father."

"The suit the pastor ordered is to be his wedding suit," Regina said quietly.

"You mean his own?" Rheinhardt asked quickly.

"That's what Father said," Regina replied.

"I thought perhaps the pastor came to question your father." Rheinhardt looked sharply at Regina.

"Question my father?" Regina asked with a start. "My father is the most faithful member of the parish in Weisslingen. He's troubled about this confusion just as you are. Why can't somebody do something about it?"

"I ask your pardon," Rheinhardt answered with a smile and took the milk can from Regina's trembling hand. "I should not speak of these troubles to one so young. This Anabaptist doctrine has a way of spreading, but I know your father is faithful."

"Thank you, Rheinhardt," Regina said.

"But none of us know what to expect these days, with whole families suddenly becoming Anabaptists and disappearing

overnight. We never know who next might become heretics. No one knows who next might be questioned by the pastor. When he passed here, he seemed quite friendly and bade me the time of day. So the young Pastor Hofmeier is going to get married."

"He will be coming for the cloth next week," Regina said as she stepped back to let each cow take its stall. "You seem to be as much surprised as Father was."

"He's not the first priest to marry, and I suppose many more will be doing the same. I think it is all right, too."

"He told Father that Pastor Zwingli encouraged him to get married," Regina said.

As Rheinhardt picked up the milking stool he said, "Then it must be all right. Give me your can, Regina. I'll fill yours first. Either I'm slow tonight or you came early. Who will the bride be? Or is that a secret?"

"He told Father it will be Catri Landwirt."

"Well, Landwirt is a good name in these parts. It must be one of Caspar's daughters. I'm really glad he did not come to question your father, Regina. I don't want my good neighbors to become heretics. I could hardly wait to find out."

Regina quickened her steps as she hurried homeward. It was difficult for her to understand how the strong ties of friendliness and neighborliness between the people of her country, Switzerland, could become so strained. Their closeness to the mountains, their dependence on nature, their love for beauty, and their appreciation for each other had made the people deeply religious and earnest.

But this evening Regina thought little of her homeland—the fir-clad slopes that hemmed in lush valley pasture lands, and blue mirrors of Alpine lakes that nestled peacefully between glittering snow peaks always pointing sharply heavenward.

At the top of the gentle slope that led from the lower edge of the garden to the backdoor of the Strahm cottage, Regina stopped abruptly. Then she ran quickly up the steps and, having set the milk can on the kitchen table, dashed through the house to the weaving shop adjoining the cottage.

"Father!" she called.

"Yes, Regina?" Friedrich Strahm looked up and smiled and then finished the left run of the shuttle.

“Father, you must stop your work and come outside to see something beautiful. You can see the Jungfrau if you come right now.”

Father Strahm got up immediately from his bench and followed Regina to the spot by the backdoor where, between two clusters of pine trees on a hill in the far distance, the snow-capped Jungfrau glistened pinkish-white in the setting sun.

“Isn’t it beautiful, Father?” she exclaimed, clasping her father’s arm.

“I have seldom seen the Jungfrau as clear from here.”

“It’s fifty miles, isn’t it?”

“All of sixty. Call Mother. She must see this, too.”

“She’s not here, Father.”

“Not here?”

“Didn’t she tell you she was going to take a fresh loaf of bread over to Granny Sankhaus this afternoon?” Regina asked.

“She told me, of course. But I thought she’d be back by this time. It won’t last long. She should be coming.”

Friedrich Strahm and Regina stood quietly admiring the beauty of God’s handiwork. Suddenly he thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets and said solemnly, “I only hope—” The sentence was not finished.

“Hope what, Father?” asked Regina, her large blue eyes looking into her father’s.

“I hope our future will be as bright as that,” he said.

“Our future? Father, why do you say that? You mean your future and my future? Do you really think it might not be?”

“Of course it will be,” he answered quickly. “We won’t allow ourselves to become confused about the heretics and what they believe. We must be more careful what we say to others—even our friends. I do hope Mother is careful about what she tells Granny Sankhaus. I hope they didn’t talk about the Anabaptists.”

Regina glanced toward the distant Jungfrau only to see it almost hidden in the magic colors of the evening sunset.

“I must go back and work a while before it gets dark, but I’m glad you called me. It may be a long, long time until we see the Jungfrau again.”

Regina followed her father into the shop. For several minutes she stood beside the loom watching his face and the shuttle passing swiftly between his hands.

"I know I shouldn't bother you when you're so busy, Father," she said hesitatingly, "but why have you been so quiet and serious since the pastor from Kyburg was here to see you?"

"Since Heinrich Hofmeier was here?" Her father's voice betrayed a note of concern. Every day Regina surprised him with new questions. As he rested his hands on the loom, he looked at his daughter.

"Yes. Mother noticed it, too," she said.

"That I looked serious?"

"Yes. Did he question you, Father?"

"Question me?" His forehead wrinkled.

"Yes."

"What makes you ask?"

"Rheinhardt asked me when I went for the milk this evening."

"Rheinhardt? Rheinhardt asked you if Hofmeier questioned me?"

Friedrich Strahm clutched both sides of the loom and rose halfway to his feet. "Listen, Regina." He looked grave but his words were strangely tender. "Everything will soon be all right. I've told you and Mother many times this heretical teaching won't last long. It can't. The pastor and I discussed some things, but I told him firmly where our family stands. Don't worry, Regina. Rheinhardt should not be asking you such questions. He should come to me if he wants to know. What did you tell him?"

"I told him the pastor came to order material for a new suit."

"Of course, that's what he came for," said her father. "And he did not come to question me. I've told you and Mother over and over, Regina. We'll not allow ourselves to be deceived. Rheinhardt is too inquisitive. Don't let him disturb you."

"It always makes me feel better to talk with you. There are many things I just can't understand. It doesn't seem right that the Wittmers had to leave. I lay awake every night thinking about them. I loved Ann, Father. I loved Ann with all my heart."

Friedrich Strahm saw her lip tremble.

“After supper we’ll talk. You should go now and cut the bread and cheese and make the tea so that when Mother comes we can eat.”

Friedrich Strahm turned toward his loom, and Regina walked to the house to prepare supper. It was times like these she missed her brother Hans. She looked down the road he had taken seven months before when he left to begin work in his uncle’s cheese factory at Langnau in the Emmental. She wished she could talk to him now. They always seemed to understand each other.

He had understood why she had tried not to cry when they said good-bye. She had walked beside him with his horse to the edge of the town.

“Sixty-five miles is too far to be away from home,” Regina had said sadly, holding out her hand.

Hans held it as he planted a kiss on each cheek.

“I’m really proud of you, though,” she added quickly, smiling through a few tears. “It will be wonderful when someday you can make a cheese yourself and own a factory. Think of it, Hans!”

“Yes. Good-bye, now. Don’t be sad.”

“You’ll try to come home at least once a year, won’t you, Hans?”

“I’ll try. I’ll miss you more than you will me, Regina.”

“Hans, that could never be. I’ll miss you terribly. I hardly know what I’ll do with you and Michel both gone.”

Now Regina still remembered the parting words of Hans. She was now alone at home, and she could no longer depend on Hans to answer her questions, especially about the Anabaptists and their teachings.

2

Regina was cutting the cheese when her mother came in.

“Did you think I was never coming, Regina?”

“Father has been anxious.”

“Anxious? About me?”

“Yes. And you missed seeing the Alps! They were never more beautiful, Mother. We saw them only a short time.”

“Is that why Father was anxious?”

“Well, yes. But he was also hoping you weren’t discussing the Anabaptists with Granny.”

“Oh, she did most of the talking, as usual. Father is so afraid someone will draw me out and I’ll say too much. I was very careful.”

“Did she tell you anything new? I hope if she did it’s good news.”

“I’m sorry, Regina,” she said sadly. “It’s the opposite.”

“What now?” Regina dropped the knife.

“Another family has turned Anabaptist.”

“Who?” Regina asked cautiously.

“The Brohens over the hill.” Mother took off her head scarf and woolen shawl and hung them on the hook behind the door.

“Oh, no! Mother! And does that mean they too will leave?”

“Yes, dear, it means they had to leave the canton. Granny’s son saw them leaving yesterday.”

“No! Mother, they were some of the nicest people we knew.”

“Yes, dear, I know—but you see,” she spoke sadly, “it’s like Father said. When people you know deliberately disobey the government—oh, I know it’s unbelievable, but they’re gone.”

“But, Mother!” Regina lifted her apron and covered her face.

“If it makes you feel like that, Regina,” her mother said, “I—I can’t tell you any more. Don’t cry. Please.” Mother wiped her eyes quickly. “Sh-h, I hear someone coming.”

Regina darted into her room and closed the door.

* * *

“You stayed quite a while, Mother.”

Melka looked up. “Yes, yes, Friedrich, I know—but it was hard to leave. Granny wanted to talk. She’s there alone so much during the day and never gets out. Just listens to Jacob bring home things that upset her.”

“What’s the matter? Did you get into any dangerous discussions about the heretics?” he asked quickly.

“No, Friedrich, not dangerous. But she told me that the Brohens have become victims and—” Melka’s voice broke.

“What? Not Heini Brohens?” Friedrich Strahm stepped back.

“Yes. Yes. They’re gone now—too.”

“Gone?” Friedrich reached for the back of the chair.

“I guess I shouldn’t have told Regina. It hurts her worse each time.”

Friedrich shook his head. “She’d find it out sooner or later anyway. We can’t keep these things from her. I’ve decided that today. She’s no child any more. Regina will soon be eighteen. Where is she? I told her to have supper ready.”

“She’s in the bedroom, Friedrich, and I am afraid she’s badly upset about this. She might even be crying.”

“After supper I’m going to talk to her.”

Gently Father rapped on her bedroom door. “Come, Regina, let’s eat.”

“Did someone come, Father?”

“No, Regina. There’s no one here but us three. Come.”

“Then I’ll be out in a minute.”

After supper Regina washed the few dishes while her mother sat by the candlelight with her knitting. Her fingers, which usually worked with magic swiftness, seemed tired or clumsy. Every now and then her hands dropped to her lap, and she looked long at Regina and Friedrich.

Father brought in an armful of wood and built a fire in the fireplace of the living room. The three sat close by the fire—Regina on a low wooden stool beside her father. Every now and then the wind blew a branch of the apple tree against the window, making an unpleasant, scraping sound.

Father arose and closed the shutter. Then, returning to his chair, he said, “Now, Regina, it is my duty as your father to tell you as best I can about the heretics so that you will not be so disturbed and so that you will be true to the holy Christian church you were baptized into as an infant. I hope you will never listen to the teaching of a stranger or a heretic. We must all put our whole faith in the laws of the church and not become troubled over what’s happening to the people who refuse to listen to advice.” Father cleared his throat. He seemed out of breath. He crossed his legs and rubbed his knee.

Regina sat in deep thought, her chin resting on one hand.

“These are foolish decisions the Anabaptists are making,” Father continued. “Someday they will see the terrible mistake they have made. I’m sure the Wittmers wish they were back.”

“But, Father,” asked Regina, “why are more and more people believing the Anabaptist way? Some are the best people we ever knew, like the Wittmers. And now the Brohens.”

“It’s just like Granny said today.” Mother tried to help Father by adding to the discussion. “This doctrine is like a dreaded disease or plague. It overcomes people we would least expect it to. It makes me shudder even to think of it. Who will be next?”

Father continued. “We must band ourselves together as a family, Regina, and condemn this strange doctrine and not allow anyone to talk to us about it. We’ve got to take every precaution.”

“I hope you don’t think I would even think of being disobedient, Father,” said Regina, looking at the flames rising in the

fireplace. "But I can't keep from wondering about things when people like the Wittmers and now the Brohens accept this teaching. We've been such good friends all these years. I just don't know what to think."

"But, Regina, aren't you satisfied that we have brought you up right and have taken care of your spiritual welfare by having you baptized as an infant?" Father cleared his throat again. "You are safe, Regina. Be satisfied with what we did for you."

"Yes, Father," said Regina. "I thank you for everything you've done for me. I couldn't ask for better parents or a better home. It's not that, Father. I just can't understand. I mean, why all this trouble ever had to start. Why can't people live in peace and love each other? It's so beautiful here. I love it. The trees, the sky, the mountains, everything. We've always been so happy here. I'd never want to leave. The Wittmers and Brohens were happy here, too, I thought. Then why did they have to leave? Something must have made them feel as if it was worth leaving. This new faith—maybe I can't make you understand what I'm trying to say, Father. Haven't you ever wondered?"

"Yes, Regina, I've wondered about all that—but—but I know this: If I would go to an Anabaptist meeting now when we've been warned not to, and allow myself to be baptized again, I would only be inviting trouble, punishment, or persecution. Heinrich Hofmeier gave me some things to think about. He is smart, too. If I'd deliberately, knowingly disobey the government, I wouldn't expect anyone to pity me if I'd have to leave. I would expect to go, and I'd take what I deserved."

"Maybe that's what they did, Father. Surely they were not compelled into being rebaptized. Of course," she added, "I know there are a lot of things about all this I may never understand. But I can't help wondering what they thought about before they made their final decision. Wittmers chose not to have their baby baptized, didn't they? Don't you think they did a lot of serious thinking about it first, Father?"

After a long silence, Father spoke as though he had discovered a good idea. "I know, Regina, what we'll do. When Pastor Hofmeier comes for his material next week, I'll have you ask him a few questions for yourself. He will know what to tell you

to set you straight on this whole matter. He is well educated and knows the situation from beginning to end."

"But would he want to take time to bother with me? I doubt it."

Friedrich Strahm sat thinking.

"That isn't what I'm wondering about," he answered. "Maybe after all that would not be the thing to do. He might wonder why you even consider spending so much thought—wait, let me think this through first. We've all got to be more careful what we ask or say to anyone, or we will be suspected. Right now the best fatherly advice I can give you, Regina, is this: Stay by the decisions and rules of the church, our church, the state church, and remember, a man as sincere and as educated as Ulrich Zwingli, and as learned in the Scripture as he, wouldn't lead anyone astray."

"Father," she said softly, "wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a Bible all our own and could read it for ourselves?"

"I intend to get one sometime," answered Father, "but that may not be very soon. And if I ever can afford to get one, I wonder how much of it we will be able to understand."

3

The controversy between the Swiss Brethren, or Anabaptists, and the Zwinglian Reformers became more serious each week. The three principal leaders of the Anabaptists, in the face of prosecution by the civil authorities, had held a public meeting in an open field near Hinwil. The story of the arrest and imprisonment of these three leaders, Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock, had spread far and wide. Everyone in the canton was listening, watching, wondering what would happen next.

Many people became afraid to discuss their opinions with their neighbors, their friends, or even their closest relatives. Threatenings, mandates, punishments authorized by the lords, the council of Zurich, were terrorizing hundreds over a large part of northern Switzerland. Every day someone stopped at the shop with more startling news about what was happening.

Why were there such great differences in biblical interpretations among distinguished scholars of the best theological schools? Is it possible to obey the teachings of the Bible and discard what cannot be established by the Scriptures? Are there not some things the Scriptures teach that are impracticable?

These questions perplexed not only the commoners but also the doctors, scholars, businessmen, and even some of the councilmen themselves.

Michel, Regina's oldest brother, was twenty-two and an apprentice in Mathis Bartsche's print shop in Zurich. One Sunday

when he came home on horseback to visit with Regina and his parents, he brought news about his work in the shop and about the alarming happenings at Zurich.

Regina listened eagerly to the report Michel gave.

“The situation in Zurich is worse than ever,” he began. The four, Michel, Regina, and their parents, were seated around the kitchen table. “Zwingli has just brought us his fourth book against the Anabaptists. We are working on it now, but truthfully I can’t see that it will accomplish more than his others. The Anabaptists claim their doctrines are based on Scripture.”

Father stared in astonishment. “Michel, why do you say that?”

“Because, in spite of all Zwingli has said, done, and written, more and more people are turning Anabaptist. Great crowds have been listening to the Anabaptist leaders speak at many places. Hundreds have already been baptized again.”

“But, Michel,” asked Regina, “why would anyone even want to listen to those men when they know Zwingli is working so hard for our good? Father says he is the most powerful teacher and the greatest Bible master living. The pastor from Kyburg was here just recently and said it is marvelous how he can quote Scriptures from memory. He says he is actually an orator as great as Cicero. That’s saying a great deal, isn’t it?”

“He is a very learned man, Regina, but his opponents are learned, too. Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz are both well educated. So is George Blaurock and some of the other Swiss Brethren. They are as able speakers as Zwingli. Their arguments against infant baptism and in favor of baptism upon confession sound as reasonable as Zwingli’s for infant baptism. At least, I mean to say many must think so,” he added. “They quote Scripture to support their arguments. That’s what makes the situation so confusing. They say they are willing to change their position if they can be convinced from the Bible that it is wrong.”

“Michel,” whispered his mother. “You shock me. Why, Michel!”

“And you shock me,” added Father. “You argue for the Anabaptists.”

Regina caught Michel by the coat sleeve. "You surely don't mean the Anabaptists are beginning to convince you with their doctrine! Michel!"

Michel laughed dryly, as he leaned back in his chair. "Of course I'm not being convinced," he said. "Don't get excited about me. It's such a relief to come home where I can express myself without being afraid I'll be suspected or lose my job. I'm only talking. Just talking to show you what's going on. There are two sides to this controversy. In the shop I've got to be tight-mouthed all the time. Of course, I read everything I can that we print. What I don't get to read for myself I hear Bartsche discussing with someone. So, you see, I hear quite a bit. I know pretty well all of Zwingli's arguments in favor of infant baptism and maintaining the state church and all that he teaches against the mass, images, fasts, pilgrimages, indulgences, purgatory, and saint worship. But I know pretty well, too, what the Anabaptists have to say. I'm only trying to give you an honest picture of what this is about. That's all."

"How do you know so much, Michel?" asked Regina, bending forward.

"Because I've heard for myself. That's how. There are some smart Anabaptists, I tell you. They know the Scriptures. They say if we teach that the mass is wrong, then why not stop having it? The Bible is authority on spiritual matters, not the city council."

Regina and her mother and father were very quiet. She could feel the situation being very tense. But Michel went on. "Yes, I heard them twice, once in the town hall in a public debate, and once in a home."

Friedrich Strahm stood up suddenly and put his face close to Michel's. "Michel, you frighten me. You stun me," he moaned. He grabbed Michel by the shoulder. "You—went to a home to hear—Conrad Grebel speak!"

"Come, Father." Michel pulled on his father's coat. "Don't be frightened. Please sit down, Father. I simply went out of curiosity. They can't both be right. We all know that. And—well, we know Zwingli is. Do sit down, Father. Grebel is smart—but Zwingli is right and smart both. Yes, indeed! Zwingli is a great reformer. He is nothing less than a Swiss Lu-

ther, and he even goes beyond Luther in his reform movement, for he wants to follow only the New Testament, not church tradition. Grebel and Zwingli are both brilliant men, but what astonished me is the way that young Blaurock can speak. He doesn't have the education Grebel has, but he is positively eloquent and has great power to sway the people. I could feel that. But," Michel added, stepping closer to his father, "Zwingli has experience politically. He can and will outdo any Anabaptist any day. Zwingli is right, and we all know it. Sit down, Father."

"Yes," Father said emphatically, "we all know Zwingli is right. Stay by that." But Father did not sit down. He ran both hands into his pockets. His one foot tapped the floor.

"Of course," continued Michel, thoughtfully, "Zwingli has to be right—he is a scholar and pastor of the Great Münster. All should respect his teachings. The Anabaptists surely will finally give up. We are already convinced of that."

"Well, Son, I'm glad to hear you say so," said Father sitting down with a sigh of relief. "Maybe you'd better quit your job in the print shop, Michel, and come home and help me." Father looked up at Michel with consequential seriousness on his face.

Michel sat thinking. "But I love my job," he said presently. "I meet a good many prominent men who come in the shop. It's all very interesting. I'm learning new things every week. I hear lots of talk."

Father Strahm looked out the window a moment, then back at Michel. He reached over and put a hand on his shoulder. "Maybe too much, Michel."

"But, Father," exclaimed Michel, "there is something in me that wants to know everything there is to know. I don't want to quit now. I want to know how this is going to turn out. I—well, I can't quit now."

"You're just like I am," added Regina. "I wonder and wonder about things, too. And I want to know why about everything. For instance, why Wittmers were driven away from their home. I loved Ann, and I can't think that she or her parents were so wicked."

"Come, come, don't let that trouble you so." Father's voice was kind and very gentle. "I've tried to tell you before,

Regina, that such things only happen to those who disobey the government. Can't you see that?"

"But did they really disobey the government, Father?"

"Regina, I wasn't going to tell you all this, but I happen to know that that crippled bookseller, Castelburger, who is reported to be a rank Anabaptist, held a service in their home one night and by their invitation. This was an act of disobedience. They knew better. Besides, after that they refused to have their new baby baptized. That was another deliberate act of disobedience."

"How did you find out all that, Father? You never told me before about the meeting in their home."

"What you don't know you can't tell, so please don't ask, Regina. Please don't tell anyone either. This is in strict confidence. You are not to tell a soul that I know this. Never, never tell Rheinhardt."

"You told me about the baby's not being baptized but not about the meeting. But is there no other way to get people to obey the government besides driving them out of their homes and putting them in prison?"

"If there was, you may be sure Zwingli or the lords would have thought of it before now."

"Well, I loved Ann." Regina turned her face and bit her lip. "I can hardly believe she or her parents deliberately did anything so dreadfully wrong. They wanted to obey God and the Bible."

"But they knew when they were rebaptized that they were violating the law," Father said.

"And they really did that, too?" asked Regina. "But, Father, you hadn't told me that either."

Michel put one hand on his father's arm. "Listen, Father, the Anabaptists contend they do not satisfy the laws of God unless they are rebaptized upon their own confession. They say no baby can confess his own sins or have faith in God, so that's why—I'm just telling you their belief, Father."

Friedrich Strahm got up and walked back and forth in front of the kitchen stove.

"Listen to me," he began, stopping abruptly. "The pastor from Kyburg told me when he was here how dangerous this whole Anabaptist teaching is. We see examples every week of

how our neighbors are being deceived and blinded. Three years ago when Conrad Grebel, the nobleman's son, came back from school abroad, Zwingli fully expected him to work with him in this reformation. And Grebel almost worshiped Zwingli. Yes, and he admits that it was Zwingli who led him to evangelical faith in Christ. And Zwingli even used Grebel for a while as his principal reader. Now the whole thing is terribly confused. As soon as Zwingli saw it was best to keep the church and state united, young Grebel started opposing him. He claimed to have new light on the interpretation of the Scriptures. He said he had a religious awakening."

Father paused to take a breath. He walked over to the window and back again. "Well, Zwingli had an awakening first," he continued. "He's been working hard to reform the church against enough opposition. Young Grebel might not have got very far, but then Felix Manz started helping him oppose Zwingli. I feel sorry for Zwingli. Now these Anabaptists want to establish what they call an evangelical church. That's what Heinrich Hofmeier told me. Yes, we talked about it, and he knows both sides, too. But look at all the trouble they are making. I mean the Anabaptists. They can't be right. It's a dangerous and deceptive doctrine in many ways. Good people like the Wittmers were simply misguided."

"And listen to this—" Michel stood up tall and strikingly handsome beside his father "—next week there's going to be another debate in Zurich about baptism, and Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock will speak again. It's not settled. It looks as if each side is becoming more dogmatic."

"Oh, I wish—" whispered Regina. Then she pinched her lip.

"Listen, one hundred Anabaptists were given a hearing before the court in Zurich this past week," continued Michel.

"One hundred!" cried Regina. "Michel, that's a lot of people, isn't it?"

"That's why I say the situation is getting worse. Hundreds in different cities and towns west of here have already been baptized. It's not just hearsay. The magistrates, particularly in the Gruningen area, are greatly disturbed, and I heard yesterday that the Anabaptists are gaining their sympathies."

“No! Not the sympathies of the magistrates!” exclaimed Father. “Then the situation is really serious.”

“Are you going to the debate?” asked Regina, catching Michel by the coat sleeve again.

“I would like to well enough,” he said softly after a brief pause.

“You’d better not,” suggested Father. “Michel, you’d better not.”

“Why not?”

“It might be risky.”

“Risky? It’s going to be a public debate. Anyone may go.”

“Are you positive you know where you stand and what and who you believe?” Father asked.

“I think I stand exactly where you do, Father,” answered Michel calmly. “You and Mother.” He pointed to each in turn. “And you, Regina. We all stand together, don’t we?”

“Michel,” suggested Regina, looking at the clock, “it’s time for me to go for the milk. Why don’t you walk along with me?”