

## *Chapter 1*

# PROSPERITY

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“*E*lly, Elly!” Hans called from the lawn. “Ell-ee-e!” he called louder, impatiently.

Elly came running. “Here,” she called cheerfully from the door.

“Papa is riding out to the farms. He says we may ride along.” Hans waved his arms toward the stable where Hosi the stable boy was leading Bou, Hans’s saddled pony, to the water trough.

Elly smiled at Hans’s excitement as he danced from one foot to the other, still waving his arms.

“Not today, Hans. Did you forget we are having our Bible study hour here tonight? Mumsy wants me to gather some flowers for the vases.”

“Ach, flowers are stupid, Elly. Come on,” Hans fussed disgustedly. “Cousin Wilhelm is riding with us, and we will have a dilly with the Ulrich children while Papa tends to business.”

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Elly longed to go. There was so much to see on the farms. The air would be filled with the sweet aroma of drying hay instead of the dusty stuffiness of the village.

Elly also loved to take part in the frolics they had in the hayfields and the rides on the hay wagons. Perhaps Mattie Ulrich would let her bunch hay again with a long-handled fork. There would be cool mint tea, and . . .

“Are you coming?” Hans broke into Elly’s musings. “Hosi is waiting to saddle Bunny for you,” he shouted, mounting Bou with a bound.

“Maybe next time,” Elly called wistfully, trying to be cheerful. “Please, Hans, be careful with your speech. You know Mumsy does not—”

Elly watched the slick dappled gray pony with Hans dash out the double gates and whiz past the white pickets that bordered the trim, spacious lawn of the elegant Reimer residence. Hans had not waited to listen to Elly’s warning about his speech.

Elly turned to wave to Papa, who was now riding through the gates, rocking gently on the back of his gaited steed. He waved to Elly with a smile and a sweeping gesture of his hand.

*How easily he rides,* Elly thought. *Not like the impatient Hans.* She smiled again at the thought of him. She loved Hans and enjoyed joining his boyish romps and games in spite of his quick-flaring temper.

Elly snipped flowers from the flourishing beds, arrayed attractively among the rocks and borders on the lawn.

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*It will not be long until these beauties will be ruined by frost, she thought, snipping a prized marigold. These with a bit of green fernery will make nice arrangements for the veranda. The dahlias with their pretty faces will add color to the parlor. Perhaps Lenchen can arrange these geraniums with the periwinkle. They would fit in with the ferns hanging in the dining room.*

"Please help me with the arrangements, Lenchen," Elly pleaded, setting her flower-laden basket on the marble topped table. "You are more gifted than I am to fix them nicely."

"I'm helping Mumsy knit," Lenchen answered curtly. "Can't you see?"

"But it can wait, Lenchen," put in Mumsy. "It is about time we put up our knitting for today, so why don't you two help each other fill the vases while I go and see if Oma Betz has supper going. We want to eat early tonight."

"Be sure to clean up any scraps or dirt from the flowers when you are finished. Then you could comb your hair before supper too," she added as she left the room.

"You choose the vases while I sort the flowers," Lenchen said, rising from her plush, cushioned chair reluctantly. "I wanted to finish this doily tonight to place on the stand in the hall," she grumbled in an undertone, so Mumsy would not hear.

"I'm sorry, Lenchen. Perhaps if we hurry, you could still finish it," Elly said quietly.

"No! Now that I had to put up my knitting, I don't want to start again tonight," she said saucily.

Elly chose a vase off the stand in the hallway. Then she chose several others from the glass china press. There was

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a great assortment of beautiful vases to choose from, for Papa, Gustav Reimer, had collected many rare vases during his travels.

Gustav Reimer was not outdone by anyone living in the village. His wealth showed from every corner of his lavishly furnished mansion—from the rich, buoyant carpet in the parlor to the heavy woven drapes hanging from the tall windows, his house contained the best to be had and was furnished with expensive, Victorianstyle mahogany furniture.

Gustav took pride in entertaining. His guests were treated to the best. He associated with those in popular society, keeping not only his homestead in first-class condition but his farm and business places too.

His wife, Selana, depended on Oma Betz, longtime maid and cook, to manage most of her duties in the home with the help of the young maid, Tina. Although Oma's health appeared to be good, her pace had become slower with age. Selana found herself looking after things more and more.

Selana knew her first duty was to her husband, whom she sometimes accompanied on his pleasure trips to please him. Also her children were her special care, to try to teach them and lead them in the paths she wanted them to go. This took effort on her part as Gustav left that to her, saying he had the business part to look after.

Selana was also an active worker in the church. The Mennonites were known for helping people in times of disaster or sickness, and Selana's knitting needles were kept busy to give aid where needed.

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Her sympathy also reached out to the poor peasants, who had to work for the rich for such a meager wage that it barely kept them fed and clothed. Many suffered from needs that could well have been supplied by their bosses, had they been merciful. But instead, the rich were piling up riches upon riches.

True, Gustav Reimer was one of the more generous employers. Still, Selana helped their employees by handing over surplus food from the gardens and by clothing many with warm woolens that her knitting needles had fashioned. New mothers were especially grateful for the many warm garments they received from her generous hand for the little ones. The sick found balm and healing from her store of herbs and medicines and from the well-filled baskets of food that reached their doors.

Gustav enjoyed keeping his wife well supplied with rubles, for he knew she used them wisely and enjoyed having surplus to help the needy.

"Um-m-m, that borscht smells appetizing tonight," Selana commended, coming into the kitchen where Oma Betz had supper cooking.

"You cooked pork with the beets, did you not, Oma?" Selana asked, lifting the lid from the steaming pot.

"The salad looks nice too." Selana turned to where Tina the maid was adding the finishing touches to the salad plate. "You arranged it so nicely and colorfully. Gustav will be delighted. He not only wants his food to taste good, he also wants it to look nice."

"Did you bake the cakes, Tina?" Selana asked, touching their soft fluffiness with her fingers.