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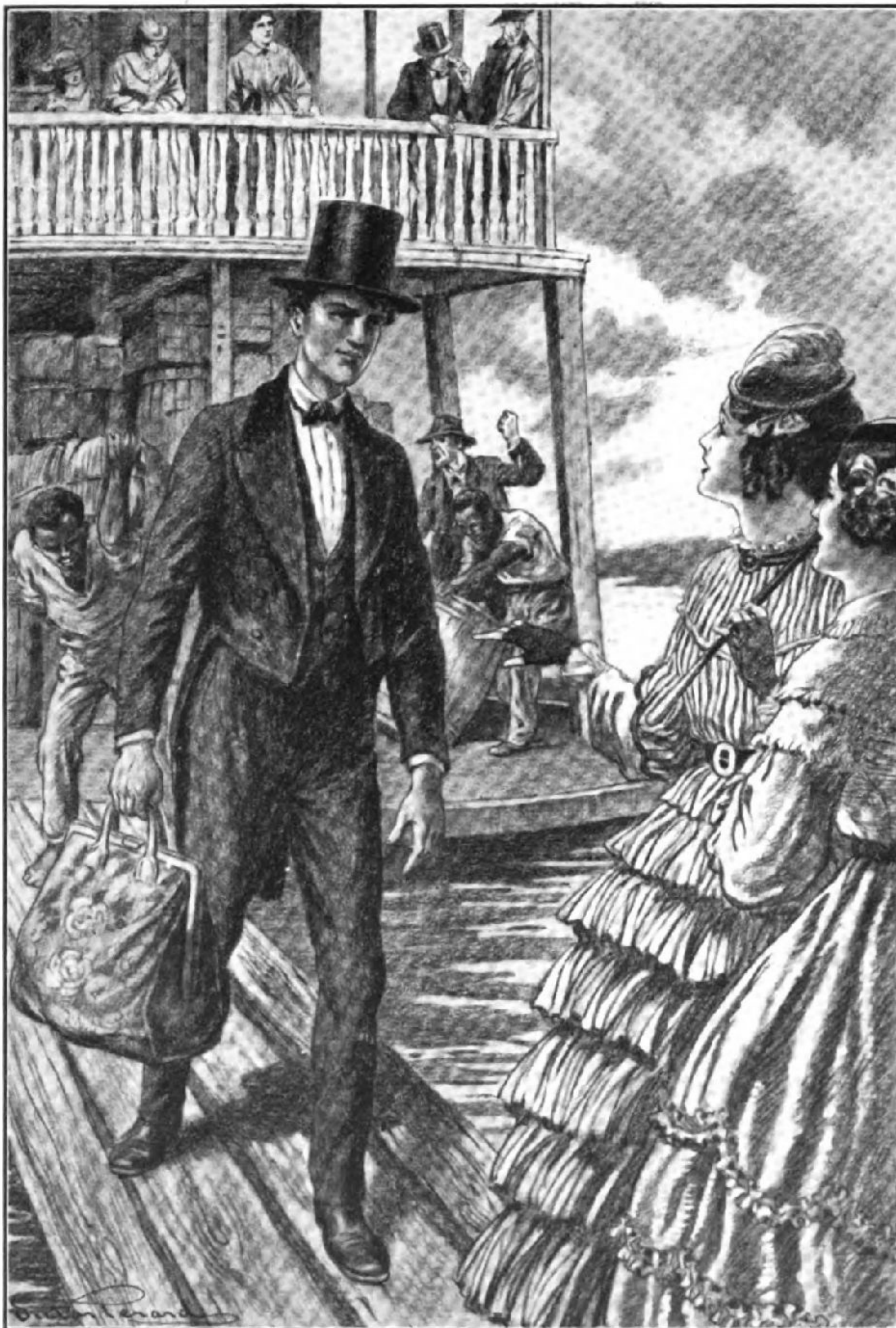
DOMINIE DEAN

A Novel

By Ellis Parker Butler

1917

Fleming And Revell Company



"'THUSIA HURRIED TO THE FOOT OF THE GANGPLANK TO MEET HER NEW CONQUEST" (See Page 11)

DOMINIE DEAN

A NOVEL

BY

ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

My Dear Mr. Dare:

That day when you came to my home and suggested that I write the book to which I now gratefully prefix this brief dedication, I little imagined how real David Dean would become to me. I have just written the last page of his story and I feel less that he is a creature of my imagination than that he is someone I have known and loved all my life.

It was because there are many such men as David Dean, big of heart and great in spirit, that you suggested the writing and helped me with incident and inspiration. Your hope was that the story might aid those who regret that such men as David Dean can be neglected and cast aside after lives spent in faithful service, and who are working to prevent such tragedies; my desire was to tell as truthfully as possible the story of one such man.

While I have had a free hand in developing the character of David Dean, I most gratefully acknowledge that the suggestion of the idea, and the inspiration, were yours, and I hope I have not misused them.

Most sincerely,

Ellis Parker Butler
Flushing, N. Y.

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I. 'THUSIA

DAVID DEAN caught his first glimpse of 'Thusia Fragg from the deck of the “Mary K” steamboat at the moment when—a fledgling minister—he ended his long voyage down the Ohio and up the Mississippi and was ready to step on Riverbank soil for the first time.

From mid-river, as the steamer approached, the town had seemed but a fringe of buildings at the foot of densely foliaged hills with here and there a house showing through the green and with one or two church spires rising above the trees. Then the warehouse shut off the view while the “Mary K” made an unsensational landing, bumping against the projecting piles, bells jingling in her interior, paddle wheels noisily reversing and revolving again and the mate swearing at the top of his voice. As the bow of the steamer pushed beyond the warehouse, the sordidly ugly riverfront of the town came into view again—mud, sand, weather-beaten frame buildings—while on the sandy levee at the side of the warehouse lounged the twenty or thirty male citizens in shirt sleeves who had come down to see the arrival of the steamer. From the saloon deck they watched the steamer push her nose beyond the blank red wall of the warehouse. Against the rail stood all the boat's passengers and at David's side the friend he had made on the voyage up the river, a rough, tobacco-chewing itinerant preacher, uncouth enough but wise in his day and generation.

“Well, this is your Riverbank,” he said. “Here ye are. Now, hold on! Don't be in a hurry. There's your reception committee, I'll warrant ye,—them three with their coats on. Don't get excited. Let 'em wait and worry a minute for fear you've not come. Keep an even mind under all circumstances, as your motter says—that's the idee. Let 'em wait. They'll think all the better of ye, brother. Keep an even mind, hey? You'll need one with that mastiff-jowled old elder yonder. He's going to be your trouble-man.”

David put down the carpetbag he had taken up. Of the three men warranted to be his reception committee he recognized but one, Lawyer Hoskins, the man who while East had heard David preach and had extended to him the church's call. Now Hoskins recognized David and raised his hand in greeting. It was at this moment that 'Thusia Fragg issued from the side door of the warehouse, two girl companions with her, and faced toward the steamboat. In the general gray of the day she was like a splash of sunshine and her companions were hardly less vivid. 'Thusia Fragg was arrayed in a dress that echoed the boldest style set forth by “Godey's Ladies' Book” for that year of grace, 1860—-a summer silk of gray and gold stripes, flounced and frilled and raffled and fringed—and on her head perched a hat that was sauciness incarnate. She was overdressed by any rule you chose. She was overdressed for Riverbank and overdressed for her father's income and for her own position, but she was a beautiful picture as she stood leaning on her parasol, letting her eyes range over the passengers grouped at the steamer's saloon deck rail.

As she stood there David raised his hand in answer to Lawyer Hoskins' greeting and 'Thusia Fragg, smiling, raised a black-mitted hand and waved at him in frank flirtation. Undoubtedly she had thought David had meant his salutation for her. David turned from the rail, grasped his companion's hand in hearty farewell, and, with his carpetbag in hand, descended to the lower deck, and 'Thusia, preening like a peacock, hurried with her girl companions to the foot of the gangplank to meet her new conquest.

This was not the first time 'Thusia had flirted with the male passengers of the packets. Few boats arrived without one or more young dandies aboard, glad to vary the monotony of a long trip and ready to take part in a brief flirtation with any 'Thusia and to stretch their legs ashore while the sweating negroes loaded and unloaded the cargo. When the stop was long enough there was usually time for a brisk walk to the main street and for hurried ice cream treats. The warning whistle of the steamer gave ample time for these temporary beaux to reach the boat. The 'Thusias who could be found all up and down the river knew just the safe distance to carry their cavaliers in order to bring them back to the departing steamer in the nick of time, sometimes running the last hundred yards at a dog trot, the girls stopping short with little cries of laughter and shrill farewells, but reaching the boat landing in time to wave parasols or handkerchiefs.

Most of these gayly garbed girls were innocent enough, although these steamer flirtations were evidence that they were not sufficiently controlled by home influences. Such actually bad girls as the town had, did however, indulge in these touch-and-go-flirtations often enough to cause the sober-minded to look askance at all the young persons who flirted thus. While the more innocent, like 'Thusia, made use of these opportunities only for their momentary flare of adventure, and while the young men were seldom seen again, even on the return trip, the town quite naturally classed all these girls as “gay”—whatever that meant.

As David stepped on the gangplank to leave the steamer he saw the three girls, 'Thusia a little in advance, standing at the foot of the plank. 'Thusia herself, saucy in her defiance of the eyes she knew were upon her, smiled up at him, her eyes beaming a greeting, her feet ready to fall into step with his, and her lips ready to begin a rapid chattering to carry the incident over the first awkward moment in case her “catch” proved mutely bashful. She put out her hand, either in greeting or to take David's arm, but David, his head held high, let his clear gray eyes rest on her for an instant only and then glanced beyond her and passed by. The girl colored with rage or shame and drew back her hand as if she had unwittingly touched something hot with unprepared fingers. Her companions giggled.

The incident was over in less time than is needed to tell of it. Henry Fragg, 'Thusia's widowed father and agent for the steamers, seeing the committee awaiting David, came from his office and walked toward them. David strode up the plank dock to where Mr. Hoskins was holding out a welcoming hand and was greeted and introduced to Sam Wiggett, Ned Long and Mr. Fragg.

The greeting of Mr. Hoskins had a flourishing orational flavor; Sam Wiggett—a heavy-set man—went so far as to exceed his usual gruff grunt of recognition; and Ned Long, as usual, copied as closely as possible Sam Wiggett's words and manner. Mr. Fragg's welcome was hearty and, of the four, the only natural man-to-man greeting.

“New dominie, hey? Well, you'll like this town when you get to know it,” he assured David. “Plenty of real folks here; good town and good people. All right, Mack!” he broke off to shout to the mate of the “Mary K”; “yes, all those casks go aboard. Well, I'm glad to have met you, Mr. Dean—”

'Thusia was still standing where David had passed her, her back toward the town. Usually saucy enough, she was ashamed to turn and face those clean gray eyes again. Her father saw her. “'Thusia!” he called.

She turned and came.

“'Thusia, this is our new dominie,” Fragg said, placing his hand on her arm. “This is my daughter, Mr. Dean. Aren't the women having some sort of welcome hurrah up at the manse? Why don't you go up there and take a hand in it, 'Thusia? Well, Mr. Dean, I'll see you many times, I hope.”

'Thusia, all her sauciness gone, stood abashed, and David tried vainly to find a word to ease the embarrassing situation. Mr. Wiggett relieved it by ignoring 'Thusia utterly.

“Fragg will send your baggage up,” he growled. “We'll walk. The women will be impatient; they've heard the boat whistle. You come with me, Dean, I want to talk to you.”

He turned his back on 'Thusia and led David away.

“The less you have to do with that girl the better,” were his first words. “That's for your own good. Hey, Long?”

“My opinion, my opinion exactly!” echoed Mr. Long. “The less the better. Yes, yes!”

“She's got in with a crowd of fast young fools,” agreed Mr. Hoskins. “Crazy after the men. Fragg ought to take her into the woodshed and use a good stiff shingle on her about once every so often. He lets her run too wild. No sense in it!”

What 'Thusia needed was a mother to see that her vivacity found a more conventional outlet. There was nothing really wrong with 'Thusia. She was young and fun-loving and possessed of more spirit than most of the young women of the town. She was amazingly efficient. Had she been a slower girl the housework of her father's home would have kept her close, but she had the knack of speed. She sped through her housework like a well-oiled machine and, once through with it, she fled from the gloomy, motherless place to find what lively companionship she could. It would have been better for her reputation had she been a sloven, dawdling over her work and then moping away the short leisure at home.

Every small town has girls like 'Thusia Fragg. You may see them arm in arm at the railway station as the trains pause for a few minutes, ready to chaffer with any “nice-looking” young fellow in a car window. You see them strolling past the local hotel, two or three in a group, ready to fall into step with any young drummer who is willing to leave his chair for a stroll. Some are bad girls, some are on the verge of the precipice of evil, and some, like 'Thusia, are merely lovers of excitement and not yet aware of the real dangers with which they play.

'Thusia, running the streets, was in danger of becoming too daring. She knew the town talked about her and she laughed at its gossip. In such a contest the rebel usually loses; in conspiring against smugness she ends by falling into the ranks of immorality. In Riverbank before the Civil War the danger to reputation was even greater than it is now; morality was marked by stricter conventions.

'Thusia, despite her new dress and hat, did not linger downtown after her meeting with David. She took the teasing of her two girl friends, who made a great joke of her attempt to flirt with the new dominie, good-naturedly, but she left them as soon as she could and walked home. Her face burned with shame as she thought of the surprised glance David had given her at the foot of the gangplank and, as she entered her motherless home, she jerked her hat from her head and angrily threw it the length of the hall. She stood a moment, opening and closing her fists, like an angry animal, and then, characteristically, she giggled. She retrieved her hat, put it on her head and studied herself in the hall mirror. She tried several smiles and satisfied herself that they were charming and then, unhooking her dress as she went, she mounted the stairs. When she was in her room she threw herself on her bed and wept. Her emotions were in a chaos; and out of this came gradually the feeling that all she cared for now was to have those cool gray eyes of David's look upon her approvingly. Everything she had done in her life seemed to have been deliberately planned to make them disapprove of her. Weighing her handicap calmly but urged by wounded pride, or desire, or love—she did not know which—she set about her pitiful attempt to fascinate David Dean.

The first Sunday that David preached in Riverbank 'Thusia bedecked herself glowingly and sat in a pew where he could not fail to see her. Since the death of his wife Mr. Fragg had taken to churchgoing, sitting in a pew near the door so that he might slip out in case he heard the whistle of an arriving steamboat, but 'Thusia chose a pew close under the pulpit. After the service there was the usual informal hand-shaking reception for the new dominie and 'Thusia waited until the aisles were well cleared. Mr. Wiggett, Mr. Hoskins and one or two other elders and trustees acted as a self-appointed committee to introduce David and, as if intentionally, they built a barrier of their bodies to keep 'Thusia from him. She waited, leaning against the end of a pew, but the half circle of black coats did not open. As the congregation thinned and David moved toward the door his protectors moved with him. The sexton began closing the windows. The black coats herded David into the vestibule and out upon the broad top step and still 'Thusia leaned against the pew, but her eyes followed David.

“Come, come! We'll have to be moving along, dominie,” growled Mr. Wiggett impatiently, as David stopped to receive the congratulations of one of the tireless-tongued old ladies. “Dinner at one, you know.”

“Yes, coming!” said David cheerfully, and he gave the old lady a last shake of the hand. “Now!” he said, and turned.

'Thusia, pushing between Mr. Wiggett and Mr. Hoskins, came with her hand extended and her face glowing.

“I waited until they were all gone,” she said eagerly. “I wanted to tell you how splendid your sermon was. It was wonderful, Mr. Dean. I'm coming every Sunday—”

David took her hand. He was glowing with the kindly greetings and praises that had been showered upon him, and his happiness showed in his eyes. He would have beamed on anyone at that moment, and he beamed on 'Thusia. He said something pleasantly conventional and 'Thusia chattered on, still holding his hand, although in his general elation he was hardly aware of this and not at all aware that the girl was clinging to his hand so firmly that he could not have drawn it away had he tried. She knew they made a striking picture as they stood on the top step and she stood as dose to him as she could, so that she had to look up and David had to look down. The departing congregation, looking back for a last satisfactory glimpse of their fine new dominie, carried away a picture of David holding 'Thusia's hand and looking down into her face.

“Come, come! Dinner's waiting!” Mr. Wiggett growled impatiently.

“Well, good-by, Mr. Dean,” 'Thusia exclaimed. “My dinner is waiting, too, and you must not keep me forever, you know. I suppose we'll see a great deal of each other, anyway. Now—will you please let me have my hand?”

She laughed and David dropped her hand. He blushed. 'Thusia ran down the steps and David turned to see Mary Wiggett standing in the vestibule door in an attitude best described as insultedly aloof.

Mr. Wiggett's face was red.

“*Her* dinner waiting!” he cried. “She's got to go home and get it before it waits. She's a forward, street-gadding hussy!”

“Father!” exclaimed his daughter.

“Well, she shan't come it over the dominie,” he growled. “I'll speak to Fragg about it.”

David walked ahead with Mary Wiggett. He was no fool. He knew well enough the troubles a young, unmarried minister has in store if he happens to be presentable, and he knew he was not ill-favored. It is not always—except in books—that the leading pillar of the church has a daughter whose last chance of matrimony is the dominie. Mary Wiggett had by no means reached her last chance. She was hardly eighteen—only a year older than 'Thusia Fragg—and forty young men of Riverbank would have been glad to have married her. She was a little heavier than 'Thusia, both in mind and body, and a little taller, almost matronly in her development, but she was a splendid girl for all that, and more than good-looking in a satisfying blond way. David was so far from being her last chance, that she had not yet thought of David as a possible mate at all, but it was a fact that David was to take dinner with the Wiggetts and another fact that 'Thusia was not considered a proper person, and Mary had resented having to stand back against the church door while David held 'Thusia's hand. If Mary had one fault it was a certain feeling that a daughter of Samuel Wiggett, who was the richest man in the church, was the equal of any girl on earth. To be made to stand back for 'Thusia Fragg was altogether unbearable.

Neither had Mr. Wiggett, at that time, any thought of David as a husband for Mary. He hoped Mary would not marry for ten years more and that when she did she would marry someone “with money.” The only interest the stubborn, rough-grained old money-lover had in David was the interest of an upright pillar of the church who, sharing the duty of choosing a new dominie, had delegated his share to Mr. Hoskins and was still fearful lest Mr. Hoskins had made a mistake. He was bound it should not be a mistake if he could help it. Having in his youth had a dozen love affairs and having married a stolid, cow-like woman for safety's sake, he believed the natural fate of a young man was to behave foolishly and he considered a young minister more than normally unable to take care of himself. If David incurred censure Mr. Wiggett would be blamed for letting Mr. Hoskins bring David to Riverbank.

II. MARY WIGGETT

NEITHER Mr. Wiggett nor Mary understood David then. I doubt if Riverbank ever quite understood him. When he was ten—a thin-faced, large-eyed child, sitting on the edge of an uncushioned pew in a small, bleak church, his hands clasped on his knees and his body tense as he hung on the words of the old dominie in the pulpit above him—he had received the Call. From that moment his destiny had been fixed. There had been no splendid Sign—no blaze of glory-light illuminating the dusky interior of the church, no sun ray turning his golden curls into a halo. His clasped hands had tightened a little; he had leaned a little further forward; a long breath, ending in a deep sigh, had raised his thin chest and David Dean had given himself to his Lord and Master to do His work while his life should last. Never was a life more

absolutely consecrated.

That the lad Davy should hear the Call was not strange. Religion had been an all-important part of his parents' lives. The rupture that wrenched American Presbyterianism into antagonistic parts in the year of David's birth had been of more vital importance than bread and meat to David's father.

He never forgave the seceders. To David's mother the rupture had been a sorrow, as if she had lost a child. In this atmosphere—his father was an elder—David grew and his faith was fed to him from his birth; it was part of him, but until the Call came he had not thought of being worthy to preach. After the Call came he thought of nothing but making himself worthy.

The eleven following years had been years of preparation. During the first of these years he spent much time with the old dominie and when he left school he came under the care of the presbytery of which the dominie was a member. It was David's father's pride that he was able to pay David's way through the college and seminary courses. It was his share in giving Davy to the Lord.

At twenty-one David was a tall youth, slender, thoughtful and delicate. His hair was almost golden, fine and soft, with a curly forelock. He had never had a religious doubt. He preached his trial sermon, received his license and almost immediately his call to Riverbank. This was David, clean and sure, honest and unafraid, broad-browed and dear-eyed, his favorite motto: “Keep an even mind under all circumstances.” It was to protect this young David, clear as crystal and strong as steel, that the members of the First Presbyterian Church of Riverbank, during those first weeks, tacitly conspired, and it was against 'Thusia Fragg, the fluttering, eager and love-incited little butterfly, with a few of the golden scales already brushed from her wings, that they sought to protect him.

To her own enormous surprise Mary Wiggett almost immediately fell in love with David. She was not an emotional girl, and she had long since decided that when the time came she would marry someone from Derlingport or St. Louis. She had not thought of falling in love as a necessary preliminary to marriage. In a vague way she had decided that a husband from Derlingport or St. Louis would be more desirable because he would take her to a place where there was more “society” and where certain of the richer trimmings of life were accepted as reasonable and not frowned on as extravagances. She had a rather definite idea that her husband would be someone in the pork or lumber industries, as they were then the best income producers. She meant to refuse all comers for about five years, and then begin to consider any who might apply, taking proper stock of them and proceeding in a sensible, orderly manner. A month after David came to Riverbank she would have given every man in the pork and lumber industries for one of David's gentle smiles. She thrilled with pleasure when he happened to touch her hand. She was thoroughly in love.

'Thusia, for her part, pursued David unremittingly. She stopped running the streets, and tried to force her way into the activities of the church until she was so cruelly snubbed and cold-shouldered that she wept for anger and gave up the attempt. Then she lay in wait for David. She sailed down upon him whenever he went upon the streets, seemingly coming upon him unexpectedly, and falling into step with him. She ambuscaded him on the main street when he went to the post office for his mail. She was quite open in her forced attentions, and, of course, she was talked about. 'Thusia did not care. She had no way of courting him but by being bold. She fluttered her wings before his eyes whenever she could. She was a butterfly teasing to be caught.

And David? In spite of Wiggett's warnings and his own he grew fond of her. You will have to imagine Riverbank as it was then to fully understand David and 'Thusia: the mean little business street with its ugly buildings and dust, or mud, ankle deep; the commercial life out of all proportion to the social life, so that few men thought of aught beside business; the fair, shady streets of homes with maples already overarching the streets and the houses of white or brick-red, all with ample lawns around them. You can see David leave the little white manse beside the brick church and walk the shady streets, making a pastoral call or going to the post office. Those pastoral calls! Serious matters for a young dominie in those days! The dominie was expected to come like a plumber, with his kit of tools, ready to set to work on a leaky conscience or a frost-bit soul and his visits were for little else but soul mending. We saved up our little leaks for him just as we saved up our little ills for the doctor, and we gave him his fill. We felt we were remiss if we did not have on hand some real or imaginary reason to make the dominie kneel beside a chair and pray with us. We expected our dominie to be a little sad when he visited us, a little gloomy about things in general; probably to give our otherwise cheerful homes a churchly gloom.

It was when David came from the main street, where the men could talk nothing but business, or from a pastoral call, and found himself young and not at all gloomy at heart under the arching trees, that 'Thusia would waylay him. She laughed and chattered inconsequently and flirted with all her little might and joked about herself and everyone else and even about David—and who else dared joke about the dominie!—until he smiled in spite of himself. His flock seemed to fall naturally into two classes—those who felt they had a sort of proprietary interest in him and those who were a little afraid of him. 'Thusia was not like either. She was a gleam of unadulterated youth. David began to look forward to their chance meetings with uneasy but pleasant anticipation. She was like a bit of merry music brightening but not interrupting his work. He hardly knew how eagerly he looked forward to his meetings with 'Thusia until after half his congregation was talking about them.

The autumn saw a great outbreak of moneymaking affairs in the church. There was a mortgage, of course, and church fairs and festivals and dinners followed one after another under David's eager guidance and it was impossible to keep 'Thusia from these. She fluttered about David. One or two of the young women of the church finally ventured to make use of 'Thusia, setting her to work as a waitress at one of the dinners where they were short-handed, but Mary Wiggett soon let them know they had made a mistake. With a woman's intuition she felt in 'Thusia a dangerous rival. Even before 'Thusia or David suspected the truth she saw how great an attraction 'Thusia had for the young dominie. Her own efforts to attract David were necessarily slower and more conventional. There was no question that Mary would make an excellent wife for a minister and Mary did not doubt her ability to win David if given time, but she feared some sudden flare-up of love that might blind David to the dignity of his position and throw him into 'Thusia's arms, even if it threw him out of Riverbank. David, she imagined, would be fearless in any loyalty.

Had there been no 'Thusia Fragg Mary Wiggett would have been well satisfied with David's progress toward love. He liked Mary immensely and let her see it. He made her his lieutenant in all the money-raising affairs and she rightly believed his affection for her was growing, but she needed time. 'Thusia, on the other hand, would win in a flash or not at all. Mary spoke to her father; her mother she felt could give her no aid. Her mother was a dull woman.

The stern-faced Wiggett listened to her grimly.

He was not surprised to hear she loved David; he was surprised that Mary should come to him for aid. The actual word "love" was not mentioned; we avoid it in Riverbank except when speaking of others.

"Father, I like David well enough to marry him, if he asked me," was what she said.

Further than this she told him nothing but the truth—that the respectable members of the church were shocked by the attention David was paying 'Thusia and that they were talking about it. It was a shame, she said, that he should lose everyone's respect in that way when the only trouble was that he did not understand.

"You men can't see it, of course, father," she said. "You don't understand what it means, as we do. And we can't speak to Mr. Dean. I can't speak to him."

"I'll tell that young man a thing or two!" growled Mr. Wiggett angrily.

"No, not you, father," Mary begged, and when he looked at her with surprise she blushed. "Huh!" he said, "why not?"

"I—listen, father! I couldn't bear it if he thought I had sent you. I should die of shame. If you went to him, he might guess."

"Well, you want to marry him, don't you!"

"If he wants me. But—yes, I do like him, father."

"Well, you won't be a starved parson's wife, anyway. You'll have money." It was equivalent to another man's hearty good wishes. "Benedict will talk to him," he said, and went out to find Benedict.

David had found in old Doctor Benedict a companion and friend. An old-style family physician, the town's medical man-of-all-work, with a heart as big as the world and a brain stored with book-lore and native philosophy, the doctor and David made a strange pair of friends and loved each other the better for their differences. Once every so often the doctor had his "periodical," when he drank until he was stupid. Once already David, knowing of this weakness and seeing the "period" approaching, had kept old Benedict talking philosophy until midnight and, when he grew restless for brandy, had walked the streets with him until the older man tottered for weariness and had to be fairly lifted into his bed. When, the next day, Benedict began the postponed spree David had dragged him to the manse, and had kept him there that night, locked in the dominie's own bedroom. Benedict took all this good-naturedly.

He looked on his "periodicals" as something quite apart from himself. He did not like them, and he did not dislike them. They came, and when they came he was helpless. They took charge of him and he could not prevent them, and he refused to mourn over them or let them spoil his good nature. The greater part of the year he was himself, but when the "periodical" came he was like a helpless baby tossed by a pair of all-powerful arms. He could not defend himself; he did not wish to be carried away, but it was useless to contend. If David wanted to wrestle with the thing he was welcome. In the meantime David and Benedict recognized each in the other an intellectual equal and they became fast friends. Old Sam Wiggett, holding the mortgages on Benedict's house and on his horse, and on all that was his, did not hesitate to order him to talk to David.

"Davy," said the doctor quizzically as he sat in an easy-chair in David's study, "they tell me you are paying too much attention to 'Thusy Fragg."

David turned.

"Arethusia Fragg?" he said. "You're mistaken, Benedict. I'm paying her no attention."

"It's the scandal of the church," drawled Benedict. "Great commotion. Everybody whispering about it. You walk abroad with her, Davy; you laugh with her at oyster suppers." He became serious. "It's being held against you. A dominie has to walk carefully, Davy. Small minds are staggered by small faults—by others' small faults."

"I meet her occasionally," said David. "I have seen no wrong in that."

"That's not for me to say," said Benedict. "Others do. She's a giddy youngster; a flyaway; a gay young flibbertygibbet. I don't judge her. I'm telling you what is said, Davy."

David sat with his long legs crossed, his chin resting in his hand and his eyes on the spatter-work motto—"Keep an even mind under all circumstances"—above his desk. He thought of 'Thusia Fragg and her attraction and of his duty to himself and to his church, considering everything calmly. He had felt a growing antagonism without understanding it. As he thought he forgot Benedict. His hand slid upward, and his fingers entangled themselves in his curly hair. He sat so for many minutes.

"Thank you, Benedict," he said at length. "I understand. I am through with 'Thusia!"

"Mind you," drawled Benedict, "I say nothing against the girl. I helped her into the world, Davy. I've helped a lot of them into the world. It is not for me to help them through it. When I put them in their mothers' arms my work is done."

"I know what you mean," said David. "If her mother had lived 'Thusia might have been different. But does that concern me, Benedict?"

"It does not," grinned the old doctor. "How long have you been calling her 'Thusia, Davy?"

"My first duty is to my church," said David. "A minister should be above reproach in the eyes of his people."

"That hits the nail on the head, fair and square," said Benedict. "You're right every time, Davy. How long have you been calling her 'Thusia?"

"I am not right every time, Benedict," said David, arising and walking slowly up and down the floor, his hands clasped behind him, "but I am right in this. You are wrong when you allow yourself, even for a day, to

fall into a state in which you cannot be of use to your sick when they call for you, and I would be wrong if I let anything turn my people from me, for they need me continually. My ministry is more important than I am. If my right hand offended my people I would cut it off. I have been careless, I have been thoughtless. I have not paused to consider how my harmless chance meetings with Miss Fragg might affect my work. Benedict, a young minister's work is hard enough—with his youthfulness as a handicap—without—"

"Without 'Thusy," said Benedict.

"Without the added difficulties that come to an unmarried man," David substituted. "The sooner I marry the better for me and for my work and for my people."

"And the sooner I'll be chased out of this easy-chair for good and all by your wife," said Benedict, rising, "so, if that's the way you feel about it—and I dare say you are right—I'll try a sample of absence and go around and see how Mrs. Merkle's rheumatism is amusing her. Well, Davy, invite me to the wedding!"

This was late November and the ice was running heavy in the river although the channel was not yet frozen over, and for some days there had been skating on the shore ice where the inward sweep of the shore left a half moon of quiet water above the levee. When Benedict left him David dropped into his chair. Ten minutes later his mind was made up and he drew on his outer coat, put on his hat and gloves and went ont. He walked briskly up the hill to the Wiggett home, and went in. Mary was not there; she had gone to the river with her skates. David followed her.

No doubt you know how the shore ice behaves, freezing at night and softening again if the day is warm; cracking if the river rises or falls; leaving, sometimes, a strip of honeycombed ice or a strip of bare water along the shore until colder weather congeals it. This day was warm and the sun had power. Here and there, to reach the firmer ice across the mushy shore ice, planks had been thrown. David stood on the railroad track that ran along the river edge and looked for Mary Wiggett. There were a hundred or more skaters, widely scattered, and David saw Mary Wiggett and 'Thusia almost simultaneously. 'Thusia saw David.

She was skating arm in arm with some young fellow, and as she saw David she pulled away from her companion. "Catch me!" she cried and darted away with her companion darting after her. She was the most graceful skater Riverbank boasted, and perhaps her first idea was merely to show David how well she could skate. Suddenly, however, as if she had just seen David, she waved her muff at him and skated toward him. The young fellow turned in pursuit, but almost instantly shouted a warning and dug the edges of his skates into the ice. 'Thusia skated on. Straight toward the thin, decayed ice she sped, one hand still waving her muff aloft in signal to David. He started down the bank almost before she reached the bad ice, for he saw what was going to happen. He heard the ice give under her skates, saw her throw up her hands, heard her scream, and he plunged through the mud and into the water. Before anyone could reach them he had drawn her to the shore and 'Thusia was clinging to him, her arms dose around him. She was laughing hysterically, but her teeth were already beginning to chatter. Her skates raised her nearer David's face than ordinarily, and as the skaters gathered she put up her mouth and kissed him. Then she fell limp in his arms.

She had not fainted and David knew it was all mere pretense. He knew she had been in no danger, for his legs were wet only to the knees, and if 'Thusia was drenched from head to foot it was because she had deliberately thrown herself into the water. He felt it was all a trick and he shook her violently as he tried to push her away.

"Stop it!" he cried. "Stop this nonsense!" but even as a dozen men crowded around them he lifted her in his arms and carried her up the railway embankment. Below them Mary Wiggett stood, safely back from the dangerous edge of the ice.

"Get a rig as quickly as you can," David commanded. "She's not hurt, but she'll take cold in these wet clothes. Mary Wiggett," he called, seeing her in the group on the ice, "I want you to come with us."

He carried 'Thusia to the street and rested her on a handcar that stood beside the railway and wrapped her in his greatcoat. The crowd, of course, followed. David sent a boy to tell Mr. Fragg to hurry home. And all this while, and while they were waiting for the rig that soon came, 'Thusia continued her pretended faint, and David knew she was shamming. He lifted her into the buggy. It was then she opened her eyes with a faint "Where am I?"

"You know well enough," David answered and turned to Mary Wiggett. "Come! Get in!" he ordered. "She has been pretending a faint." David, who tried to keep an even mind under all circumstances, never quite understood the reasoning that led him to drag Mary Wiggett into the affair in this way. He felt vaguely that she was protection; it had seemed the thing he must do. He was angry with 'Thusia, so angry that he felt like beating her and he was afraid of himself because even while he hated her for the trick she had played the clasp of her arms had filled him with joy. He was afraid of 'Thusia.

Without hesitation or demur Mary clambered into the buggy, and David helped 'Thusia in and drove the heavy vehicle through the muddy streets to 'Thusia's door. He lifted her out and carried her into the house and helped her up the stairs to her room, and there he left her with Mary. From the sitting room below he could hear Mary moving about. He heard her come down and put the sadirons on the stove to heat and heard her mixing some hot drink. When Mr. Fragg reached the house 'Thusia was tucked between blankets with hot irons at her feet, and Mary came down as David ended his explanation of the affair.

"I think she'll be all right now," Mary said. "She has stopped shivering and is nice and warm. We'll stop for Dr. Benedict, Mr. Fragg, just to make sure."

On the way home David asked Mary to marry him. She did not pretend unwillingness. She was surprised to be asked just then, but she was happy and she tucked her arm under his affectionately and David clasped her hand. He was happy, quite happy. They stopped to send Dr. Benedict to the Fraggs and then David drove Mary home. She held his hand a moment or two as she stood beside the buggy at her gate.

"You'll come up this evening, David, won't you?" she asked. "Wait, David, I'll have our man drive you home and take this rig back wherever it came from," she added with a pleasing air of new proprietorship; "you must go straight home and change into something dry. And be sure to come up this evening."

"I will," said David, and she turned away. She turned back again immediately.

“David,” she said hesitatingly; “about 'Thusia—I feel so sorry for her. She has no mother and I think lately she has been trying to be good. I feel as if—”

“Yes,” said David, “I feel that too.”

“Well, then, it will be all right!” said Mary happily. “And remember, change your clothes as soon as you get home, David Dean!”

When David opened the door of the manse he stood for a minute letting his happiness have its own way with him. He imagined the little house as it would be with Mary in it as the mistress and, in addition to the glow of heart natural to an accepted lover, he felt he had chosen wisely. His wife would be a help and a refuge; she would be peace and sympathy at the end of every weary day.

Then he climbed the stairs to change his wet garments as Mary had wisely ordered.

III. THE COPPERHEAD

WHEN Sumter was fired upon David Dean had been in Riverbank not quite a year, but he had passed through the first difficult test of the young minister, and Mary Wiggett's smile seemed to have driven from the minds of his people the opposition they had felt when it seemed he was, or might become, too fond of 'Thusia Fragg. Poor little 'Thusia! The bright, flirting, reckless butterfly of a girl, captured soul, mind and body by her first glimpse of David's cool gray eyes, knew—as soon as Mary Wiggett announced that David had proposed and had been accepted—that David was not for her. Mary Wiggett, inheriting much of hard-headed old Samuel Wiggett's common sense, was not apt to let David escape and David had no desire to escape from the quite satisfactory position of future husband of Mary Wiggett. As the months of the engagement lengthened he liked Mary more and more.

The announcement of the dominie's engagement settled many things. It settled the uneasiness that is bound to exist while a young, unmarried minister is still free to make a choice, and it settled the fear that David might make a fool of himself over 'Thusia Fragg. While his congregation did not realize what an attraction 'Thusia had had for David, they had feared her general effect on him. With David engaged to the leading elder's daughter, and that daughter such a fine, efficient blond young woman as Mary was, there was peace and David was happy. He had no trouble in stifling the feeling for 'Thusia that he felt had come dangerously near being love.

Until Riverbank was thrown into a rage by the news from Fort Sumter David, with due regard for his motto, “Keep an even mind under all circumstances,” had prepared to settle down into a state of gentle usefulness and to become the affectionate husband of the town's richest man's daughter. The wedding was to be when Mary decided she was quite ready. She was in no great haste, and in the flame of patriotism that swept all Iowa with the first call for troops and the subsequent excitement as the town and county responded and the streets were filled with volunteers Mary postponed setting a day. David and Mary were both busy during those early war days. Almost too soon for belief lists of dead and wounded came back to Riverbank, followed by the pale cripples and convalescents. Loyal entertainments and “sanitary fairs” kept every young woman busy, and there is no doubt that David did more to aid the cause by staying at home than by going to the front. He was willing enough to go, but all Iowa was afire and there were more volunteers than could be accepted. No one expected the war to last over ninety days. More said sixty days.

Little 'Thusia Fragg, forgiven by Mary and become her protégée, was taken into the councils of the women of David's church in all the loyal charitable efforts. She was still the butterfly 'Thusia; she still danced and appeared in gay raiment and giggled and chattered; but she was a forgiven 'Thusia and did her best to be “good.” Like all the young women of the town she was intensely loyal to the North, but her loyalty was more like the fiery spirit of the Southern women than the calmer Northern loyalty of her friends.

As the lists of dead grew and the war, at the end of ninety days, seemed hardly begun, loyalty and hatred and bitterness became almost synonymous. Riverbank, on the Mississippi, held not a few families of Southern sympathizers, and the position of any who ventured to doubt the right of the North to coerce the South became most unpleasant. Wise “Copperheads” kept low and said nothing, but they were generally known from their antebellum utterances, and they were looked upon with distrust and hatred. The title “Copperhead” was the worst one man could give another in those days. As the war lengthened one or two hot

outspoken Democrats were ridden out of the town on rails and the rest, for the most part, found their sympathies change naturally into tacit agreement with those of their neighbors. It was early in the second year of the war that old Merlin Hinch came to Riverbank County. It was a time when public feeling against Copperheads was reaching the point of exasperation.

Merlin Hinch, with his few earthly goods and his wife and daughter, crossed the Mississippi on the ferry in a weather-beaten prairie schooner a few weeks before plowing time. He came from the East but he volunteered nothing about his past. He was a misshapen, pain-racked man, hard-handed and close-mouthed. He rested one day in Riverbank, got from some real estate man information about the farms in the back townships of the county, and drove on. There were plenty of farms to be had—rented on shares or bought with a mortgage—and he passed on his way, a silent, forbidding old man.

In the days that followed he sometimes drove into town to make such purchases as necessity required. Sometimes his wife—a faded, work-worn woman—came with him, and sometimes his daughter, but more often he came alone.

Old Hinch—“Copperhead Hinch,” he came to be called—was not beautiful. He seldom wore a hat, coming to town with his iron-gray hair matted on his head and his iron-gray beard tangled and tobacco-stained. Some long-past accident had left him with a scar above the left eyebrow, lowering it, and his eyebrows were like long, down-curving gray bristles, so that his left eye looked out through a bristly covert, giving him a leering scowl. The same accident had wrenched his left shoulder so that his left arm seemed to drag behind him and he walked bent forward with an ugly sidewise gait. At times he rested his left hand on his hip. He looked like a hard character, but, as David came to know, he was neither hard nor soft but a man like other men. Sun and rain and hard weather seemed to have turned his flesh to leather.

In those days the post office was in the Wiggett Building, some sixty feet off the main street, and it was there those who liked to talk of the war met, for on a bulletin board just outside the door the lists of dead and wounded were posted as they arrived, and there head-lined pages of the newspapers were pasted. To the post office old Hinch came on each trip to town, stopping there last before driving back to Griggs Township. Old Hinch issued from the post office one afternoon just as the postmaster was pasting the news of a Union victory on the board, and some jubilant reader, dancing and waving his cap, grasped old Hinch and shouted the news in his ear. The old man uttered an oath and with his elbow knocked his tormentor aside. He shouldered his way roughly through the crowd and clambered into his wagon.

“Yeh! you Copperhead!” the old man's tormentor shouted after him.

The crowd turned and saw the old man and jeered at him. Hinch muttered and mumbled as he arranged the scrap of old blanket on his wagon seat. He gathered up his reins and, without looking back, drove down the street, around the corner into the main street and out of the town. After that old Hinch was “that Copperhead from Griggs Township.” Silent and surly always, he was left more completely alone than ever. When he came to town the storekeepers paid him scant courtesy; the manner in which they received him indicated that they did not want his trade, and would be better satisfied if he stayed away. The children on the street sometimes shouted at him.

Old Sam Wiggett, Mary's father, was by that time known as the most bitter hater of the South in Riverbank. Later there were some who said he assumed the greater part of his virulent fanaticism to cover his speculations in the Union paper currency and his tax sale purchases of the property of dead or impoverished Union soldiers, but this was not so. Heavy-bodied and heavy-jowled, he was also heavy-minded. That which he was against he hated with all the bitterness his soul could command, and he was sincere in his desire that every captured Confederate be hanged. He considered Lincoln a soft-hearted namby-pamby and would have had every Confederate home burned to the ground and the women and children driven into Mexico. In business he had the same harsh but honest single-mindedness. Money was something to get and any honest way of getting it was right. There were but two or three men in Riverbank County who would bid in the property of the unfortunate soldiers at tax sale, but Sam Wiggett had no scruples. The South, and not he, killed and ruined the soldiers, and the county, not he, forced the property to tax sale. He bought with depreciated currency that he had bought at a discount. That was business.

It was not unnatural that Mary Wiggett should have absorbed some share of this ultraloyalism from her father. The women of Riverbank were not, as a rule, bitterly angry. They were staunch and true to their cause; they worked eagerly with their hands, scraping lint, making “housewives” and doing what they could for their soldiers; they were cheered by victories and depressed by defeats, and they wept over their slain and wounded, but their attitude was one of pity and love for their own rather than of hard hatred against the South. With Mary Wiggett patriotism was more militant. Could she have arranged it the lint she scraped would never have been used to dress the wounds of a captured Confederate soldier boy. 'Thusia, even more intense, hated the South as a personal enemy.

David felt this without, at first, taking much notice of it. He was happy in his engagement and he liked Mary better each day. There was a wholesome, full-blooded womanliness in all she did and a frankness in her affection that satisfied him. The first shock to his evenly balanced mind came one day when he was walking through the main street with her.

The young dominie was swinging down the street at her side, his head high and his clear gray eyes looking straight ahead, when something whizzed past his face. They were near the corner of a street. Along the edge of the walk a half dozen farm wagons stood and in the nearest sat Mrs. Hinch, her sunbonnet thrown back and her Paisley shawl—her finest possession—over her shoulders. Old Hinch was clambering into the wagon and had his best foot on the hub of a wheel. The missile that whizzed past David's face was an egg. It struck old Hinch on the temple and broke, scattering the yolk upon the waist of Mrs. Hinch's calico dress and upon her shawl and her face. Some boy had grasped an egg from a box before a grocer's window and had thrown it. The lad darted around the corner and old Hinch turned, grasping his whip and scowling through his bristly eyebrows. The corner loafers laughed.

What David did was not much. He drew his handkerchief from his pocket and gave it to the faded woman in the wagon, that she might remove the stain of egg. She wiped her face and began removing the egg from her

garments and David and Mary moved on.

“Why did you do that!” Mary asked. “Don't you know them! They're Copperheads.”

“She was badly spattered. She seemed at a loss what to do.”

“Didn't you *know* they were Copperheads!”

“I did not know. That would have made no difference. She was distressed.”

“Well, please, David, do not help any more distressed Copperheads when I am with you,” Mary said. “Everyone in front of the store saw you. Oh! I wouldn't raise my little finger to help a Copperhead if she was dying! I hate them! They ought to be egged out of town, all of them.”

Some two weeks later old Hinch drove up to the little manse and knocked on David's door. He had the handkerchief, washed, ironed and folded in a bit of white paper, and a dozen fresh-laid eggs in a small basket.

“Ma sent me 'round with these,” old Hinch said. “Sort of a 'thank you.' She 'minded me particular not to throw the eggs at you.”

There was almost a twinkle in his eyes as he repeated his wife's little joke. He would not enter the manse but sidled himself back to his wagon and drove away.

It was from 'Thusia Fragg that David had the next word of old Hinch. Even in those days David had acquired a great taste for a certain sugared bun made by Keller, the baker. Long years after the buns were still made by Riverbank bakers and known as “Keller buns” and the last sight many had of David was as an old man with a paper bag in his hand, trudging up the hill to his home for a little feast on “Keller buns.” He used to stop and offer his favorite pastry to little children. Sometimes the paper bag was quite empty by the time he reached home.

It was no great disgrace, in those days, to carry parcels, for many of the Riverbankers had come from St. Louis or Cincinnati, where the best housewives went to market with basket on arm, but David would have thought nothing of his paper parcel of buns in any event. The buns were at the baker's and he liked them and wanted some at home, so he went to the baker's and bought them and carried them home. He was coming out of Keller's doorway when 'Thusia, as gayly dressed as ever, hurrying by, saw him and stopped. She was frightened and agitated and she grasped David's arm.

“Oh, Mr. Dean!” she cried. “Can't you do something! They're beating an old man! There!” she almost wept, pointing down the street toward the post office. David stood a moment, tense and breathing deeply.

“Who is it!” he asked.

“That Copperhead farmer,” said 'Thusia.

David forgot the motto over his desk in his study. He saw the small mob massed in front of the post office and men running toward it from across the street, and he too ran. He saw the crowd sway back and forth and a fist raised in the air, and then he was on the edge of the group, pushing his way into it.

“Stop this! Stop this!” he cried.

His voice had the ring of authority and those who turned knew him to be the dominie. They had done old Hinch no great harm. A few blows had been struck, but the old man had received them with his arm thrown over his head. He was tough and a few blows could not harm him. He carried a stout hickory club, and as the crowd hesitated old Hinch sidled his way to the edge of the walk and scrambled into his wagon.

Someone laughed. Old Hinch did not drive away.

“My letter,” he growled, and David stooped and picked up the letter that lay on the walk and handed it to him. Then Hinch struck his horses a blow with the club and the wagon bumped over the loose stones and away. The letter had been trampled upon by dusty feet and David's coat had received a smear of dust from the wagon wheel. He brushed his hands together, and someone began knocking the dust from the skirt of his coat. It eased the tension. Someone explained.

“We told the Copperhead to take off his hat to the flag,” they told David, “and he damned the war. Somebody hit him.”

“He is an old man,” said David. “You can show your patriotism better than by striking an old man.”

It was not a diplomatic thing to say and it was still less diplomatic for David to preach, the next Sunday, on the prodigal son. Many shook their heads over the sermon, saying David went too far in asking them to prepare their hearts for the day when the war would be ended and it would be necessary to take the South back into the brotherhood of States, and to look upon the Confederates as returning prodigals. Old Wiggett was furiously angry. Forty years were to elapse before some of David's hearers were ready to forgive the South, and many went to their graves unforgiving. The feeling after the sermon was that David sympathized entirely too strongly with the South. Those who heard his following sermons knew David was still staunchly loyal, but through the byways of the town the word passed that Dominie Dean was “about as bad as any Copperhead in the county.”

IV. ROSE HINCH

IT was during that week that Benedict, the medical man-of-all-work of the county, David's closest friend, carried David out to Griggs Township to see old Hinch. Doctor Benedict had his faults, medical and otherwise. Calomel in tooth-destroying quantities was one and his periodical sprees were all the rest. His list of professional calls and undemanded bills qualified him for a saintship, for his heart was right and it hurt him to take money from a poor man even when it was willingly proffered.

“Davy,” he said, putting his beaver hat on David's desk and sinking into David's easy-chair with a yawn (people would not let him have a good night's rest once a week), “one of my patients gave you a dozen eggs. Remember her?”

“Yes. The Copperhead's wife. She's not sick, I hope.”

“Malaria, backache, pain in the joints, headache, touch of sciatica. No, she's well. She don't complain. It's her husband, David. He's in a bad way.”

“What ails him!” David asked.

“He's blaspheming his God and Maker, Davy,” said Benedict. “He's blaspheming himself into his grave. He has hardened his heart and he curses the God that made him. Davy, he's dying of a breaking heart. He is breaking his heart against the pillars of Heaven.”

David turned in his chair.

“And you came for me? You were right, Benedict. You want me to go to him!”

“I want to take you to him,” said Benedict. “Get on your duds, Davy; the horse is outside.” It is a long drive to Griggs Township and Benedict had ample time to tell all he knew of Hinch. For five days the man had refused to eat. He sat in his chair and cursed his God for bringing the war upon the country; sat in his chair with a letter crumpled in his hand, with his eyes glassy hard and his face in a hideous scowl.

“I heard from the wife of what you did the other day when those loafers would have beaten the old man. He hates all mankind, Davy, but if there is one of the kind can soften his heart you are the one. Hates?” The doctor shook his head. “No, he thinks he hates man and God. It is grief, Davy. He's killing himself with grief.” David was silent. He knew Benedict would continue.

“The day you mixed up in his affair he got a letter at the post office. It's the letter he keeps crushed in his hand.”

“I remember. I picked it up and gave it to him.”

“He read it before he came out of the post office, I dare say,” said the doctor. He flicked his whip over the haunches of his horse. “You don't know why he came West? He was burned out where he came from. He spent his life and his wife's life, too, building up a farm and Fate made it a battlefield. Raiders took his stock first, then one army, and after that the other, made his farm a camp and between them they made it a desert, burning his buildings. He had a boy of fourteen, and they were trying to keep alive in the cellar hole where the house had been. A chance bullet killed the lad. I think the boy was running to the well for a pail of water. It has made, the old man bitter, Davy. It has made him hate the war.”

“It might well make him hate the war,” said David.

“There was another son,” said Benedict. “I take it he was a fine lad, from what the mother tells me. He was nineteen. The letter that came the other day said the lad had been killed in battle. Yes, the old man hates the war. He does not love the war, Davy.”

“He may well hate it,” said David.

They found old Hinch as Benedict had left him, bent down in his chair with his eyes set in a hard glare. He was very weak—much weaker than when Dr. Benedict had left him—but his lips still moved in ceaseless blasphemy. The wife let David and the doctor in. No doubt she felt the loss of her son as deeply as old Hinch himself felt it, but Fate had taken vigor out of her soul before this blow fell. Her nervous hands clasped and unclasped, and she looked at Benedict with the pitiful pleading of a dumb animal. When the two men went up to Hinch she seated herself at the far side of the room, still clasping and unclasping her hands. The tragedy that had occurred seemed lost in the tragedy that impended.

David fell on his knees beside the old man's chair and, with his hand on old Hinch's arm and his forehead on the chair arm, prayed. He prayed aloud and as he prayed he tightened his grasp on the old man's arm. It was more than a prayer; it was a stream of comfort flowing straight from his heart. He prayed long. The wife ceased her nervous clasping and unclasping of her hands and knelt beside her own chair. Benedict stole to the far corner of the room and dropped noiselessly into a seat. An hour passed and still David prayed.

The room was poverty-stricken in the extreme. There was no carpet on the floor and no drapery at the windows. The table was of pine, and a squat lamp of glass stood on it, the lamp chimney broken and patched

with scorched paper. The afternoon waned and old Hinch ceased his muttering, but David prayed on. He was fighting for the man's soul and life. Dusk fell, and with a sudden great sob old Hinch buried his face between his knees. Then David clasped his hand.

The wife silently lighted the lamp and went to the kitchen, and, as if the light had been a signal, the door opened and Rose Hinch came in. She stood a moment in the doorway, her sunbonnet pushed back, taking in the scene, and then she came and stood beside her father and put her hand on his head. Then David looked up and saw her.

She had been all day in the field, doing the work her father had left undone, and her shoes were covered with loam and her hands burned to a brown-red. Her garments were rough and patched, but her face, protected by the sunbonnet, was untouched by tan. It was a face like that of a madonna, sweet and calm. Her hair, parted in the middle, had been drawn back smoothly, but now it fell rather loosely over her forehead, and was brown, as were her eyes. She let her hand rest a moment on her father's head, and then passed on into the kitchen.

Benedict left immediately after the supper, but David remained for the night. Old Hinch drank a bowl of broth and permitted himself to be led to bed. He was very weak but he blasphemed no more; his mood was one of saner sorrow. The wife sat with him, and David, seeing that Rose—after a day of man's work in the field—must care for the scanty stock, insisted on aiding her. When Benedict arrived the next morning old Hinch was much better physically and quite himself mentally, and David drove back to town with the doctor.

Three times in the next two weeks David drove out to Griggs Township with Benedict. Things had returned to their miserable normal state when he made his last visit, but when David arrived Samuel Wiggett was there. No doubt the farm was to be put up at tax sale and Wiggett had come out to see whether it was worth bidding in. It would have pleased him to be able to put old Hinch, a Copperhead, off the place.

Wiggett, like many sober and respectable men, had little respect for men like Benedict, and he was never any too well pleased to see David in the doctor's company. To see David and Benedict together at the home of the Copperhead was bad indeed, and to see the evident friendship existing between David and the Copperhead and the Copperhead's wife and daughter was worse. Wiggett climbed into his buggy after a gruff greeting and drove away.

For several days after David's meeting with Wiggett at the farm the young dominie did not see Mary Wiggett. War times were busy times for the ministers as well as for the men at the front, and David's pastoral duties seemed to crowd upon him. Three of the “boys,” sent home to die, lay in their beds and longed for David's visits. He tried to grasp a few minutes to see Mary, but it was often long past midnight when he fell exhausted on his bed.

Gossip, once started in a small town, does not travel—it leaps, growing with each leap. It builds itself up like conglomerate, that mass of pebbles of every sort, shells and mud. In no two heads did the stories that were told about David during those days agree. The tales were a conglomerate of unpleasant lies in which disloyalty, infatuation for the Copperhead's daughter, hypocrisy, unhallowed love and much else were illogically combined. Of all this David suspected nothing. What Mary Wiggett heard can only be guessed, but it set her burning with jealousy of Rose Hinch and weeping with hurt pride.

It was not a week after his last visit to the Hinches that Sam Wiggett's man-of-all-work stopped at the manse, leaving a small parcel and a note for David. The parcel held the cheap little ring David had given Mary as a token of their engagement and the letter broke their engagement.

David was horrified. Again and again he read the letter, seeking to find in it some clew to Mary's act, but in vain. He hastened to her home, but she would not see him. He wrote, and she replied. It was a calmly sensible letter, but it left him more bewildered than ever. She begged him not to be persistent, and said her mind was made up and she could never marry him. She said he could see that if he forced his attentions or even insisted on making a quarrel of what was not one it would be harder for both, since she was a member of his church and, if he became annoying, one of them must leave.

Before giving up all hope David persuaded Dr. Benedict to see Mary. The good doctor returned somewhat dazed.

“She sat on me, Davy; she sat on me hard,” he said. “My general impression is that she meant to convey the idea that what Samuel Wiggett's daughter chooses to do is none of a drunken doctor's infernal business.”

“But would she give you no reason?” asked David.

“Now as to that,” said Benedict, “she implied quite plainly that if you don't know the reason it is none of your business either. She knows the reason and that's enough for the three of us.” David wrote again, and finally Mary consented to see him and set the day and hour; but, as if Fate meant to make everything as bad as possible for David, Benedict came that very afternoon to carry him out to Griggs Township to minister to Mrs. Hinch, who had broken down and was near her end. It was not strange that she should ask for David, but the town found in the two or three visits he made the dying woman additional cause for umbrage, and Mary, receiving David's message telling why he could not keep his appointment, refused to make another.

Through all this David went his way, head high and with an even mind. He felt the change in his people toward him and he felt the changed attitude of the town in general, but until the news reached him through little 'Thusia Fragg he did not know there was talk in some of the barrooms of riding him out of town on a rail.

He was sitting in his study trying to work on his sermon for the next Sunday morning, but thinking as much of Mary as of his sermon, when 'Thusia came to the door of the manse. Mary Ann, the old housekeeper, admitted her, leaving her sitting in the shaded parlor while she went to call David. He came immediately, raising one of the window shades that he might better see the face of his visitor, and when he saw it was 'Thusia he held out his hand. It was the first time 'Thusia had been inside the manse.

“Well, 'Thusia!” he queried.

She was greatly agitated. As she talked she began to cry, wringing her hands as she poured out what she had heard. David was in danger; in danger of disgrace and perhaps of bodily harm or even worse. From her

father she had heard of the threats; Mr. Fragg had heard the word passed among the loafers who hung out among the saloons on the street facing the river. David was to be ridden out of town on a rail; perhaps tarred and feathered before the ride.

David listened quietly. When 'Thusia had ended, he sat looking out of the window, thinking.

He knew the men of the town were irritated. For a time all the news from the Union armies had been news of reverses. The war had lasted long and bad news increased the irritation. Riots and lawlessness always occur in the face of adverse reports; news of a defeat embitters the non-combatants and brings their hatred to the surface. At such a time the innocent, if suspected, suffered along with the known enemy.

"And they think I am a Copperhead!" said David at length.

"Because you are friendly with Mr. Hinch," 'Thusia repeated. "They don't know you as I do. It is because you are kind to the Hinches when no one else is. And they say—" she said, her voice falling and her fingers twisting the fringe of her jacket—"they say you are in love with—with the daughter."

"It is all because they do not understand," said David, rising. "I can tell them. When I explain they will understand."

He had, as yet, no definite plan. A letter to the editor of the daily newspaper occurred to him; he might also make a plain statement in the pulpit before his next Sunday sermon, setting himself right with his congregation. In the meanwhile he must show himself on the street; by word of mouth he could explain what the townspeople did not know. He blamed himself for not having explained before. He stood at the window, looking out, and saw Dr. Benedict drive up. The doctor came toward the house.

David met him at the door.

"Davy," the doctor said, clasping his hand, "she is dead," and David knew; he meant Mrs. Hinch.

"And Hinch?"

"He's taking it hard, Davy. He is in town. He is in that mood of sullen hate again. He will need you—you are the only man that can soften him, Davy. It is hard—we left the girl alone with her dead mother. Some woman is needed there." 'Thusia had come to the parlor door.

"Will I do! Can I go!" she asked.

"Yes, and bless you for it!" the doctor exclaimed. "Get in my buggy. You'll come, David!"

"Of course! But Hinch—he came to town! Why?"

"He had to get the coffin, Davy."

David hurried into his coat.

"We must find him at once and get him out of town," he said. "They're threatening to tar and feather him if he shows his face in town again. We may stop them if we are in time; please God we may stop them!"

They found old Hinch's wagon tied opposite the post office. They knew it by the coarse pine coffin that lay in the wagon bed. A crowd—a dozen or more men—stood before the bulletin board watching the postmaster post a new bulletin and, as David leaped from the buggy, the men cheered, for the tide had turned and the news was news of victory. As they cheered, old Hinch came out of the post office. He had in his right hand the hickory club he always carried and in the left a letter, doubled over and crushed in his gnarled fingers. He leaned his weight on the club. All the strength seemed gone out of his bent body. Someone saw him and shouted "Here's the Copperhead!" and before David could reach his side the crowd had gathered around old Hinch.

The old man stood in the doorway, under the flag that hung limply from its pole. His fingers twitched as they grasped the letter in his hand. He glared through his long eyebrows like an angry animal.

"Kill the Copperhead!" someone shouted and an arm shot out to grasp the old man.

"Stop!" David cried. He struggled to fight his way to Hinch, but the old man, maddened out of all reason, raised his club above his head. It caught in the edge of the flag above his head and he uttered a curse—not at the flag, not at his tormentors, but at war and all war had done to him. The knotted end of the club caught the margin of the flag and tore the weather-rotten fabric.

Those in front had stepped back before the menace of the raised club, but one man stood his ground. He held a pistol in his hand and as the flag parted he leveled the weapon at the old man's head and calmly and in cold blood pulled the trigger.

"That's how we treat a Copperhead!" he cried, and the old man, a bullet hole in his forehead, fell forward at his feet.

You will not find a word regarding the murder in the *Riverbank Eagle* of that period. They hustled the murderer out of town until it was safe for him to return; indeed, he was never in any danger. The matter was hushed up; but few knew old Hinch. It was an "incident of the war." But David, breaking through the crowd one moment too late, dropped to his knees beside the old man's dead body and raised his head while Benedict made the hurried examination. Some members of the crowd stole away, but other men came running, from all directions and, standing beside the dead man, David told them why old Hinch had damned the war and why he hated it—not because he was a Copperhead but because one son and then another had been taken from life by it—one son killed by a stray Confederate bullet and the other shot while serving in the Union army. He made no plea for himself; it was enough that he told them that old Hinch was not a Copperhead but a grief-maddened father. As he ended Benedict handed him the letter that had slipped from the old man's hand as he fell. It bore the army frank and was from the colonel of a Kentucky regiment. There was only a few lines, but they told that old Hinch's oldest son, the last of his three boys, had fallen bravely in battle. It was with this new grief in his mind that the old man had stepped out to confront his tormentors.

David read the letter, his clear voice carrying beyond the edges of the crowd, and when he finished he said, "We will pray for one who died in anger," and on the step of the post office and face to face with those who but a few minutes before would have driven him from the town in disgrace, he prayed the prayer that made him the best-loved man in Riverbank.

Some of our old men still talk of that prayer and liken it to the address Lincoln made at Gettysburg. It was never written down and we can never know David's words, but those who heard knew they were listening to a real man speaking to a real God, and they never doubted David again.

As David raised his head at the close he saw Mary Wiggett and her father in their carriage at the far edge of the crowd, that filled the street. Mary half arose and turned her face toward David, but old Wiggett drove on, and, while hands now willing raised the body of old Hinch, David crossed the street to where 'Thusia Fragg was waiting for him.

When old Sam Wiggett drove away from in front of the post office, little imagining David had just counteracted all the baseless gossip that had threatened him, Mary placed her hand on his arm and urged him to turn back, but cold common sense urged him to drive on. He did not want to be known as having seen any of the tragedy, for he did not relish having to enter a witness chair. Had he turned back as Mary wished David's whole life might have been different, and certainly his end would have been.

Once safely home Mary did not hesitate to write to David. Whatever else she may have been, and however old Sam's wealth had affected her mode of thought, Mary was sincere, and she now wrote David she was sorry and asked him to come to her. It was too late. With 'Thusia David walked up the hill. At the gate of the manse they paused. They had spoken of nothing but the tragedy.

“Rose Hinch will be all alone now,” 'Thusia said.

“Yes,” David said.

'Thusia looked down.

“Do you—will she get work,” she asked, “or is she going to marry someone.”

“I know she is not going to marry,” David said promptly. “She knows no one—no young men.”

“Except you,” 'Thusia suggested, looking up. As she met David's dear eyes her face reddened as it had on that first day at the wharf. The hand that lay on the gate trembled visibly; she withdrew it and hid it at her side.

“I like Rose, but I am not a candidate for her hand, if that is what you mean,” said David.

'Thusia suddenly felt infinitely silly and childish.

“I mean—I don't mean—” she stammered. “I must not keep you standing here. Good-by.”

“Good-by,” David said, and turned away.

He took a dozen steps up the path toward the manse. He stopped short and turned.

“'Thusia!” he called.

“Yes?” she replied, and turned back.

David walked to the gate and leaned upon it.

“What is it,” 'Thusia asked.

“You asked about Rose Hinch. I think we should try to do something for her—”

'Thusia's eyes were on David's hands. Now David's hands and not 'Thusia's were trembling. She watched them as if fascinated. She looked up and the light in his eyes thrilled her.

“'Thusia, I know now!” David said. “I love you and I have always loved you and I shall love you forever.”

Her heart stood still.

“David! but we had better wait. We had better think it over,” she managed to say. “You had better—you're the dominie—I—”

“Don't you care for met” he asked.

She put her hand on his and David clasped it. Kisses 'and embraces usually help carry off a moment that can hardly be anything but awkward, but kisses and embraces are distinctly impossible across a dominie's manse gate in full day, with the Mannings on their porch across the street. 'Thusia laughed a mischievous little laugh.

“What!” David asked.

“I'll be the funniest wife for a dominie!” she said. “Oh, David, do you think I'll do!”

And so, as the fairy tales say, they were married. Fairy tales properly end so, with a brief “and lived happily ever after,” and so may most tales of real life end, but, however the minister's life may run, a minister's wife is apt to find the married years sufficiently interesting. She marries not only a husband but an official position, and the latter is quite apt to lead to plentiful situations.

Mary Wiggett, calling David back too late, did not fall into a decline or die for love. Not until she lost David finally did she realize how deeply she had loved him, but she did not sulk or repine. She even served as a bridesmaid for 'Thusia, and with 'Thusia planned the wedding gown. She almost took the place of a mother, and advised and worked to make 'Thusia's trousseau beautiful. She seemed to wish David's bride to be all she herself would have been had she been David's bride. 'Thusia was too happy to think or care why Mary showed such interest, and David, who could not avoid hearing of it, was pleased and grateful.

The crowning act of Mary's kindness was asking 'Thusia to call Rose Hinch from her poverty to help with the plainer sewing. The three girls spent many days together at the Fraggs' and, although David was mentioned as seldom as ever a bridegroom was mentioned, all three felt they were laboring for him in making his bride fine. Mary, with her calm efficiency, seemed years older than 'Thusia, and thus the three worked—and were to work together for many years—for love of David.

V. CHURCH TROUBLES

THE leaves of the maples before the small white manse were red with their October hue, and the sun rays were slanting low across the little front yard at a late afternoon angle, when David, his hat in his hand and his long black coat thrown open, paused a few moments at his gate to greet Rose Hinch, who was approaching from up the hill.

David had changed little. He was still straight and slender, his yellow hair still curled over his broad forehead, and his gray eyes were still clear and bright. His motto, “Keep an even mind under all circumstances,” still hung above his desk in his study. For nearly six years, happy years, 'Thusia had been David's wife.

The old rivalry between 'Thusia and Mary seemed forgotten. For one year old Wiggett, refusing Mary's pleadings, had sat under a Congregational preacher, but the Congregational Church—being already supplied with leaders—offered him small opportunity to exert his stubborn and somewhat surly desire for dictatorship, and he returned to sit under and glare at David, and resumed his position of most powerful elder.

During the first year of 'Thusia's married life

Mary was often at the manse. 'Thusia's love was still in the frantically eager stage; she would have liked to have lived with one arm around David's neck, and she was unwittingly in constant danger of showing herself all a dominie's wife should not be. Her taste for bright clothes and her carelessness of conventionality threatened a harsh awakening for David. During that dangerous first year Mary made herself almost one of the household.

'Thusia, strange to say, did not resent it. Mary kept, then and always, her love for David, as a good woman can. But little older than 'Thusia, she was far wiser and immeasurably less volatile and, having lost David as a lover, she transmuted her love into service.

Probably she never thought her feelings into a conscious formula. At the most she realized that she was still very fond of David and that she was happier when helping him than at any other time.

'Thusia's gay companions of the days before David's coming were quite impossible now that 'Thusia was a dominie's bride, and 'Thusia recognized this and was grateful for Mary's companionship during the months following the honeymoon. A young bride craves a friend of her own age, and Mary was doubly welcome. Her advice was always sound, and 'Thusia was quick to take it. Mary's friendship also made the congregation's acceptance of 'Thusia far easier, for anyone so promptly taken up by the daughter of the church's richest member and most prominent elder had her way well prepared in advance. Mary, fearing perhaps that 'Thusia might be annoyed by what might seem unwarranted interest in her affairs, was wise enough to have herself elected head of the women's organization that had the care and betterment of the manse and its furnishings. To make the house fit for a bride she suggested and carried through changes and purchases. She opened her own purse freely, and what 'Thusia did not suggest she herself suggested.

“Mary is lovely!” 'Thusia told David.

A year or two after Mary had thus made herself almost indispensable to 'Thusia she married.

“Oh, I knew it long ago!” 'Thusia said in answer to David's expression of surprise at the announcement of the impending wedding. She had known it a month, which was just one day less than Mary herself had known it. Mary's husband, one of the Derlings of Derlingport, was due to inherit wealth some day, but in the meanwhile old Sash-and-Door Derling was glad to shift the nattily dressed, inconsequential young loafer on to Mr. Wiggett's shoulders. Wiggett found him some sort of position in the Riverbank bank and young Derling gradually developed into a cheerful, pattering little business man, accumulating girth and losing hair. 'Thusia rather cruelly but exactly expressed him when she told Rose Hinch he was something soft and blond with a gold toothpick. If Mary was ever dissatisfied with him she gave no sign.

Those who had wondered what kind of a minister's wife flighty, flirty, little 'Thusia Fragg would make soon decided she made a good one. She can hardly be better described than by saying she sang at her work. David's meager stipend did not permit the employment of a maid, and 'Thusia had little enough leisure between meals for anything but cheerful singing at her tasks. She cooked, swept, baked and washed. There were ministers' wives in Riverbank who were almost as important in church work as their husbands, and this was supposed to be part of their duties. They were expected to lead in all social money-getting affairs, and, in general, to be not merely wives but assistant ministers. If 'Thusia had attempted this there might have been, even with Mary's backing, trouble, for every woman in the church remembered that only a short while before 'Thusia had been an irresponsible, dancing, street-gadding, young harum-scarum of a girl. Her interference would have been resented. With good sense, or good luck, she left this quasi assistant ministry to Mary, who gladly assumed it, and 'Thusia gave all her time to the pleasanter task of being David's happy little wife and

housekeeper.

David, at the manse gate, was waiting for Rose Hinch. Rose, when she saw David, came on with a brisker step. Rose had become David's protégée, the first and closest of many that—during his long life—gathered about him, leaning on him for help and sympathy. In return Rose Hinch was always eager to help David in any way she could. She was Riverbank's first precursor of the trained nurse. David and old Benedict had worried about her future, until David suggested that the old doctor give her what training he could and put her in charge of such of his cases as needed especial care. Rose took up the work eagerly. She lived in a tiny room above a store on the main street. To many in Riverbank she represented all that a trained nurse and a lay Sister of Charity might.

"Well, Rose," David said, "you seem happy. Is this fine October air getting into your blood too?"

"I suppose that helps," said Rose, "but the Long boy is so far past the crisis that I'm not needed any longer. I'm so glad he's getting well; he is such a dear, patient little fellow. That's why I'm happy, David. And you seem fairly well content with the world, I should judge."

"I am, Rose!" he answered. "Have you time to see 'Thusia for a minute or two. I know she wants to see you."

He held the gate open and Rose entered. David put his hat on one of the gateposts and stood with his arms on the top of the gate, "bathing in beauty," as he told 'Thusia later. The sun, where it touched the maple leaves, turned them to flame. Through a gap in the trees he could catch a glimpse of the Mississippi and the varicolored foliage on the Illinois shore, the reds softened to purple by the October haze. For a few minutes he let himself forget his sick and his soul-sore people and his duties, and stood in happy thoughtlessness, breathing October.

Rose came out.

"It's all settled. I'm coming," she said, "and, oh, David! I am so glad!"

"We are all glad," said David.

Thus it happened that no wife ever approached motherhood more happily than motherless little 'Thusia. With David and kind old Doctor Benedict and gentle, efficient Rose Hinch at hand, and Mary as delighted as if the child was to be her own, and all of them loving her, 'Thusia did not give a moment to fear. The baby, when it came, was a boy, and Doctor Benedict said it was the finest in the world, and immediately nominated himself the baby's uncle. He bought the finest solid silver, gold-lined cup to be had in Riverbank and had it engraved, "Davy, Junior, from Uncle Benedict," with the date. This was more than he did for Mary Derling's baby, which came a month later. He gave a silver spoon there, one of about forty that lucky infant received from near and far.

'Thusia was up and about, singing as before, in due time. Rose Hinch remained for the better part of a. month and departed absolutely refusing any compensation. The winter was as happy as any David ever knew. Davy Junior was a strong and fairly well-behaved baby; 'Thusia was in a state of ecstatic bliss, and in the town all the former opposition to David had been long since forgotten. With the calmness of an older man but with a young man's energy he went up and down the streets of the town on his comforting errands. He was fitting into his niche in the world with no rough edges, all of them having been worn smooth, and it seemed that it was his lot to remain for the rest of his life dominie of the Presbyterian Church of Riverbank, each year better loved and more helpful.

April and May passed blissfully, but by the end of June an unexpected storm had gathered, and David did not know whether he could remain in Riverbank another month.

Late in May an epidemic of diphtheria appeared in Riverbank, several cases being in David's Sunday school and the school was closed. Mary, in a panic, fled to Derlingport with her child. She remained nearly a month with her husband's parents, but by that, time Derlingport was as overrun by the disease as Riverbank had been and conditions were reported better at home; so she came back, bringing the child. She returned to find the church in the throes of one of those violent quarrels that come with all the violence and suddenness of a tropical storm. Her short absence threatened to result in David's expulsion from the church.

On the last Saturday of June old Sam Wiggett sat at the black mahogany desk in his office studying the columns of a New York commercial journal—it was the year when the lumber situation induced him to let who wished think him a fool and to make his first big purchase of Wisconsin timberlands—when his daughter, Mary Derling, entered. She came sweeping into the office dressed in all the fuss and furbelow of the fashionable young matron of that day, and with her was her cousin, Ellen Hardcome. Sam Wiggett turned.

"Huh! what are you down here for!" he asked. He was never pleased when interrupted at his office. "Where's the baby!"

"I left him with nurse in the carriage," said Mary. "Can't you say good-day to Ellen, father!"

"How are you!" said Mr. Wiggett briefly. Mrs. Hardcome acknowledged the greeting and waited for Mary to proceed.

"Well, father," said Mary, "this thing simply cannot go on any longer. Something will have to be done. This quarrel is absolutely breaking up the church."

"Huh!" growled Mr. Wiggett. "What's happening now!"

"David is going to preach to-morrow," said Mary dropping into a vacant chair and motioning Ellen to be seated. "After all the trouble we took to get Dr. Hotchkiss to come from Derling-port, and after the ladies offering to pay for a vacation for David out of the fund—"

"What!" shouted Wiggett, striking the desk a mighty blow with his fist. "Didn't I tell you you women have no right to use that fund for any such nonsense! That's money raised to pay on the mortgage. You've no right to spend it for vacations for your star-gazing, whipper-snapper preacher. No! Nor for anything else!"

"But, father!" Mary insisted.

"I don't care anything about your 'but, father.' That's mortgage money. You women ought to have turned it over to the bank long ago. You have no right to keep it. Pay for a vacation! You act like a lot of babies!"

"Father—"

"Pay for a vacation! Much he needs a vacation! Strong as an ox and healthy as a bull; doesn't have anything to do the whole year 'round but potter around town and preach a couple of sermons. It's you women get these notions into your preachers' heads. You turn them into a lot of babies."

"Father, *will* you let me say one word before you quite tear me to pieces! A great many people in our church *like* David Dean. It is all right to bark 'Woof! woof! Throw him out neck and crop!' but you know as well as I do that would split the church."

"Well, let it split! If we can't have peace—"

"Exactly, father!" Mary said quietly. "If we cannot have peace in the church it will be better for David Dean to go elsewhere, but before that happens—for I think many of our people would leave our church if David goes—shouldn't we do all we can to bring peace? Ellen agrees with me."

"In a measure I do; yes," said Ellen Hard-come.

"Ellen and Mr. Hardcome," Mary continued, "are willing to promise to do nothing immediately if David will go away for a month or two. If we can send him away for a couple of months until some of the bitterest feeling dies everything may be all right. We women will be glad enough to make up and pay back anything we have to borrow from the fund. I think, father, if you spoke to David he might go."

"Better get rid of him now," Wiggett growled. Ellen Hardcome smiled. This was what she wanted. Mary looked at the heavy-faced old dictator. She knew her father well enough to feel the hopelessness of her mission. Old Wiggett had never forgiven David for marrying 'Thusia instead of Mary, and because he would a thousand times have preferred David to Derling as a son-in-law he hated David the more.

"It isn't only that David would go, father," Mary said. "If he is sent away we will lose the Hodges and the Martins and the Ollendorfs and old Peter Grimby. I don't mind those old maid Curlews going, or people like the Hansoms or the Browns, but you know what the Hodges and old Peter Grimby do for the church every year. We thought that if you could get David to take a vacation, explaining to him that it would be a good thing to let everything quiet down—"

Old Sam Wiggett chuckled.

"Who thought! Ellen never thought of that," he said.

"I thought of it," said Mary.

"And he won't go!" chuckled Wiggett. "I give him credit—he's a fighter. You women have stirred up the fight in him. I told you to shut up and keep out of this, didn't I! Why—that Dean has more sense than all of you. You must have thought he was a fool, asking him to go on a vacation while Ellen and all stayed here to stir things up against him. He has brains and that wife of his has spunk—do you know what she told me when I met her on the street this morning!"

Mary did not ask him.

"Told me I wasn't fit to clean her husband's shoes!" said Wiggett.

"I hope—" said Mary.

"Well, you needn't, because I didn't," said her father. "I didn't say anything. Turned my back on her and walked away."

"And I suppose you haven't heard the latest thing she has said!" said Ellen Hardcome bitterly. "She says I have no voice, and that I would not be in the choir if my husband did not have charge of the music."

"Said that, did she!" chuckled Wiggett.

"She said my upper register was squeaky, if you please!"

'Thusia had indeed said this. She had said it years before and to a certain Miss Carrol who was then her friend. What Miss Carrol had said about the same voice, she being in the choir with Mrs. Hardcome, does not matter. Miss Carrol had not thought it necessary to tell that to Ellen. With the taking of sides in the present church quarrel all those who were against David racked their brains to recall things 'Thusia had said that could be used to set anyone against the dominie. There were plenty of such harmless, little confidences to recall. 'Thusia, during her first married years—and for long after—was still 'Thusia; she tingled with life and she loved companionship and liked to talk and listen. Every woman expresses her harmless opinions to her friends, but it is easy for the friend, when she becomes an enemy and wishes for recruits, to use this contraband ammunition. It is a woman's privilege, it seems. The women who, like Rose Hinch, and certain women you know, are accepted by men on an equality of friendship, make the least use of it, for even among children there is no term of opprobrium worse than "tattletale." It was but natural for yellow-visaged Miss Connerton, for instance, who had once said to 'Thusia, "Don't you get tired of Mrs. Hallmeyer's eternal purple dresses," and who had accepted 'Thusia's "Yes" as a confidential expression of opinion as between one woman and another, to run to Mrs. Hall-meyer, when everyone was against 'Thusia, and say: "And I suppose you know what she said about you, Mrs. Hallmeyer? That she simply got tired to death of seeing your eternal purple dresses!"

David was fighting for his life, for his life was his work in Riverbank. He was not making the fight alone. Seven or more years of faithful service had won him staunch friends who were glad to fight for him, but the miserable feature of a church quarrel is that—win or lose—the minister must suffer. The two months of the quarrel were the unhappiest of his life, and David made the fight, not because he hoped to remain in Riverbank after it was ended, but because he felt it his duty to stand by what he believed was right, until he should be plainly and actually told to go. The majority of his people, he felt, were with him, but that would make little difference in the final outcome. Although he tried in every way to lessen the bitterness of the quarrel, so that his triumph, if he won, might be the less offensive, he knew his triumph could mean but one thing. A body, nearly half the church, would prepare to leave, and his supporters, having won, would suggest that it would be better for David—who could not keep body and soul together on what the remnant of a church could afford to pay him—and better for the church, that he should resign and carry his triumph elsewhere.

Win or lose David was likely to lose, but until the final moment he did not mean to back down. Had he felt himself in the wrong he would have acknowledged it at once; had he been in the right, and no one but himself concerned, he would have preached a farewell sermon and would have departed. He remained and made the fight because he was loyal to 'Thusia!

It was, indeed, 'Thusia against whom the fight was being made, and it was Ellen Hardcome to whom the whole miserable affair was due. It was all brought about by a pair of black prunella gaiters.

VI. THE BLACK PRUNELLA GAITERS

SETH HARDCOME, while not an elder, was one of the most prominent men in the church, and if anything could be said against him it was that he was almost too upright. Men are intended, no doubt, to be more or less miserable sinners, but Seth Hardcome was, to outward view, absolutely irreproachable. He was in the shoe business on the main street. It is a nice, clean business and does not call for much sweat of the brow (a boy can be hired to open the cases) or necessitate rough clothes, and Seth Hardcome was always clean, neat and suave. He was a gentleman, polite and courteous. He sold the best shoe he could give for the money. Among other boots, shoes and slippers he sold gaiters—then quite the fashion—with prunella uppers and elastic gores at the sides. Most of the ladies wore them.

'Thusia needed new gaiters. David's stipend was so small in those days—it was never large—that, with the new baby, he had hard figuring to avoid running into debt and 'Thusia did her share in the matter of economy. She had worn her old gaiters until they were hardly fit to wear. The elastic had rotted and hung in warped folds; the gaiters had been soled and resoled and the soles were again in holes; finally one of the gaiters broke through at the side of the foot. 'Thusia could not go out of the house in such footwear and she asked David to stop at Hardcome's for a new pair. She wrote the size on a slip of paper.

“The black prunella gaiters, David; the same that I always get. Mr. Hardcome will know,” she said.

David bought the gaiters. He handed Mr. Hardcome the slip of paper, and Mr. Hardcome himself went to the shelves and selected the gaiters. He wrapped them with his own hands. This was a Monday, and not until the next Sunday did 'Thusia have occasion to wear the gaiters. It was a day following a rain, and the streets were awash with yellow mud. 'Thusia came home limping, her poor little toes crimped in the ends of the gaiters.

“My poor, poor feet!” she cried. “David, I nearly died; I'm sure you never preached so long in your life. Oh, I'll be glad to get these off!”

She pulled off one of the offending gaiters and looked at the sole. The size stamped on the sole was a size smaller than 'Thusia wore. The next day David returned the gaiters to Mr. Hardcome. Mr. Hardcome's professional smile fled as David explained. He shook his head sorrowfully as he opened the parcel and looked at the shoes. There was yellow clay on the heels and a spattering of yellow clay on the prunella.

“Too bad!” said Mr. Hardcome, still shaking his head. “She's worn them.”

“Yes; to church, yesterday,” David said. “I'm sorry,” said Mr. Hardcome, and he really was sorry, “I can't take them back. My one invariable rule; boots or shoes I sometimes exchange, but gaiters never! After they have been worn I cannot exchange gaiters.”

“But in this case,” said David, “when they were the wrong size? You remember my wife herself wrote the size on a slip. It doesn't seem, when it was not her error—”

“That, of course,” said Mr. Hardcome with a sad smile, “we cannot know. I am not likely to have made a mistake. Mrs. Dean should have tried the shoes before she wore them.”

David did not argue. He had the average man's reluctance to exchange goods, particularly when soiled, and he bought and paid for another pair, and nothing more might have come of it had 'Thusia not happened to know that old Mrs. Brown wore gaiters a size smaller than herself.

'Thusia did not give the gaiters to Mrs. Brown without first having tried to get Mr. Hardcome to take them back. She went herself. David's money must not be wasted if she could prevent it, and it is a fact that when she left Mr. Hardcome's store she left in something of a huff. She cared nothing whatever for Mr. Hardcome's rules, but she was angry to think he should suggest that she had written the wrong size on the slip of paper. Mr. Hardcome was cold and polite; he bowed her out of the store as politely as he would have bowed out Mrs. Derling or any other lady customer, but he was firm. It was natural enough that 'Thusia should tell the story to old Mrs. Brown when she gave her the gaiters.

From Mrs. Brown the story of the black prunella gaiters circulated from one lady to another, changing form like a putty ball batted from hand to hand, until it reached Mrs. Hardcome. One, or it may have been two, Sundays later David, coming down from his pulpit, found Mr. Hardcome—white-faced and nervous—waiting for him. Suspecting nothing David held out his hand. Mr. Hardcome ignored it.

“If you have one minute, Mr. Dean,” he said in the hard voice of a man who has been put up to something by his wife, “I would like to have a word with you.”

“Why, certainly,” said David.

“It has come to my ears,” said Mr. Hardcome, “that your wife is circulating a report that I am untruthful.”

David almost gasped with astonishment. He could not imagine 'Thusia doing any such thing.

“I do not hold you in any way responsible for what your wife may say or do, Mr. Dean,” said Mr. Hardcome in the same hard voice. “I do not believe for one moment that you have sanctioned any such slanderous

remarks. I have the utmost respect and affection for you, but I tell you, Mr. Dean"—his voice shook with the anger he tried to control—"that woman—your wife—must apologize! I will not have such reports circulated about me! That is all. I merely expect you to do your duty. If your wife will apologize I will do my duty as a Christian and say no more about it."

David, standing in amazement, chanced to look past Mr. Hardcome, and he saw many of his congregation watching him. He had not the slightest idea of what Mr. Hardcome was speaking, but he felt, with the quick intuition of a sensitive man, that these others knew and were keen to catch his attitude as he answered. He put his hand on Mr. Hardcome's arm.

"This must be some mistake, Hardcome," he said. "I have not a doubt it can all be satisfactorily explained. My people are waiting for me now. Can you come to the house to-night? After the sermon! That's good!"

He let his hand slide down Mr. Hardcome's sleeve and stepped forward, extending his hand for the shaking of hands that always awaited him after the service. Before he reached the door his brow was troubled. Not a few seemed to yield their hands reluctantly; some had manifestly hurried away to avoid him. 'Thusia, always the center of a smiling group, stood almost alone in the end of her pew. He saw Mrs. Hardcome sweep past 'Thusia without so much as a glance of recognition.

On the way home he spoke to 'Thusia. She knew at once that the trouble must be something about the black prunella gaiters.

"But, David," she said, looking full into his eyes, "he is quite wrong if he says I said anything about untruthfulness. I have never said anything like that. I have never said anything about him or the gaiters except to old Mrs. Brown. I did tell her I was quite sure I had written the correct size on the slip of paper I gave you. But I never, never said Mr. Hardcome was untruthful!"

"Then it will be very easily settled," said David. "We will tell him that when he comes to-night."

Mr. Hardcome did not go to David's alone. When David opened the door it was quite a delegation he faced. Mrs. Hardcome was with her husband, and old Sam Wiggett, Ned Long and James Cruser filed into the little parlor behind them. David met them cheerfully. He placed chairs and stood with his back to the door, his hands clasped behind him. 'Thusia sat at one side of the room. David smiled.

"I have spoken to my wife," he said, "and—"

"If you will pardon me for one minute, Mr. Dean," said Mrs. Hardcome, interrupting him. "I do not wish to have any false impressions. I do not want my husband blamed, if there is any blame. I want it understood that I insisted that he ask for this apology. I am not the woman to have my husband called a—called untruthful without doing something about it. It is not for me to say that plenty of us thought you made a mistake when you chose a wife, that is neither here nor there. A man marries as he pleases. We don't ask anything unreasonable. If Mrs. Dean will apologize—"

Little 'Thusia, her hands clasped tightly in her lap, looked up at David with wistful eagerness. David, stern enough now, shook his head.

"I have spoken to my wife," he said, "and I have her assurance that she has never said anything whatever in the least reflecting on Mr. Hardcome's veracity. Neither she nor I can say more."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardcome in a shocked tone, glancing at her husband as if to say: "So she is lying about this too!" Mr. Hardcome arose and took up his hat.

"We came in a most forgiving spirit, Brother Dean, feeling sure, from what you told me, that an apology would be given without quibble. We wished to avoid all anger and quarreling. If we begin a dispute as to what Mrs. Dean said or did not say we cannot tell what unpleasantness may result. I am taking this stand not to protect myself, but to protect others in our church who may be similarly attacked. We wish Mrs. Dean to apologize."

"Mrs. Dean cannot apologize for what she has not done."

There was no mistaking David's tone. If he was angry he hid his anger; he was stating an unchangeable fact.

When he and 'Thusia were alone again she cried in his arms; she told him it would have been better if he had let her apologize—that she did not care, she would rather apologize a thousand times than make trouble for him—but David was firm. Old Sam Wiggett, on the way home, told the Hardcomes they had been fools; that they had been offered all they had a right to ask. It was not, however, his quarrel. Mrs. Hardcome was the offended party, and Mrs. Hardcome would hear of nothing less than an apology.

In a week or less the church was plunged into all the mean pettiness of a church quarrel. The black prunella gaiters and the slip of paper with the shoe size were, while not forgotten, almost lost in the slimy mass of tattle and chatter. James Cruser in a day changed from a partisan of the Hardcomes to a bitter enemy, because Mrs. MacDorty told Mrs. Cruser that Mrs. Hardcome had said Mr. Cruser was trying to befriend both sides and was double-faced. Ned Long, looming as the leader of the Hardcome faction, told of a peculiar mortgage old James P. Wardop had—he said—extorted from Widow Wilmot, and Mr. Wardop became the staunchest supporter of David, although he had always said David was the worst preacher a man ever sat under. It was—"and she's a nice one to stick up for the Deans when everybody knows"—and—"but what else can you expect from a man like him, who was mean enough to"—and so on.

'Thusia wept a great many tears when she was not with David. The quarrel was like a wasp-like a nest of wasps. From whatever quarter a stinging bit of maliciousness set out, and whoever it stung in its circling course, it invariably ended at 'Thusia's door. In a short time the affair had become a bitter factional quarrel. There were those who supported Mr. Hardcome and those who supported Mr. Wardop, but the fight became a battle to drive 'Thusia out of Riverbank and the result threatened to be the same, whichever side finally considered itself beaten. Many would leave the church.

During those weeks David's face became thin and drawn. Even the actions of his closest friend, Dr. Benedict, hurt him, for Benedict refused to remain neutral and became a raging partisan for David. The old bachelor—while he never admitted it—adored 'Thusia and since he had been dubbed "Uncle" he considered her his daughter (a mixing of relationships) and nothing 'Thusia could do was wrong. He hurt David's cause

by his violence. Even 'Thusia's own father, Mr. Fragg, was less partisan. David tried to act as peacemaker, but soon the quarrel seemed to have gone beyond any adjustment.

Mary Wiggett went home from her father's office deeply hurt because her father was uncompromisingly against David. Ellen Hardcome was delighted. With old Sam Wiggett on her side she was sure of victory, and when she left Mary she set about planning a final blow against David. She found her husband in his shoe store and told him of the manner in which old Wiggett had refused to help Mary. Together Ellen and her husband discussed the best method of administering the *coup de grâce*. Hardcome, being neither an elder nor a trustee, doubted the advisability of forcing the matter immediately upon the attention of either body, for he was not yet sure enough of them. The decision finally reached was to ask for an unofficial meeting at which the opposition to David could be crystallized—a meeting made up of enough prominent members of the church to practically overawe any undecided elders and trustees. With Sam Wiggett at the head of such a meeting no one could doubt the result. David would have to go.

Hardcome's first step was to see Sam Wiggett, for he desired, above all else, to have Wiggett call the meeting. The stubborn old man refused.

“I'm with you,” he said. “That wife of Dean's made all this trouble, but I never sold her a shoe. You started this; call your own meeting.”

“You'll attend!” asked Hardcome.

“Yes.”

“And may we make you chairman!”

“Yes.”

“There may be some there who will try to talk down any motion or resolution we may want to pass—”

“You leave them to me!” said Wiggett.

Of the proposed meeting Mary knew nothing. She planned to run down to see David and 'Thusia after supper, although she had but faint hope of inducing David to leave Riverbank for a “vacation” now that her father had refused his aid. Wiggett, who still remained the head of his household, although Mary and her husband were nominally in control, ate his supper in grim silence and nothing was said about David or the church affairs. Nor did Mary run down to the manse after supper as she had planned. When the meal was half finished her nurse called her away from the supper table to see her child, who was suddenly feverish and “stopped up.” Mary did not return, and Derling, when he had ended his meal, found her holding the little one in her arms.

“George,” she said, “I'm worried about baby. I'm afraid he's sick. Touch his cheek; see how hot he is. Go for Dr. Benedict. I'm frightened.”

“Benedict!” said Derling. “What do you want that fellow for! I won't have him in the house. I'll get Martin. I won't have Benedict, always hanging about that dear dominie of yours!”

“He's jealous!” thought Mary with a sudden inward gasp of surprise. She bent forward and brushed the baby's hair from the hot forehead. That Derling could be jealous of David Dean had never occurred to Mary. Her marriage had been so completely an alliance of fortune rather than of love, and Derling had seemed so indifferent and lacking in affection, that she had never even considered that jealousy might have a part in his nature. Derling, she knew, conducted plenty of flirtations on his own side; some were rather notorious affairs; but Mary was conscious of never having overstepped the lines set for a good wife. She did not deny to herself that she felt still a great affection for David, and she felt that for David to leave Riverbank would be the greatest sorrow of her life, but she had never imagined that Derling might think he had cause for jealousy.

Derling was, however, like many men who are willing to flirt with other women, an extremely jealous man. He was jealous of the time and attention Mary gave the dominie. Derling had, therefore, thrown himself into the ranks of the Hardcome adherents, and he had been one of those who ran afoul of old Dr. Benedict's keen tongue. Some of the advice Benedict had given him would have done him good had he acted on it, but it cut deep. The old doctor knew human nature and how to make it squirm.

“Benedict is so much better with children, George,” said Mary, looking up. “He seems to work miracles, sometimes.”

“If he came in this house, I would throw him out,” said Derling. “I won't have him. That's flat!”

“Well, get Martin then, but I *don't* have the faith in him I have in Benedict,” Mary said.

Martin came. He said it was nothing, that the child had a croupy cold and he left a powder for the fever and advised Mary what to do in case the child got worse during the night. When he came the next day he said the boy was much better. That evening Derling, sent downtown for medicine, heard at the druggist's that 'Thusia's child had diphtheria and that there was a fresh outbreak of the disease in town. He drove his horse home at a gallop and found Martin there, and Mary, white and panic-stricken, wringing her hands. When the young doctor admitted that the child had diphtheria Derling, in a rage, almost threw him out of the house. A slight fever was one thing, the dread disease was quite another, and he left Mary weeping, and lashed his horse in search of Dr. Benedict.

The old doctor was not at home; Derling found him at David's and found him in a tearing rage. Mrs. Hardcome, hoping to force David's resignation, had just called to warn David that if he wished to protect himself he must attend the meeting the next evening. Benedict was still spluttering with anger and tramping up and down David's little study, when Derling found him.

“You!” he shouted. “Go to your house! I'd let you all rot first, the whole lot of you. Go get your Martin, you called him quick enough. I wouldn't go if you got on your knees to me. You and your dog-faced father-in-law and your Hardcomes, trying to drive this poor girl out of town! If this was my house I'd throw you out. I will anyway! Get out!”

Poor Derling—harmless enough creature—did all but get on his knees. He went away haggard, and looking twenty years older, to find some other physician. He got Wagenheim, a poor substitute. In fact there was no substitute for Benedict. It may have been that luck favored him, but the old doctor seemed able to wrest

children from the clutches of the awful disease far oftener than other physicians. Derling felt that the angry old doctor had condemned his son to death. With the witlessness of a distracted man he tried to find Rose Hinch at her room on the main street, thinking Rose might plead for him with Benedict. He might have known Rose would be with 'Thusia in such an hour of trial. He went home, dreading to face Mary, and found Wagenheim doing what he could, which was little enough. Mary was not there.

When Wagenheim came Mary had guessed that Derling had not got Benedict, and she guessed why. She ran, half dressed and hatless as she was, all the way to the manse. In her agony she still thought clearly; Benedict would be there, and if he was not there David would be, and in David—calm and faithful to all his people even when they turned against him—she placed her hope. In the dark she could not find the bell and she was fumbling at the door when it opened and 'Thusia stood before her, silhouetted against the light. With the impulse of one suffering mother in the presence of another, Mary grasped 'Thusia's arms.

“'Thusia!” she cried. “My boy is dying and Benedict won't come. Can't you make him come? He knows, and he won't come!”

'Thusia drew back in horror.

“He knows? And he won't go?” she exclaimed. “But Mary, he must go! Why—why—but he must go, Mary! I don't understand! Benedict—won't—go?”

She turned and flew to the study where Benedict had usurped David's easy-chair. She stood before him, one mother pleading for another. No one but the three—Benedict and 'Thusia and Mary—will ever know what she said, but when she had said it old Benedict drew himself out of the chair and went with Mary.

A week later little Davy, 'Thusia's child, died. Mary was more fortunate; her boy recovered and although it was long before he was strong again Mary treasured him all the more. Rose Hinch, her work at David's ended, went to her and for many weeks was like another mother to the sick child.

But it was the night following old Benedict's denunciation of Derling and all the Hardcome clique that David Dean found a new supporter. The meeting that was to end his stay in Riverbank was to be held in Ned Long's office and David went early, not to be accused of cowardice. He left 'Thusia and Rose with the boy, drove old Benedict away, and went alone. He walked slowly, his head bowed and his hands clasped behind him, for he had no hope left. It was so he came to the foot of Ned Long's office stairs and face to face with old Sam Wiggett standing in the dark of the entry. He stopped short, for the bulky old man did not move aside.

“Huh!” growled the old lumberman. “So it's you, is it? What are you doing here?”

“There's a meeting—” David began.

“Meeting? No, by the eternal! there's not going to be any meeting, now nor ever! I'll throw them out neck and crop; I'll boot them out, but there'll be no meeting. Go home!” In the dark the heavy-jowled old man scowled at the slender young dominie. Suddenly he put his hand on David's shoulder. “Dean—Dean—” he said; “you and that little wife of yours—” That was all he could say. Mary's boy, at home, was making the awful struggle for life.

And there was no meeting. A month later Mr. and Mrs. Hardcome went to the Episcopalians, and a half year later to the Congregationalists, where they remained. There was a lull in the church quarrel during the days when little Davy was sickest, and while David and 'Thusia were in the first cruel days of grief. There were but few bitter enough to wish to take up the fight again against the sorrowing 'Thusia. The quarrel was buried with little Davy, for when David entered the pulpit again, and the congregation waited to learn how their leaders would lead them, the powerful man of the church decided for them. When David came down from the pulpit old Sam Wiggett, stolid, heavy-faced and thick-necked, waited for him at the head of the aisle and placed his arm around David's shoulders, and Mary Derling crossed the aisle and stood beside 'Thusia Dean.

David had won.

VII. MACK

DAVID had won. Except for the defection of the Hardcomes—who left behind them a feeling that they were trouble-makers and were not greatly regretted—the church continued its even tenor. It must always be a question, however, whether David would not have done better by losing. Riverbank grew

in population, as shown by the census, but the growth was not one to prosper the Presbyterian Church at Riverbank. The sawmills brought nearly all the newcomers—immigrants from Germany almost entirely—and these had their own churches. The increase in population offered little material with which to build up David's congregation.

At that time but few farmers, grown wealthy, moved into town. The town hardly realized, until the lumber business died, how contracted was the circle of its industries. The few men of wealth were all firmly affiliated with one church or another—as were also all the well-to-do—and, with no available new blood, it was inevitable that the numbers in the existing churches should remain almost stationary.

Liberality was not a trait of the wealthy of Riverbank at that day. Like old Sam Wiggett, those with money had had their hard grubbing at first and knew almost too well the value of a dollar. The ministers of the various churches in Riverbank were paid but paltry sums and their salaries were often in arrears.

Had David lost his fight and been driven from Riverbank he might, and probably would, have gone far. He preached well and was still young. It is hardly possible that he would have felt for a new church the affection he felt for the church at Riverbank, and he might have gone from church to church until he was in some excellent metropolitan pulpit. For Riverbank he felt, coming here so young, something of the affection of a man for his birthplace.

In the years following the church quarrel David began to feel the pinch of an inadequate remuneration. After little Roger was born 'Thusia was, for a year, more or less of an invalid, and a maid was a necessity. The additional drains on David's income, slight as they were, meant real hardship when he had with difficulty kept out of debt before. Two years later little Alice was born, and 'Thusia was kept to her bed, an invalid, longer than before. They were sad days for David. For a month 'Thusia hung between life and death, and Mary Derling and Rose Hinch, with old Dr. Benedict, spared neither time nor affection.

Rose Hinch put aside all remunerative calls and nursed 'Thusia night and day. Dr. Benedict was equally faithful, and the women of David's congregation deluged the manse with jellies, flowers, bowls of “floating island” and other dainties, but when 'Thusia was up and about again David faced a debt of nearly three hundred dollars. As soon as 'Thusia was able to stand the strain the church gave David a donation party. Pickles and preserves predominated, but a purse made a part of the donation and left David only some hundred and seventy or eighty dollars in debt.

This is no great sum nor did any of his creditors press him unduly for payment. His bills were small and scattered. He tried to pay them, but in spite of 'Thusia's greatest efforts each salary period saw an unpaid balance seldom smaller, and sometimes slightly greater, than the original debt. This debt worried David and 'Thusia far more than it worried his creditors—who worried not at all—but before long it seemed to become, as such things do, a part of life. David's bills, paid at one end and increased at the other, were never over three months in arrears. In Riverbank at that day this was considered unusually prompt pay. Accounts were usually rendered once a year. But the debt was always there.

The year her boy was three Mary Derling divorced her husband. For some time one of Derling's flirtations had been more serious than Mary had imagined. When she heard the truth she talked the matter over calmly with her father and her husband. All three were of one mind. Derling's father had consistently refused to give the son money and Sam Wiggett had again and again put his hand in his pocket to make good sums lost by Derling in ill-considered business ventures. The truth was that Derling's flirtations were costing too much, and he spent more than he could afford. Wiggett, to be rid of this constant drain, gave Derling a good lump sum and Mary kept the child. The divorce was granted quietly, no one knowing anything about it until it was all over. There was no scandal whatever. Derling went back to Derlingport and was soon forgotten, and Mary resumed her maiden name. More than ever, now, she took part in David's work, and her purse was always at his service for his works of charity. David, Rose Hinch and Mary were a triumvirate working together for the good.

At thirty-seven Dominie Dean was as fully a man as he ever would be. He was fated to cling always to his boyish optimism; never to age into a heavily authoritative head of a flock, with a smooth paunch over which to pass a plump hand as if blessing a satisfactory digestive apparatus. To the last day of his life he remained youthfully slender, and his clear gray eyes and curly hair, even when the latter turned gray, suggested something boyish.

It is inevitable that fifteen years of ministry shall either make or mar the man inside the minister. David Dean had ripened without drying into a hack of church routine. At thirty he had, without being aware of the fact, entered a new period of his ministry, and at thirty-seven, like a pilot who knows his ship, he was no longer prone to excitement over small difficulties. If he was no longer a flash of fire, he was a steadier flame.

In fifteen years David had come to love Riverbank, even to having a half-quizzical and smilingly philosophical love for the Wiggetts, Grims-bys and others who had once been thorns in his flesh. Their simple closefistedness, generosity based on ambition and transparent, harmless, hypocrisy were, after all, human traits, and while not exactly pleasant neither more nor less than part of the world in which David had his work to do. Wherever one went, or whatever work one undertook, there were Wiggetts and Hardcomes and Grimsbys. They were part of life. They were irritants, but it rested with David whether he should feel their irritation as a scratch or a tickle. Until he was thirty he had often smarted; now he smiled.

In the self-centered little town there were good people and bad and, as is the case everywhere, fewer actively vicious than we are pleased to assume. David cherished a philosophy of pity for these. If old Wiggett had so much good in him, and 'Thusia, who was now as faithful a wife and mother as Riverbank could boast, had once been on the verge of being cold-shouldered into a life of triviality, if not of shame, no doubt all these others, if they had been properly guided in the beginning, might have been as normal as old Mrs. Grelling, or the absolutely colorless Mr. Prell. With all this willingness to make allowances for the sinner, David had a hard, uncompromising, Presbyterian hatred for the sin. In one of his sermons he put it thus: “To sin is human; the sin is of the devil.” It was in this spirit David began his long fight against Mac-dougal Graham's personal devil.

When David Dean came to Riverbank Mack Graham had been a bright-eyed, saucy, curly-haired little fellow

of five or six; a “why!” sort of boy—“Why do you wear a white necktie? Why do you have to stand in the pulpit! Why did Mr. Wiggett get up and go out! Why's that horse standing on three legs!” Certain ladies of the church made a great pet of Mack and helped spoil him, for he was as handsome as he was saucy. An only son, born late in his parents' lives, they prepared the way for his disgrace. It may be well enough, as Emerson advises, to “cast the bantling on the rocks,” but leaving an only son to his own devices on the theory that he is the finest boy in creation and can do no wrong does not work out as well. At nineteen Mack was wild, unruly and drinking himself to ruin.

David's first knowledge of the state into which Mack had fallen came from 'Thusia. There had been one of those periodical church squabbles in which the elder members had locked horns with the younger and more progressive over some unimportant question that had rapidly grown vital, and David had, for a while, been busy impoverishing the little conflagration so that it might burn out the more quickly. The church was subject to these little affairs. In the fifteen years of his ministry David had seen the church change slowly as a natural result of children reaching maturity, and the passing of the aged. Some, who liked David's sermons left other churches and joined the congregation, and there were a few accretions of newcomers, but from the first the older members had resented any interference with their management on the part of new and younger members. A change in the choir, an effort to have the dingy interior of the church redecorated, any one of a thousand petty matters would, if suggested by the newer members, throw the older men into a line of battle.

It was, in a way, a quarrelsome church. It was, indeed, not only in Riverbank but throughout the country, a quarrelsome time. The first rills of broader doctrine were beginning to permeate the hot rock of petrified religion and where they met there was sure to be steam and boiling water and discomfort for the minister, whether he held with one side or the other, or tried to be neutral. The Riverbank church, because of the conservatism of the older members, was particularly prone to petty quarrels, and this was one of David's greatest distresses. At heart he was with those who favored the broader view, but he was able to appreciate the fond jealousy of the older men and women for old thoughts and ways.

It was after one of these quarrels, when he had found himself unduly busied healing wounds, that 'Thusia came running across from the Mannings', opposite the manse, and tapped on David's study door.

“Yes! Come in!” he said.

“David! It's Mack—Mack Graham—he is drunk!”

“Mack drunk!” David cried, for he could not believe he had heard aright. “Not our Mack!”

David, his lanky form slid down in his great chair so that he was sitting on the small of his back, had been thinking over his sermon for the next Sunday. No one could sit in David's great chair without sliding down and down and down into comfort or into extreme discomfort. It had taken David a long time to become part of the chair, so that he could feel the comfort of utter relaxation of body it demanded. In time the chair grew to be a part of the David we all knew. Those of us who knew him best can never forget him as he was when he sat in that old chair, his feet on the floor, his knees almost as high as his chin, his hands loosely folded over his waist, so that his thin, expressive thumbs could tap together in, emphasis as he talked, and his head forward so that his chin rested on the bosom of his shirt. Slumped down like this in the great chair, he talked to us of things we talked of nowhere else. We could talk religion with David when he was in his chair quite as if it were an interesting subject. Many of us can remember his smile as he listened to our feeble objections to his logic, or how he ran his hand through his curls and tossed one knee on top of the other when it was time to bring the full battery of his mind against us. It was while slumped into his great chair that David had most of his famous word battles with old Doc Benedict, and there, his fine brow creased, he listened when Rose Hinch told of someone in need or in trouble. When we happened in and David was out and we waited for him in his study that chair was the *emptiest* chair man ever saw in the world. The hollows of the threadbare old green rep always seemed to hunger for David as no other chair ever hungered for any other man. No other man or woman ever fitted the chair. I always felt like an overturned turtle in it, with my neck vainly trying to get my head above the engulfing hollow. Only David and little children felt comfortable in the chair, for in it little children—David's own or others—could curl up as comfortably as a kitten in a rug.

It was out of this chair David scrambled, full of fight, when 'Thusia brought him the news that Mack was drunk.

What 'Thusia had to tell David was clear enough and sad enough. From his great chair, when David raised his eyes, he could see the Mannings' house across the way, white with green blinds, cool in the afternoon shadows. Sometimes Amy Manning and sometimes her mother and sometimes both sat on the porch, busied with the trifles of needlework women love. It was always a pleasant picture, the house framed between the trunks of two great maples, the lawn crisply cut and mottled with sunshine and shadow, and at one side of the house a spot of geranium glowing red in the sun with, at the other side, a mass of shrubbery against which a foliage border of red and green fell, in the afternoons, just within the shadow and had all the quality of rich Italian brocade.

Sometimes 'Thusia would run across to visit a few minutes with Amy Manning, and sometimes Amy—her needlework gathered in her apron—would come running across to sit awhile with 'Thusia. The two were very fond. 'Thusia had reached the age when she was always humorously complaining about having to let out the seams of her last year's dresses, and Amy was hardly more than a girl, but propinquity or some contrast or similarity of disposition had made them the best of friends. Perhaps 'Thusia had never lost all her girlish qualities, and certainly Amy had been something of a woman even as a child. For all the years that divided them they were more nearly of an age than many who reckoned from the same birth year. Such friendships are far from rare and are often the best and most lasting.

David had seen Amy grow; had seen her fall bumping—a little ball of white—down the Manning porch steps and had heard (and still heard) the low-voiced and long lasting farewells she and Mack exchanged at the Mannings' gate, young love making the most of itself, and making a twenty-four hour tragedy out of a parting. The girl had been tall at fourteen and even then had certain womanly gestures and manners. She had always been a sweet girl, frank, gentle, even-tem-pered, with clear eyes showing she had a good brain back of their blue. She was always, as the saying is in Riverbank, “interested in church.” Her religion was something real

and vital. She accepted her faith in full and lived it, not bothering with the artificial agonies of soul that some youngsters find necessary. From a girl of this kind she had grown into a young woman, calm, clean, sterling. She had a healthy love of pleasure in any of the unforbidden forms, and, before Mack Graham slipped a ring on her finger, she liked to have half a dozen young whipper-snappers showing attention, quite like any other girl. She even liked, after that, to see that two or three of the whipper-snappers were jealous of Mack.

Mack was never jealous and could not be. He was one of the laughing, conquering hero kind. Amy was his from the moment he decided she was the finest girl in the world; he never considered any rival worth a worry. In olden days he would have been a carefree, swashbuckling D'Artagnan sort of fellow, and this, in nose-to-grindstone Riverbank, made him a great favorite and it led him to consort with a set of young fellows of the gayer sort with whom he learned to crook his elbow over a bar and continue to crook it until the alcohol had tainted his blood and set up its imperative cry for more. When David took up the fight for Mack this alcohol yearning had become well intrenched, and the conquering hero trait in the young fellow's character made the fight doubly hard, for Mack—more than any man I have ever known—believed in himself and that he could “stop off short” whenever he really wished.

The thing that, more than all else, kept Mack from rapid ruin was his engagement. Love has a certain power, and there are some men it will reform or hold from evil, but it could not hold Mack. The yearning for alcohol had found its place in his system before Amy had found her place in his heart. The very night of his engagement was celebrated in Dan Reilly's; Amy's kiss was hardly dry on his lips before he moistened them with whisky, and it probably never occurred to him that he was doing wrong. Before he had received all the congratulations that were pushed over the bar, however, he was sickeningly intoxicated. Amy's father, returning home from a late session with a trial balance, ran across Mack and two of his companions swaying perilously on the curb of Main Street, each maudlinly insisting that he was sober and should see the other two safely home. It was ridiculous and laughable, but Mr. Manning did not laugh; he knew Amy was more than fond of Mack. He told Amy about Mack before she had a good opportunity to tell him of her engagement. This was the next morning.

Mack, of course, came to see Amy that evening. In spite of a full day spent in trying to remove the traces of the night's spree he showed evidences that he had taken one or two drinks to steady his nerves before seeing Amy. He was a little too hilarious when he met her at the door, not offensive, but too talkative. It was a cruel position for the girl. She loved Mack and loved him tremendously, but she had more than common sense. She knew she had but one life to live, and she had set her ideals of happiness long before. A drunken husband was not one of them.

She talked to Mack. She did not have, to help her, an older woman's experience of the world, and she had against her the love that urged her to throw herself in Mack's arms and weep away the seriousness of the affair. She had against her, too—for it was against her with a man like Mack—her overflowing religious eagerness which would have led another girl to press the church and prayer upon him as a cure. No doubt it was a strange conglomeration of love, religion and common sense she gave him, but the steel frame of it all was that she could not marry a man who drank. She left no doubt of that.

“Why, that's all right, Amy, that's all right!” Mack said. “I'll quit the stuff. I can quit whenever I want to. Last night I just happened to meet the boys and I was feeling happy—say, no fellow ever had a bigger right to feel happy!—and maybe I took one or two too many. No more for little Mack!”

They left it that way and went into the dining room, where Mr. and Mrs. Manning were, to announce the engagement formally. It was two months before Mack toppled again. This was the first 'Thusia and David knew of it. 'Thusia and Amy had been sitting on the Mannings' porch when Mack came up. Anyone would have known he was intoxicated, he was so intoxicated he swayed. He talked, but his lips refused to fully form the words he tried to use. He had come up, he said, to convince the little rascal—meaning Amy—that it was all nonsense not to be married right away. When he tried to say “nonsense” he said, “nom-nom-nomsemse, all nomsemse.”

“Mack and I want to have a talk, 'Thusia,” Amy said, and 'Thusia gathered up her sewing and fled to David.

When 'Thusia had told David all she knew, David walked to the window, his thin hands clasped behind his back, and looked across toward the Mannings'. Amy had taken Mack into the house to hide his shame from chance passers-by. For several minutes David stood at the window while 'Thusia waited. He turned at last.

“It is my fault,” he said. “I should have thought of him.”

That was like David Dean. His shoulders were always overloaded with others' burdens, and it was like David to blame himself for having overlooked one burden more.

VIII. THE GREATER GOOD

MACK was not the only weak creature David was trying to help. Helpfulness was his life. I do not want you to think of David as eager for overwork, or as eager for greater burdens. He was always loaded down with others' fights against poverty, passion and sin because something within him always said: “This is one case in which you can be of actual help.” Before he was aware he would be enlisted in these individual battles, with all the close personal details that made them living sorrows.

Inside the broad fight the church was making to strengthen character and maintain morality these individual battles were fought. How could David stand aloof from the battle of old Mrs. Miggs against poverty, with her penchant for spending the alms she received for flummery dress; or from the battle of old

Wickham Reid against his insane inclination to suicide; or from the battles of all the backsliders of one kind and another; or from the battle of the Rathgebers against starvation; the battle of young Ross Baldwin against the trains of thought that were urging him to unbelief; or all the battles against alcohol! These were lame dogs David was helping over stiles. There were battles David won in an hour; there were other battles that lengthened into sieges, where sin and sinners "dug in" and struggled for years.

In some of these 'Thusia could help David, and she did help, most willingly, but 'Thusia had her own battles. Like most ministers' wives she had a constant battle to make David's inadequate salary meet the household expenses. When, after one of the usual church quarrels, those in favor of putting the choir in surplices won, 'Thusia was sorry she was not in the choir; her worn Sunday gown would not then be a weekly humiliation. Her hats, poor things! were problems as difficult to finance as a war. The grocer's bill was a monthly catastrophe; "the wood is low again, David," was an announcement 'Thusia felt was almost unkind. She spent five times as long turning a dress that was no pleasure after it was turned than she should have had to spend getting a new one. The lack of a few dollars to "do with" is the greatest waster of a faithful home-keeper's time.

The hope of a call to a church that will pay enough to supply those few dollars is one many ministers' wives cherish.

David picked up his hat and waited on his own porch until he saw Mack come from the Mannings' door; then he crossed the street.

"'Lo, dominie!" Mack said unsteadily. "Little girl's been giving me Hail Columbia. She's all right, dominie; fine little girl. I'm ashamed of myself. Told you so, didn't I, little girl?"

David put his hand on Mack's shoulder.

"She *is* a fine girl, Mack," he said. "There's no finer girl in America than Amy. Suppose we take a walk, Mack, a good long walk out into the country and tell each other just how fine Amy is." Mack smiled knowingly. He put a hand on David's shoulder, so that the two men stood like some living statue of "United we stand."

"Couldn't tell all about how fine a little girl she is in *one* walk," he said.

"Come!" said David.

He put his arm through Mack's, and thus he led him away. The assistance was necessary, for Mack was drunker than he had seemed. David led him to the country roads by the shortest route, that passing the cemetery, and when they were beyond the town he walked Mack hard. He let Mack do the talking and kept him talking of Amy, for of what would a lover, drunk or sober, rather talk than of his sweetheart! It was dark and long past David's supper hour when they reached the town again, and David drew Mack into the manse for a "bite." After they had eaten he led him into the study.

Mack was well past the unpleasant stage of his intoxication now, and with 'Thusia sewing in her little, low rocker and Mack in a comfortable chair and David slumped down in his own great chair, they talked of Amy and of a hundred things David knew how to make interesting. It was ten when 'Thusia bade them good-night and went out of the study.

"The Mannings are still up," said David, and Mack turned and looked out of the window.

"God, but I am a beast!" said Mack.

"You are worse than that, Mack, because you are a man," said David.

"Yes, I'm worse than a beast," said Mack. He meant it. David, deep in his chair, his eyes on Mack's face, tapped his thumbs slowly together.

"Mack," he asked, "just how much of a hold has this drink got on you!"

"Oh, I can stop any time I—"

"Yes, so can Doc Benedict," said David. "He stops whenever he has had his periodical and his nerves stop their howling for the alcohol. I don't mean that, Mack. Just how insistent is the wish for the stuff, when you haven't had it for a while, if it makes you forget Amy as you did to-day!"

"Well, it is pretty insistent," Mack admitted. "I don't mean to get the way I was this afternoon, dominie. Something starts me and I keep going."

David's thumbs tapped more and more slowly.

"You still have the eyes of a man, Mack," he said, "and you are still able to look me in the eyes like a man, Mack," he said. "We ought to be able to beat this thing. Now go over and say good-night to Amy. She'll sleep better for seeing you as you are now."

The next day David learned more, and so did 'Thusia. What David learned was that the two months that had elapsed between Mack's engagement spree and his next was the longest period the young fellow had been sober for some time, and that Mack had already been docketed in the minds of those who knew him best as a hard and reckless drinker. It meant the fight would be harder and longer than David had hoped. What 'Thusia learned was that Amy had had a long talk with Mack after he had left David.

"She did not tell him, David, but she told me, that she could not marry him if he let this happen. She can't marry a drunkard; no one would want her to; but if she throws him over he will be gone, David. She'll give him his chance, and she will help us—or let us help her—but when she is sure he is beyond help she will send him away. And when she sends him away—"

"If she sends him away one great influence will be lost," said David. "She must not send him away."

"If he comes to her drunk again," said 'Thusia, as one who has saved the worst tidings until last, "she will have no more to do with him."

In less than a week Mack fell again, and Amy, her heart well-nigh broken, gave him back his ring, and ended the engagement. Then, indeed, began the hardest fight David ever made for a man against that man's self. There were nights when David walked the streets with Mack until the youth fell asleep as he walked, and days when Mack lay half stupid in David's great chair while the dominie scribbled his sermon notes at the

desk beneath the spatter-work motto: “Keep an even mind under all circumstances.” Often David and old Doc Benedict sat in the same study and discussed Mack. David from the stand of one who wanted to save the young fellow, and Benedict as one who knew the alcohol because it had conquered him.

“Now, in my case,” the doctor would say, quite as if he were discussing another person; and, “but on the other hand I had this gnawing pain in my stomach, while—” and so on.

There were weeks when David felt he was making great progress and other weeks when he felt he was not holding his own, and some frightful weeks when Mack threw everything aside and plunged into unbridled dissipation. The periods after these sprees were deceptive. During them Mack seemed to want no liquor and vaunted his strength of will. He boasted he would never touch another drop.

There were also periods of overwhelming defeat, and periods when Mack was never drunk but never sober. Little by little, however, David felt he was making progress. It was slow and there were no “Cures” to work a sudden change, as there are now, but under the tottering structure of Mack's will David was slowly building a foundation of serious thought. Mack was changing. His dangerous and illusive bravado was bit by bit yielding to a desire to do what David wished.

It was slow work. Rather by instinct than by logic David saw that to save Mack he must make Mack like him better than he liked anyone in Riverbank. Our David had none of that burly magnetism that draws men in a moment; those of us who liked him best were those who had known him longest, and he was not the man a youth like Mack would instinctively choose as a dearest friend and most frequent companion. In David's mind the idea probably formed itself thus: “I must make Mack come to me as often as possible,” and, “Mack won't come unless he likes me.” He set about making Mack like him, and making him like 'Thusia and little Roger and baby Alice, and making him like the manse and all that was in it. With Amy turning her face from Mack, and Mack's mother varying between shrewish scolding and maudlin tears, and Mack's father wielding no weapon but a threat of disinheritance, it became necessary that Mack should have someone he wished to please, someone he liked and respected and wished to please more than he wished to please his insistent nerves. Each touch of eagerness added to Mack's face as he came up the manse walk David counted a gain.

And 'Thusia, beside what she did for Mack in making Mack love the manse and all those in it, worked with Amy and kept alive the flame of her love.

They were dear people, our Dominie Davy and his wife. In time little Roger became as eager to see Mack as Mack was to see David, and Mack became “Ungel Mack” to the child. The boy would climb the gate and cry, “Here cometh Ungel Mack!” with all the eagerness of joyful childhood. Sometimes when Mack was drunk, but not too drunk, David would lead Roger into the study, and the boy would say, “Poor Ungel Mack, you thick?” It all helped.

Together Mack and David made the fight. Amy, according to her light, did her part, too. She never fled from David's little porch when she happened to be there and saw Mack coming up the street. She always gave Mack her hand in frank and friendly manner. She did not let the other young fellows pay her attentions. It was as if Mack had never courted her; as if they were bound by a friendship that had never ripened into anything warmer but that might some day. Mack was fine about it; eager as he was to have Amy he held himself in check. Eventually it was a great thing for them both; it was as if they were living the difficult “getting acquainted” year that follows the honeymoon before the honeymoon itself. They got to know each other better, perhaps, than any Riverbank lovers had ever known one another.

It was one Sunday afternoon during this stage of Mack's fight, while Mack and 'Thusia and Amy were on the porch and David taking his between-sermon nap in his great chair, that the great opportunity came to David's door. It came in the form of a man of sixty years, silk-hatted and frock-coated. He walked slowly up the street from the direction of the town, and when he reached David's gate he paused and read the number painted on the riser of the porch step, opened the gate and entered. He removed his hat and extended his hand to 'Thusia.

“You are Mrs. Dean, I know,” he said, smiling. “My name is Benton, and I don't think you know me. Mr. Dean is in?”

There were many men of many kinds came to David's door from one end of a year to the other, but never had a man come whose face so quickened 'Thusia's heart. It was a strongly modeled face and gave an impression of power. The nose was too large and the lips were too large, so were the brows, so were all the features. It was a face that was too large for itself, it left no room for the eyes, which had to peer out as best they could from between the brows that crowded them from above, and the cheekbones that crowded them from below, but they were kind, keen, sane eyes; they were even twinkling eyes. The man was rather too stout and his skin was coarse-pored, almost as if pitted. 'Thusia had never seen a homelier man, and yet she liked him from the moment he spoke. It was partly his voice, full, soft and, in some way, satisfying. She felt he was a big man and a good man and an honest man.

“Yes, Mr. Dean is in,” she said. “I think he is napping. If you will just rest a minute until I see—”

David, as was his habit when his visitors were unknown to him, came to the door. 'Thusia slipped into the kitchen. The day was hot and Mr. Benton was hot, and there were lemons and ice in the refrigerator, perhaps a pitcher of lemonade all ready to serve with thin cakes.

“Mr. Benton, my wife said, I think!” asked David. “Shall we sit out here or go inside!”

“Might go inside,” said the visitor, and David led the way into the study. Mr. Benton placed his hat on the floor beside the chair David placed for him, unbuttoned his coat and breathed deeply.

“Quite a hill you are perched on here,” he said. “Fat man's misery on a day like this. I suppose you saw me in church this morning!”

“Yes. I tried to reach you after the service, but you slipped out.”

“I ran away,” admitted Mr. Benton. “I wanted to think that sermon over and cool down after it. It was a good sermon.”

David waited.

“I'm a lawyer,” said Mr. Benton, “and I'm cracked up as quite an orator in one way and another, and I know

that some of the things that sound best hot from the lips don't amount to so much an hour later. That was a good sermon, then and now! It was a remarkable sermon. I want you to come to Chicago and preach that same sermon to us in the Boulevard Church next Sunday, Mr. Dean."

David, in his great chair, tapped his thumbs together and looked at Mr. Benton. He was trying to keep an even mind under circumstances that made his pulse beat almost wildly.

"You know now, as well as you ever will, why I'm here, I think," said Mr. Benton. "We are looking for the right man for our church, and I came here to hear you. I think you are the man we want. I can almost say that if you preach as well for us next Sunday as you did to-day we will hardly dare let you come back for your household goods. Matter of fact, the man I select is the man we want."

"I know the church," said David slowly. "It is a splendid church."

"It *is* a good church," said Mr. Benton. "It is a strong church and a large church. It is a church that needs a young man and a church in which you will have opportunity for the greater good a man such as you always desires. I jotted down a few figures and so on—"

Holding the paper in his hand Mr. Benton read the figures; figures of membership, average attendance morning and evening, stipend, growth, details even to the number of rooms in the manse and what the rooms were.

"The church pays the salary of the secretary," he added.

David's thumbs were pressed close together. His mind passed in rapid review the patched breeches little Roger wore during the week, the pitiful hat 'Thusia tried to make respectable, her oft-remodeled gowns. It was comfort to the verge of luxury Mr. Benton was offering, as compared with Riverbank. It was more than this: it was a broader field, a greater chance.

Slumped down in his great chair, his eyes closed, David thought. It would mean freedom from the petty quarrels that vexed the church at Riverbank; it would mean freedom from cares of money. Out of the liberal stipend Mr. Benton had mentioned they might even put aside a goodly bit. It would mean he could start anew with a clean slate and be rid of the stupid interference of all the Hardcome and Grimsby tribe. 'Thusia would be with him, and Rose Hinch—who had become, in a way, a lay sister of good works, helping him with his charities—could be induced to follow him. Then he thought of old Mrs. Miggs, and of Wickham Reid, of the Rathgebers and Ross Baldwin, and all those whose fight he was fighting in Riverbank. And Mack! What would become of Mack!

Through the window he heard the voices of Mack and Amy.

"It is quite unexpected," David said, opening his eyes. "I'll have to—you have no objection to my speaking to my wife?"

The tinkling of ice in a pitcher sounded at the door.

"By all means, speak to her," said Mr. Benton, and as 'Thusia tapped David arose and opened the door. 'Thusia entered.

"'Thusia," David said, "Brother Benton is from the Boulevard Church in Chicago. He wants me to preach there next Sabbath and, if the congregation is satisfied, I may be offered the pulpit." The color slowly mounted from 'Thusia's throat to her brow. She stood holding the small tin tray, and the glasses trembled against the pitcher. It did not need the figures Mr. Benton reread to tell 'Thusia all the opportunity meant. Mr. Benton ceased, and still 'Thusia stood holding the tray. Her eyes left Mr. Benton's uncouth face and found David's eyes.

"It—it's wonderful, David," she said steadily, "but of course there's Mack—and Amy!"

So Mr. Benton and the great opportunity went back to Chicago, after a sip or two of 'Thusia's lemonade, and David dropped back into his great chair and his old life of helpfulness, and 'Thusia went out on the porch and smiled at Amy, and they all had lemonade.

From the day Mr. Benton entered David's door Mack never touched the liquor again. It was a year before Amy felt sure enough to let him slip the ring on her finger again, but it was as if David's sacrifice had worked the final cure. Perhaps it did. Perhaps Mack, hearing, as all of us did, of the great chance David had put aside, guessed what none of us guessed—that it was for him David remained in Riverbank. Perhaps that was why, when our church wanted to throw David aside in his old age like a worn-out shoe, Mack Graham fought so hard and successfully to secure for David the honorary title and the pittance.

IX. LUCILLE HARDCOME

IN spite of all his efforts David could not shake off his pitiful little burden of debt. After little Alice 'Thusia bore him two more children; they died before the month, and the last left 'Thusia an invalid, and even Doctor Benedict lacked the skill to aid her. A maid—hired girl, we called them in Riverbank—became a necessity. The church did what it thought it could, gave David a few more dollars yearly, and sympathized with him.

To David the misfortune of 'Thusia's invalidism came so gradually that he felt the weight of it bit by bit and not as a single great catastrophe. She was "not herself" and then "not quite well" and then, before he was fully aware, he was happy when she had a "good" day.

'Thusia did not complain. With her whole heart she wished she was well and strong, but she did not allow her troubles to sour her mind or heart. Mary Derling and Rose Hinch came oftener to see her. 'Thusia, unable

to do her own housework, had more time to use her hands. Once, when some petty bill worried David, she asked if she could not take in sewing, but David would not hear of it. There are some things a dominie's wife cannot be allowed to do to help her husband. About this time 'Thusia did much sewing for the poor, who probably worried less over their finances than David worried over his, and who, as likely as not, criticized the stitches 'Thusia took with such loving good will.

David was then a fine figure of a man in the forties. Always slender, he reached his greatest weight then; a little later worry and work wore him down again. If his kindly cheerfulness was at all forced we never guessed it. He was the same big-hearted, friendly Davy he had always been, better because more mature. As a preacher he was then at his best. It was at this time Lucille Hardcome's life first brought her in touch with David.

Lucille was a widow. Seth Hardcome and his wife, Ellen, had long since left our church in a huff, going to another congregation and staying there. Lucille was, in some sort, Seth's cousin-in-law, however that may be. She came to Riverbank jingling golden bracelets and rustling silken garments, and for a while attended services with Seth and his wife, but something did not suit her and she came to us. We counted her a great acquisition, for she had taken the old Ware house on the hill—one of the few big “mansions” the town boasted.

In a few weeks after her arrival Lucille Hardcome was well known in Riverbank. She had money. Her husband—and Riverbank never knew anything else about him—-had been an old man when she married him. He had died within the year. No doubt, having had that length of time in which to become acquainted with Lucille's vagaries, he was willing enough to go his way. Within a month after she had installed herself in the Ware house Lucille had her “hired man”—they were not called “coachmen” until Lucille came to Riverbank—and a fine team of blacks. Her low-hung carriage was for many years thereafter a common sight in Riverbank. As Lucille furnished it her house seemed to us palatial in its elegance. It overpowered those who saw its interior; she certainly managed to get everything into the rooms that they would hold—even to a grand piano and a huge gilded harp on which she played with a great show of plump arms. All this mass of furnishings and bric-à-brac was without taste, but to Riverbank it was impressive. She had, I remember, a huge cuckoo clock she had bought in Switzerland, but which, being of unvarnished wood, did not suit her taste, so she had it gilded, and hung it against a plaque of maroon velvet. She painted a little, on china, on velvet and on canvas, and her rooms soon held a hundred examples of her work, all bad. Unless you were nearsighted, however, you could tell her roses from her landscapes even from across the room, for she painted large. It was the day of china plaques, and Lucille had the largest china plaque in Riverbank. It was three feet across. It was much coveted.

On her body she crowded clothes as she crowded her house with furnishings. She was permanently overdressed. She was of impressive size and she made herself larger with ruffles and frills. Her hair was always overdone—she must have spent hours on it—and if a single hair managed to exist unwaved, uncurled or untwisted it was not Lucille's fault. Yet somehow she managed to make all this flummery and curliness impressive; in her heart she hoped the adjective “queenly” was applied to her, and it was! That was before the days of women's clubs, but Lucille had picked up quite a mass of impressive misinformation on books, painting and like subjects. In Riverbank she was able to make this tell.

With all this she was politely overbearing. She let people know she wanted to have her way—and then took it! From the first she pushed her way into prominence in church matters, choosing the Sunday school as the door. The Sunday school fell entirely under her sway in a very short time, partly because Mrs. Prell, the wife of the superintendent, had social ambitions, and urged Mr. Prell to second Lucille's wishes, and partly through Lucille's mere desire to lead. She began as leader of the simple Sunday school music, standing just under the pulpit and beating out the time of

“Little children, little children,
Who love their Redeemer—”

with an arm that jingled with bracelets as her horses' bridles jingled with silver-plated chains.

Her knowledge of music was slight—she could just about pick out a tune on her harp by note—but she called in Professor Schwerl and made him pound further knowledge into her head. The hot-tempered old German did it. He swore at her, got red in the face, perspired. It was like pouring water on a duck's back, but some drops clung between the feathers, and Lucille knew how to make a drop do duty as a pailful. She took charge of the church music, reorganized the choir, and made the church think the new music was much better, than the old.

And so it was. She added Professor Schwerl and his violin to the organ. Theoretically this was to increase the volume of sweet sounds; in effect it made old Schwerl the hidden director of the choir, with Lucille as the jingling, rustling figurehead. So, step by step, Lucille became a real power in the church. The trustees and elders had little faith in her wisdom; they had immense respect for her ability to have her own way, whether it was right or wrong.

Lucille, having won her place in the church, set about creating a “salon.” Her first idea was to make her parlor the gathering place of all the wit and wisdom of Riverbank, as Madame de Staël made her salon the gathering place of the wit and wisdom of Paris. Perhaps nothing gives a better insight into the character of Lucille than this: her attempt to create a salon—of which she should be the star—in Riverbank. She soon found that the wit and wisdom of our small Iowa town was not willing to sit in a parlor and talk about Michael Angelo. The women were abashed before the culture they imagined Lucille to have. The men simply did not come. Not to be defeated, Lucille organized a “literary society.” By including only a few of her church acquaintances she gave the suggestion that the organization was “exclusive.” By setting as the first topic the poems of Matthew Arnold—then hardly heard of in Riverbank—she suggested that the society was to be erudite. The combination did all she had hoped. Admission to Lucille's literary society became Riverbank's most prized social plum.

Few in Riverbank had any real affection for Lucille, but affection was not what she sought. She wanted

prominence and power, and even the men who had scorned her salon idea soon found she had become, in some mysterious way, an “influence.” The State senator, when he came to Riverbank, always “put up” at Lucille's mansion instead of at a hotel as formerly. When the men of the town wished signatures to a petition, or money subscriptions to any promotion scheme—such as the new street railway—the first thought was: “Get Lucille Hardcome to take it up; she'll put it through.” In such affairs she did not bother with the lesser names; some fifteen or twenty of the “big” men she would write on her list and for a few days her blacks and her low-hung carriage would be seen standing in front of prominent doors, and Lucille would have secured all, or nearly all, the signatures she sought.

At first Lucille paid little attention to David. She treated him much as she treated the colorless Mr. Prell, *our* Sunday school superintendent: as if he were a useful but unimportant church attachment, but otherwise not amounting to much. It was not until the affair of the church organist showed her that David was a worthy antagonist that Lucille thought of David as other than a sort of elevated hired man.

Far back in the days when David came to Riverbank, Miss Hurley (Miss Jane Hurley, not Miss Mary) had volunteered to play the organ when Mrs. Dougal gave it up because of the coming of the twins. That must have been before the war; and the organ was a queer little box of a thing that could be carried about with little trouble. It was hardly better than a pitch pipe. It served to set the congregation on (or off) the key, and was immediately lost in the rough bass and shrill treble of the congregational vocal efforts. Later, when the Hardcomes came to Riverbank and Ellen Hardcome's really excellent soprano suggested a quartet choir, the “new” organ had been bought. It was thought to be a splendid instrument. In appearance it was a sublimated parlor organ, a black walnut affair that had Gothic aspirations and arose in unaccountable spires and points. We Presbyterians were properly proud of it. With our choir of four, our new organ and Miss Hurley learning a new voluntary or offertory every month or so, we felt we had reached the acme in music. We used to gather around Miss Hurley after one of her new “pieces” and congratulate her, quite as we gathered around David and congratulated him when he gave us a sermon we liked especially well.

The Episcopalians gave us our first shock when they built their little church—spireless, indeed, so that their bell had to be set on a scaffold in the back yard—but with a pipe organ actually built into the church. We figured that seven, at least, of our congregation went over to the Episcopalians on account of the pipe organ. The Methodists were but a year or two later. I do not remember whether the Congregationalists were a year before or a year after the Methodists, but the net result was that we Presbyterians and the United Brethren were the last to lag along, and the United Brethren had neither our size nor wealth. Not that our wealth was much to brag of.

After her typhoid Ellen Hardcome's voice broke—the disease “settled in her throat,” as we said then—and she stepped out of the choir to make way for little Mollie Mitchell, who sang like a bird and had a disposition like one of Satan's imps. Hardly had Lucille Hardcome taken charge of our church music than she began her campaign for a pipe organ. By that time the “new” organ was the “old” organ and actually worse than the old “old” organ had ever been. It was in the habit of emitting occasional uncalled-for groans and squeaks and at times all its efforts were accompanied by a growl like the drone of a bagpipe. The blind piano tuner had long since refused to have anything more to do with it, and Merkle, the local gun and lock smith, tinkered it nearly every week. It was comical to see old Schwerl roll his eyes in agony as he played his violin beside it.

As Merkle said, repairing musical instruments was not his business, and he had to “study her up from the ground.” He did his best, but probably the logic of his repair work was based on a wrong premise. We never knew, when Merkle entered the church on a Saturday to correct the trouble that evolved during Friday night's choir practice, what the old black walnut monstrosity would do on Sunday.

All through this period, as through her struggles with the old “old” organ, Miss Hurley labored patiently. “I couldn't do so and so,” old Merkle used to tell her, “so you want to look out and not do so and so.” Perhaps it meant she must pump with one foot, or not touch some three or four of the “stops.” She did her best and, but for the rankling thought that the other churches were listening to glorious pipe organ strains, I dare say we would have been satisfied well enough. I always loved to see the gentle little lady seat herself on the narrow bench, arrange her skirts, place her music on the rack and then look up to catch the back of Dominie Dean's curly-haired head in her little mirror.

When Lucille Hardcome announced that she just couldn't stand the squeaky old organ any longer and that the church must have a pipe organ if she had to work night and day for it, we knew the church would have a pipe organ, for Lucille—as a rule—got whatever she set her heart on.

Lucille's announcement threw little Miss Jane into a flutter of excitement. It was as if someone gave a gray wren a thimbleful of champagne. Miss Jane was all chirps of joy and tremblings of the hand. She hardly knew whether to be jauntily joyous or crushed with fear. Her eyes were unwontedly bright, and her cheeks, which had not glowed for years, burned red. The very Friday night that Lucille condemned the old organ and proclaimed a new one Miss Jane, walking beside David Dean (although she felt more like skipping for joy), asked David a daring question.

“Won't it be wonderful to have a real organ—a pipe organ!” she exclaimed. “It means so much in the musical service, Mr. Dean. I try to make the old organ praise the Lord but—of course I don't mean anything I shouldn't—but sometimes I think there is no praise left in the old thing! I can do so much more if we have a pipe organ!”

“I imagine you sometimes think the Old Harry is in the old walnut case, Miss Jane,” said David.

“Oh, I would never think that!” cried Miss Jane, and then she laughed a shamed little laugh. “That is just what sister Mary said last Sunday when the bass growled so!”

She walked a few yards in silence, nerving herself to ask the question.

“Mr. Dean,” she said, “do you think it would be all right—do you think it would be proper—if I asked Mademoiselle Moran to give me a few lessons?”

She almost held her breath waiting for David's answer. It seemed to her, after the question had left her mouth, that it had been a bold, almost brazen, thing to ask David. It seemed almost shameful to ask the dominie such a question, for, you understand, Mademoiselle Moran was a Catholic, and not only a Catholic

but the niece of Father Moran, the priest, and his housekeeper, and the organist of St. Bridget's. The lessons would mean that Miss Jane must go to St. Bridget's; they would be given on the great organ there, with the image of the Virgin, and of St. Bridget, and the gaunt crucifix, and the pictures portraying the Stations of the Cross, and the confessionals, and all else, close at hand. To ask the dominie if one might voluntarily venture into the midst of all that!

“Have you spoken to her yet?” asked David, surprisingly unshocked.

“No! Oh, no! I would not until I had asked you, of course!” gasped Miss Jane. “Why, I haven't had time! I only knew we were going to have a pipe organ this evening!”

“Perhaps you had better let me arrange it,” said David. “I think perhaps Doctor Benedict can manage it, although Mademoiselle is giving up her pupils, Benedict says. Father Moran is worried about her health; Benedict says Mademoiselle is trying to do too much. She is giving up all but her two or three most promising pupils. But in a case like this—Shall I speak to Benedict?”

“Oh, will you? Will you?” cried little Miss Jane ecstatically. “Oh, if you will!”

David smiled in the darkness. But a day or two before, when Doc Benedict had dropped into the manse to sit awhile in David's study under the motto “Keep an even mind under all circumstances,” David had scolded him whimsically for unfaithfulness.

“I don't see you once in a blue moon any more, Benedict,” he had said. “I grow stale for someone to wrangle with. You're a false and fickle friend. Who is your latest passion? Father Moran?”

“Don't you say anything against Father Moran!” Benedict threatened. “It's a pity you're not both Presbyterians, or both Catholics, Davy. You'd love each other. You'd have some beautiful fights. I can't hold my own against him; he's too much for me. He's a fine old man, Davy,” he added, and then, smiling, “and he knows good sherry and good cigars.”

“What do you talk about, over your good sherry and good cigars?” asked David.

“Last night,” said Benedict, “it was music. He had me there, Davy. No man has a right to know as much about as many things as Father Moran knows. Of course, if I had a niece like Mademoiselle I might know about Beethoven and Chopin and all those fellows. He scolded me about our church music. I went for him, of course, on that; bragged about our choir. 'Ah, yes I' he smiled through that thick, brown beard of his; 'and I 'ave heard of your organ!' He gave me an imitation of it through his nose. Then he called Mademoiselle and took me into the church and made her play a thing or two—an 'Elevation' and an 'Ave Maria.' He had me, all right, Davy. It was holy music, Davy!”

So David, remembering, spoke to Benedict about Miss Jane's desire, and Benedict spoke to Father Moran. The old doctor knew just how to handle the good-natured priest, whose eyes were deep in crow's-feet from countless quizzical smiles.

“Why, Father, you yourself were howling and complaining about our church music the other night! Scolding me, you were. And now I give you a chance to better the thing you scolded me about, and you hesitate! Oh, tut! about Mademoiselle's health! Let her give up another of her fancy, arts-and-graces pupils. I prescribe Miss Hurley for Mademoiselle's health. And don't you dare go against her physician's orders!”

Father Moran chuckled in his black beard and his eyes twinkled. He loved to have anyone pretend to bulldoze him; he was a beloved autocrat among his own people.

“You're afraid!” declared Benedict. “You're afraid that when we get our new organ and Miss Hurley learns to play it your Mademoiselle will be overshadowed. We'll show you!”

“Afraid!” chuckled Father Moran. “You heard Mademoiselle play, and you say I am afraid! *Bon!* Ex-cellent! Come, we will interview Mademoiselle!”

So it was arranged. Mademoiselle would take no remuneration. She patted little Miss Hurley on the thin shoulder and smiled, but she would not hear of payment.

“N', no!” she declared. “I teach you because I like you, because I like all praise music shall be good music. N', no! We will not think about money; we will think about great, grand music. You will be my leetle St. Cecilia; yes?” Not until she had consulted David, and had been assured that accepting such a favor from the niece of the priest was not at all wrong, would Miss Hurley agree. Then the lessons began, Miss Hurley always “my leetle St. Cecilia” to Mademoiselle. They were a strongly contrasted pair: Mademoiselle Moran stout, black-haired, with powerful arms and fingers; Miss Hurley a mere wisp of humanity, hair already gray, and with scarce strength to handle the stops and keys.

When first she entered the huge St. Bridget's Miss Hurley cringed, as if she entered a forbidden place. The great stained windows permitted but little light to enter; here and there some woman knelt low on the floor, crossing herself. Mademoiselle walked to the organ loft with a brisk, businesslike tread and Miss Hurley followed her timidly. From somewhere Father Moran appeared, smiling, and patted Miss Hurley's shoulder. No man had patted Miss Hurley's shoulder for many years, but she was far from resenting it. It was like a good wish. Then Mademoiselle reached up and drew the soft green curtains across the front of the organ loft and lo! they were alone. The lesson began.

It needed but that one first lesson to tell Mademoiselle that her “leetle St. Cecilia” would never play “great, grand music” on a large pipe organ. It was as if you were to undertake to teach a child trigonometry and discovered he did not know the multiplication table beyond seven times five. Miss Hurley hardly knew the rudiments of music; harmony, thoroughbass and all the deeper things, that Mademoiselle had learned so long ago that they were part of her nature now, were absolute Greek to Miss Hurley. But, worse than all this, Miss Hurley had not the physique of an organist. She was physically inadequate.

Such news invariably leaks out. Long before Lucille Hardcome had managed to coax the pipe organ out of Sam Wiggett's purse it was known that Miss Hurley was “taking lessons” from Mademoiselle and that she was not strong enough to play a pipe organ properly. For her part, had Miss Hurley been any other person, Mademoiselle would have thrown up her hands and turned her back on the impossible task, but she liked Miss Jane sincerely. I think she loved the little old maid. It must be remembered that St. Bridget's was Irish and in those days many of the Irish in Riverbank were fresh from the peat bogs and potato fields, and

Mademoiselle, before coming to care for her uncle's house, had lived in the midst of France's best. It is no wonder she craved even such crambs of culture as Miss Hurley had gathered or that she loved the little woman. In return she gave Miss Jane all she could.

There were intricacies of stops and keys, foot pedaling and fingering, that must be explained and practiced, but Mademoiselle early told Miss Hurley:

“St. Cecilia, you are not, remembair, the grand organist; you are the sweet organist. For me”—she made the organ boom with a tumult of sound—“for me, yes! I am beeg and strong. But, for you”—she played some deliciously dainty bit—“because you are gentle and sweet!”

And all the while Miss Jane and Mademoiselle were having their little love affair and their struggles with stops and pedals and keys, behind the green curtain of St. Bridget's organ loft, Lucille Hardcome was bringing all her diplomacy to bear against old Sam Wiggett's pocket. For her own part she made a direct assault: “Mr. Wiggett, you're going to give us a pipe organ!” She kept this up day in and day out: “Have you decided to give us that pipe organ?” and, “I haven't seen the pipe organ you are going to give us. Where is it?” Old Wiggett, who liked Lucille, chuckled. Perhaps he knew from the first that he would give the organ. Lucille set his daughter, Mary Derling, to coaxing, and primed unsuspecting old ladies to speak to Mr. Wiggett as if the organ was a certainty. She had Mort Walsh, the architect, prepare a plan for taking out a portion of the rear wall of the church without disturbing the regular services. She took a group of ladies to Derlingport to hear the pipe organ in the Presbyterian Church there. They returned enthusiastic advocates of an organ for our church, and Lucille, knowing Sam Wiggett, and sure the old fellow would love to have his name attached forever to some one big thing in the church, set the ladies to raising money for a pipe organ. This was a hopeless task and Lucille knew it. It was done to frighten Mr. Wiggett and make him hurry with his gift, lest he lose the opportunity.

One result of the trip to Derlingport can be stated in the words of Mrs. Peter Minch, uttered as she came down the steps of the Derlingport church:

“Well, Lucille, if we have an organ like that we will have to have more of an organist than Jane Hurley!”

“Of course!” Lucille had said. “Jane Hurley and a pipe organ would be ridiculous!”

So this was added to David's worries. The choir of four and Lucille—as musical dictator of the church—spoke to David almost immediately about the retirement of Miss Hurley. It would be better to say perhaps, that they spoke to him about the manner in which money could be raised to pay a satisfactory organist. They did not consider Miss Hurley as a possibility at all. She had done well enough with the old organ, and it had been pleasant for her, and well for the church, that she had been permitted to play the squeaky old instrument without pay, but she simply would not do when it came to the new organ. David listened, his head resting in his hand and one long finger touching his temple. He saw at once that a quarrel was in the air.

“You did not know,” he asked, “that Miss Hurley has been taking lessons from Mademoiselle Moran for a month or more!”

“Oh, that!” said Lucille. “That's nonsense! If she wants to play 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' for the Sunday school, I don't object; but church music! We have heard the organist at Derlingport!”

“I think,” said David, “that for a while at least, if we get a pipe organ, Miss Hurley should be our organist. She is looking forward to it. She is taking lessons with that in view!”

Lucille said nothing, but in her eyes David saw the resolve to be rid of Miss Hurley.

“Miss Jane understands, I think,” David said, “that she is to continue as our organist. At no advance in salary,” he smiled.

Lucille closed her mouth firmly. As clearly as if she had spoken, David read in her face: “Well, if that's who is to play the pipe organ, I shan't try to get one!” He did not wait for her to speak.

“I feel,” he said, “that if Miss Hurley is to be thrown out after so many years of patient and faithful struggling with the miserable instruments she has had to do with, it would be better to let the whole idea of having a pipe organ drop. At any rate, the chance of getting one seems small.”

“Oh, we're going to have one!” exclaimed Lucille, caught in the trap he had prepared for her spirit of opposition. “I get what I go after, Mr. Dean.”

X. LUCILLE DISCOVERS DAVID

IT was no new thing for David to feel the opposition of his choir; indeed, is not the attitude of minister and choir in many churches usually that of armed neutrality? How many ministers would drop dead if all the bitterness that is put into some anthems could kill! To the minister the choir is often a body of unruly artistic temperaments bent on mere secular display of its musical talents; to the choir the minister is a crass utilitarian, ignorant in all that relates to good music, and stubbornly insisting that the musical program for each day shall be twisted to illustrate some point in his sermon. To some ministers it has seemed that eternal vigilance alone prevented the choir from singing the latest “Gem from Comic Opera”; some choirs have felt that unless they battled strenuously they would be tied down to “Old Hundred” and “Blest Be the Tie that Binds,” by a minister who did not know one note from another. How many ministers have, early in November, begun to dread the inevitable quarrel over the choice of Christmas music!

Lucille Hardcome was a large woman and much given to violent colors, but, to do her justice, she managed them with a *chic* that put them above any question of mere good taste. She clashed a green and purple

together, and evolved something that was "style" and that had to be recognized as "style." In a day when women were wearing gray and black striped silks, as they were then, Lucille would concoct with her dressmaker something in orange and black, throw in a bow or two of cerulean blue, and appear well dressed. She could wear a dozen jangling bracelets on her plump arm and leave the impression that she was not overornamented, but ultrafashionable. You would have said, to see her among the less violently garbed women of the church, that she was one who would win only by bold thrusts. On the contrary, she could be a wily diplomatist.

Just as old Sam Wiggett received from unexpected quarters questions regarding the pipe organ, so David began to hear questions regarding the organist. Some asked him eagerly if it were true an organist was to be brought from Chicago; some asked if it were true that Miss Hurley had refused to play the big new organ. Presently he heard the name of the young man who was to be brought from Chicago to supplant Miss Hurley; then that the young man was to have a position in Sam Wiggett's office if he couldn't get into Schultz' music store.

It was soon after the arrangements for the purchase of the pipe organ had been made (Sam Wiggett giving in at last) that Miss Jane herself came to David. She had been ill two days, confined to her bed, although she did not tell David so. Partly, no doubt, her little breakdown had come because of the overhard work she was doing with Mademoiselle, but mainly it had been the shock of the word that she was to be pushed aside. Her disappointment had been overwhelming, for little Miss Jane had coveted with all her heart the joy of playing the great, new organ. The news that another was to be organist came like the blow of a brutal fist between her eyes, and she went down. For two days she fought against what she felt must be her great selfishness and then, still weak but ready to do what she felt was her duty, she went to David. 'Thusia, herself weak, led her to David's study door and left her there. David let her enter and closed the door after her. He placed a chair for her. The light fell on her face, and as he saw the marks her struggle had left there he threw up his head and drew a deep breath. All the fight there was in him surged up, and he cast his eyes at the spatter-work motto above his desk before he dared speak. His gray eyes glowed cold fire.

"Not on your own account, but on mine," he said, "you will go on just as you have been going, Miss Jane Hurley! You are making some progress under Mademoiselle Moran!"

"Why—yes—yes—" Miss Jane stammered, twisting her handkerchief, "but—"

"Then you are all the organist the church wants or needs or shall have, unless it wants and needs and has a new dominie! I dare say we can manage to praise the Lord with your fingers and soul quite as well as with Samuel Wiggett's money and Lucille Hardcome's ambition."

"But I can't!" said Miss Jane. "I can't, when they all want a new organist; they'll hate me. You don't know, Mr. Dean, what it would be to sit there and feel their hate against my back. You'll think I'm foolish, but if I could face them it would be different; but to sit there and try to play when everyone in the church doesn't want me, and to feel every eye behind me hostile! I can't, Mr. Dean!"

David opened the study door.

"'Thusia!" he called, and his wife answered. "Who do you want as your organist!" he called. "Why, Miss Jane, of course!" 'Thusia replied. "There's one who will not look hatred at your back," said David. "And I'm two. And I can take little Roger to church, and that will be three. And I dare say we can find others. 'Thusia should know. Who does Mrs. Merriwether want, Thusia!" he called.

"She wants Miss Jane," said 'Thusia promptly. They joined 'Thusia where she lay on her couch. "Are you worried about what Lucille has been suggesting, Miss Hurley! Dear me! you mustn't let anything like that worry you! Why, someone always wants something else. If David and I worried about what everyone wants we would do nothing but worry!"

"But Mr. Wiggett is giving the organ, and Lucille really got it for the church—" Miss Hurley faltered.

"I know," said 'Thusia, "but David wants you to be the organist. That is both sides and the middle of the matter for me. David always knows what is best!"

"So, you see," said David smiling, "we've had our little tempest in a teapot for nothing. 'Thusia, have you a teapot with something other than tempests in it? A cup might refresh Miss Jane."

Her talk with 'Thusia did more than anything David could have said, perhaps, to convince Miss Jane that she need not bury her fond desire, for 'Thusia could talk as one woman talks to another. As she talked Miss Jane saw things as they were, the great majority of the congregation wishing to retain Miss Jane, with but a few of the richer and display-loving wanting anything else. 'Thusia was able to convey this without saying it. She made it felt, as a woman can when she chooses. A name here, a name there, an incidental mention of Lucille's unfortunate attempt to put her coachman in livery, and Miss Jane saw the church as it was—a few moneyed "pushers" and the body of silent, sincere worshipers. More than all else 'Thusia herself seemed to embody the spirit of the congregation. It suddenly occurred to Miss Jane that, after all, the quiet people who were her friends were the real church. And this was true. She left quite at peace with the idea that she was to play the new organ when it was installed.

And then David began his fight for Miss Jane, which became a fight against Lucille Hardcome. Lucille fought her battle well, but the odds were against her. As against the few who wanted a hired organist at any price there were an equal few who still questioned the propriety of having a new organ at all. Against her were still others who would have been with her had she and her warmest supporters not so often tried to "run" everything connected with the church, but the overwhelming sentiment was that as Miss Jane was "taking lessons" from the best organist in Riverbank, and as Miss Jane had always been organist, and as hiring one would be an added expense, Miss Jane ought to stay, at least until it was quite evident that she would not do at all. Even Professor Schwerl told David, albeit secretly, that he was for Miss Jane, his theory being that it was better to hear a canary bird pipe prettily than to listen to any half-baked virtuoso Lucille was likely to secure.

Thus it came to the night before the day when Professor Hedden, coming from a great city, was to introduce the congregation to its new organ. That afternoon Mademoiselle had given Miss Jane a final lesson

—final with the promise of more later—and had kissed her cheek. Father Moran had patted her shoulder, too, wishing her, in his quaint English, good success, offering her a glass of sherry, which of course she declined, making him laugh joyously as he always did at "these Peelgrims Fathers," as he good-naturedly called those he considered puritanical. Miss Jane, coming straight from St. Bridget's, had entered the church and had tried the great, new, splendid organ. She was a little afraid of it; she trembled when she pulled out the first stops and heard the first notes answer her fingers on the keys. Then she grew bolder; she tried a simple hymn and forgot herself, and by the time twilight came she was not afraid at all. She left the church uplifted and happy of heart. She told Miss Mary, when she reached home, that she believed she would do quite well.

The evening trial left her in trembling fear again. It was well enough to assure herself that no one in America could play as Professor Hedden played; that he was our one great master; but she feared what would be thought of her playing after the congregation had had such music as Professor Hedden's as a first taste.

A dozen or more fortunate hearers made up the little audience at the impromptu trial. They were Sam Wiggett and Mary Derling (who had had a little dinner for Professor Hedden), the four members of the choir, Lucille Hardcome, Miss Hurley, David and 'Thusia, two friends Lucille had invited and Schwerl.

The new organ was a magnificent instrument. Behind the pulpit and the choir stall the great pipes arose in a convex semicircle as typical of aspiring praise as any Gothic cathedral, and when, Saturday evening, Professor Hedden seated himself on the player's bench and, after resting his hands for a moment on the keyboard, plunged into some tremendous "voluntary" of his own composition, the mountains and the ocean and all the wild winds of Heaven seemed to join in one great burst of gigantic harmony. It seemed then to David Dean that the organ pipes should have been painted in glorious gold and all the triumphant hues of a magnificent sunrise instead of the fiat terra cotta and moss green that had been chosen as harmonizing with the church interior.

Presently the wild tumult of sound softened to the sighing of a breeze through the pine trees, to the rippling of a brook, to the croon of a mother over a babe. David held his breath as the crooning died, softer and softer, until he saw the mother place the sleeping child in its crib, and when the last faint note died into silence there were tears in his eyes. This was music! It was such music as Riverbank had never heard before!

"This is another of my own," said Professor Hedden and the organ began to laugh like nymphs at play in a green, sunny field—tricksy laughter that made the heart glad—and that changed into a happy hands-all-around romp, interrupted by the thin note of a shepherd's flute. Out from the trees bordering the field David could see the shepherd come, swaying the upper part of his body in time to his thin note, and behind him came dancing nymphs and dryads and fauns. He touched 'Thusia's hand, and she nodded and smiled without taking her eyes from the organ. Then the dash of cymbals and the blare of trumpets and the martial tread of the warriors shook the green field—thousands of armed men—and all the while, faint but insistent, the piping of the shepherd and the laughter of the dancing nymphs. And then came priests bearing an altar, chanting. The cymbals and the flute and the trumpets ceased and the dancers were still. David could see the altar carried to the center of the green field. There was a moment of pause and then arose, faint at first but growing stronger each instant, the hymn of praise, of praise triumphant and all-overpowering. Mightier and mightier it grew until the whole universe seemed to join in the glorification of deity. David half arose from his seat, his hands grasping the back of the pew in front of him. Praise! this was praise indeed; praise worthy of the God worshiped in this church; worthy of any God!

As the music ceased David's eye fell on Miss Hurley at the far end of his pew. The thin little woman in her cheap garments was wiping her eyes with her handkerchief. Her hands trembled with emotion. Suddenly she dropped her forehead to the back of the pew before her and with one silk-gloved hand on either side of her cheek, remained so.

Professor Hedden, half turning on his seat, said:

"While this next is hardly what I would call a complete composition, it may give you an idea of the capabilities of the organ."

When he ceased playing he said:

"It is merely an exercise in technique, but I think it shows fairly well what can be done with a good organ."

It may have been merely an exercise, but it had made the organ perform as no one in that church, aside from Professor Hedden himself, had ever heard an organ perform. The full majesty and beauty of the great instrument, unguessed by those who had gathered to hear this first test, stood revealed. David Dean's heart was full. It seemed to him as if the organ, capable of speaking in such a manner, must be a mighty force to aid him in his ministerial work; as if the organ were a living thing. Such music must grasp souls and raise them far toward Heaven.

Professor Hedden arose and approached the steps leading down from the organ. In the pew in front of David old Sam Wiggett, donor of the organ, sat in his greatcoat, his iron gray hair mussed as always. David could imagine the firm-set mouth, the heavy jowls, the bushy eyebrows, the scowl that seldom left the old man's face. Lucille Hardcome whispered to him and he nodded.

"Now let's hear Miss Hurley play something," said Lucille in her sweetest voice.

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Hurley, cowering into her corner. "Not now, please! Not after that!"

Lucille laughed. Old Sam Wiggett sat as before, his head half hidden by his coat collar, but David knew the grim look that was on the old man's face. Wiggett's word would settle the organist matter when that grim old man chose to speak. David turned toward Miss Hurley, and she shook her head. He did his best to smother her refusal by advancing to the professor with congratulatory hand extended. In a moment the dozen fortunate listeners were crowded around Professor Hedden, and Miss Hurley, in her pew end, was forgotten.

As 'Thusia, David and Miss Jane were leaving the church Lucille, jingling with jewelry, swooped down upon them.

"Oh, Miss Hurley!" she called. "Just one minute, please!"

Miss Jane stopped and turned.

"Professor Hedden thinks," Lucille cooed, "or, really, I'm not sure which of us thought of it, but we quite

agree, that you must play at least once to-morrow morning! To christen *your* organ with you taking no part would be quite too shameful. So"—she hesitated and her smile was wicked—"so we want you to play the congregation out after the professor is through. You know they will never leave while he is playing."

The taunt was cruel and plain enough—that the congregation *would* leave if Miss Jane played—and Miss Jane reddened. Professor Hedden, with Sam Wiggett, came up to them.

"Of course you must play!" he said through his beard, in his gruff, kindly voice.

"But, I—I—" stammered Miss Jane.

"Good-night! Good-night, all!" said Lucille. "It's all arranged, Miss Hurley," and she bore the professor away.

"I shall not dare!" Miss Jane said to David. "After such music as the professor will give! Even the biggest thing I know—"

"But you'll not play the biggest thing you know," said David.

The church was crowded the next morning. Even before the Sunday school was dismissed the seats began to fill. Sam Wiggett was on hand early, grim but proud of his great gift; his daughter came later with Lucille and Professor Hedden. When David came to take his seat behind his pulpit the church was filled as it had never been filled before, and many were standing. The two ladies of the choir had new hats. Professor Hedden took his place on the organist's bench and little Miss Jane cowered behind the rail curtain of terra-cotta wool. From the body of the church nothing could be seen but the top of the quaint little rooster wing on her hat. The praise service began.

I cannot remember now what Professor Hedden played, but it was wonderful music, as we all knew it would be. There were moments when the whole church edifice seemed to tremble, and others when we held our breath lest we fail to hear the delicate whispering of the organ. From my seat in the diagonal pews at the side of the church I could see old Sam Wiggett's face, grim and set, and Lucille Hardcome's triumphant glances and David's thin, clean-cut features, his whole spirit uplifted by the music, and I could see Miss Jane's rooster wing sinking lower and lower behind the terra-cotta curtain.

David's sermon was short, almost a rhapsody in praise of the music of praise, and then an anthem, and Professor Hedden's final offering. As the magnificent music rolled through the church, poor little Miss Jane's rooster wing disappeared entirely behind the curtain. The music ended in a mighty crash, into which Professor Hedden seemed to throw all the power of the organ. David arose. He stood a moment looking out upon the congregation.

"Following the benediction," his dear voice announced, "our organist, Miss Hurley, will play while the congregation is being dismissed."

Lucille looked from side to side, smiling and raising her eyebrows. David, however, did not give the benediction at once. He stood, looking out over the congregation, and behind him and the terra-cotta curtain two hats turned toward the place where we had seen Miss Jane's rooster wing sink out of sight. Professor Hedden bent down and raised Miss Jane and led her to the player's bench. She was very white. No one in the congregation moved. Then David spoke again.

His words were simple enough. He began by speaking of the man who had given the organ, and called him rugged but big-souled, and Sam Wiggett frowned. David continued, saying the organ would always be a memorial of that man's generosity and more than that. As David raised his head there came from the organ, as if from far off—faint, most faint, like a child's voice singing—the strains of the old, old hymn:

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!"

David continued as the music sang faintly. He said there was one, in whose name the donor had presented the organ, whose vacant place all would regret, since she, too, would have been eager to join in the music of praise, but he believed, he knew, that she was joining in the voice of the noble instrument from her new home on high. Then he said the benediction and the organ's voice grew strong, repeating the same noble hymn.

The congregation arose. One by one the voices took up the hymn until every voice joined in singing old Sam Wiggett's favorite hymn; the hymn he loved because his wife had loved it:

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!"

I cannot describe the change that came over the old man's face; it was as if he had been sitting with his hat on and suddenly uncovered. It was as if he had been grimly appraising a piece of property and suddenly realized that he was in God's house and felt the organ lifting his soul toward Heaven. He glanced to the left as if seeking the wife who had for so many years stood at his side to sing that same hymn. He raised his face to David and then suddenly dropped back into his seat. Miss Jane reached forward and manipulated I know not what stops and the organ opened its great lungs, crying triumphantly:

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!"

Lucille waited for Professor Hedden and there were plenty who waited with her, but old Sam Wiggett stood, gruffly slighting the words of thanks that were proffered him, until Miss Jane came down from the organ. He went to her and took her hand.

"Thank you, Jane!" he said. "That's what we want—music, not fireworks!"

He walked with David and 'Thusia and Miss Jane to the church door. Mademoiselle was there and she pounced upon Miss Jane.

"Ah, you see!" she cried. "I am disguised! I buy me a new hat so no one will know me, and I come to hear

your grand organ. He was magnificent, your professor! But you, Meester Wiggett," she asked in her quaint accent, "what you think now of our leetle St. Cecilia! She can play vairy nice!"

Miss Jane blushed with pleasure.

"Uh!" said Sam Wiggett, which—freely translated—meant that as long as he lived no one but Miss Jane should play the Wiggett pipe organ if he could prevent it. Lucille looked at David with a new respect.

XI. STEVE TERRILL

LUCILLE HARDCOME'S defeat, unimportant as it was to the world at large, made her furiously angry for a few days. She would have left the church to go to the Episcopalians if it had not been that the Episcopalian Church in Riverbank was direly poverty-stricken. Lucille sulked for a few days and let the report go out that she was ill, and then appeared with her hair, which had been golden, a glorious shade of red. She said it was Titian. It was immensely becoming to her. Had any other woman in the congregation dared to change the color of her hair thus flauntingly there would have been little less than a scandal. That her first hair vagary created little adverse comment shows how completely Lucille had impressed us with the idea that she was extra-privileged. Later she changed the color of her hair as the whim seized her, varying from red to gold.

In addition to the change in the color of her hair Lucille came out of her brief retirement with an entirely changed opinion of David Dean. She seemed suddenly aware that, far from being a mere church accessory, he was someone worth while. She began to court his good opinion openly. Having burned her fingers she admired the fire.

Lucille was a woman of elementary mentality and much of her domineering success was due to that very fact. She often went after what she wanted with a directness that was crude but effective. Lucille set about getting David under her thumb.

Poor David! Lucille saw that his dearest tasks of helpfulness were always shared by the trio—'Thusia, now grown pale; Rose Hinch, the ever-cheerful; and Mary Derling. These three understood David. They echoed his gentle tact and loving-kindness, and it was to be a fourth in this group that Lucille decided was the thing she desired.

For the work done by the trio, under David's gentle direction, Lucille was eminently unfitted. The three women were handmaidens of charity; Lucille was a major general of earthly ambitions. In spite of this she thrust herself upon David.

The power of single-minded insistence is enormous. We see this exemplified over and over again in politics; the most unsuitable men, by plain force of will, thrust themselves into office. They are not wanted; everyone knows they are out of place, but they have their way. Lucille—resplendent hair, flaring gowns and all—forced David to accept her as one of his intimate helpers by the simple expedient of insisting that he should. It is only fair to say that she opened her purse, but this was in itself an evidence of her unfitness for the work she had to do. Most of David's "cases" needed personal service of a kind Lucille was incapable of rendering. She gave them dollars instead. Time and again she upset David's plans by opening her hand and showering silver where it was not good to bestow it. She tried to take full command of Rose Hinch and Mary Derling. They went calmly on their accustomed ways.

In one matter in which David was interested Lucille did give valuable assistance. Although Riverbank was notoriously a "wet" town the State had voted a prohibitory law against liquor selling. In Riverbank the law was all but a dead letter. The saloons remained open, the proprietors coming up once a month to pay a "fine," which was in fact a local license. Probably our saloons were no worse than those in other river towns, but many of us believed it a scandal that they should continue doing business contrary to law. Our Davy was never much of a believer in the minister in politics, although he had said his say from the pulpit with enough youthful fervor back in Civil War days, but he feared and hated the saloon and all liquor, remembering his long fight for Mack Graham and plenty of other youths. He was mourning, too, his best of friends, old Doc Benedict, who never overcame his craving for whisky, and who died after being thrown from his carriage one night when he had taken too much. No doubt Sam Wiggett had some influence over David's actions, too. The old man was all for having the saloons closed as long as the law said they should be closed, and, to some extent, he dragged Davy into the fight.

It was understood that if our county attorney wished the saloons closed he could close them. A fight was made to elect a "dry" county attorney, and, as it happened, the fight carried all the county and town offices. Every Democrat was thrown out.

No one can say how greatly David Dean's part in the campaign affected the result. I think it had a greater effect than was generally believed. For one thing his sermons aroused us as nothing else could have aroused us, and for another he had the assistance of Lucille Hardcome.

As women are apt to do, Lucille made her fight a personal matter. She organized the women, organized children's parades, planned house-to-house appeals and persuaded even the merchants who favored open saloons to place her placards in their windows. It is probable that Lucille's work did more to cause the landslide than all the handbills and speeches of the politicians and she did it all to impress David. David's personal stand also had a great effect, for he was known as a conservative, meddling little with political affairs. It is hardly too much to say that between them Lucille Hardcome and David carried the election. The margin was small enough as it was. The *Riverbank Eagle*, after the election, declared that without David's

help the prohibition forces would have lost out. Among the other defeated candidates was Marty Ware, who had been city treasurer for several terms.

The new city officials, most of them greatly surprised to find themselves elected, were to take office January first, and it was one day about the middle of December that Steve Turrill came to the front door of the little manse and asked for David. 'Thusia, who came to the door, knew Turrill. She had known him years before, when she was a thoughtless, pleasure-mad young girl. Even then Steve had been a gambler and fond of a fast horse. In those days Steve would often disappear for months at a time, for the steamboats were gambling palaces. He never returned until his pockets were full of money and his mouth full of tales of Memphis, Cairo, St. Louis and even New Orleans. He was known in all the gambling places up and down the Mississippi.

At the beginning of the Civil War Steve Turrill had enlisted, returning, after about five months service, with a bullet in his leg just below the left hip. The bullet was never found. After that Steve walked with a cane and on damp days one could see him in a chair in front of the Riverbank Hotel, his forehead creased with pain and his left hand ceaselessly rubbing his left hip. When his hip was worst he could not sit still at the gaming table. To the gambler's pallor was added the pallor of pain.

As a boy I remember him sitting under the iron canopy of the hotel. We all knew he was a gambler, and he was the only gambler we knew. Sometimes he would have a trotter, and we would see him flash down the street behind the red-nostriled animal; sometimes even the diamond horseshoe in his tie and the rings on his fingers would be gone.

Everyone seemed to speak to Steve Turrill. Even as a boy I knew, vaguely, that he had a room in the Riverbank Hotel where people went to gamble. It was understood that not everyone could gamble there. I think there was a feeling that Steve Turrill was “straight,” and that as he had been wounded in the war, and was the last professional gambler Riverbank would have, he should not be bothered. I believe he was always a sick man and that, from the day he returned from the war, Death stood constantly at his side.

He looked as if Death's hand had touched him. His thin, sharp features were ashen gray at times and his hands were mere bones covered with transparent skin. He never smiled. He never touched liquor. He smoked a long, thin cigar that he had made especially for his own use; I suppose Doc Benedict had told him how much he could smoke and remain alive.

When 'Thusia saw him at the door (it was one of her “well” days) she was not startled; for many odd fish come to a dominie's door from one end of the year to the next. He leaned on his cane and took off his gray felt hat.

“'Day, 'Thusia,” he said, quite as if they had not been strangers for years; “I wonder if Mr. Dean is in?”

“He's in,” said 'Thusia, “but this is the afternoon he works on his sermon. He tries not to see anyone.”

“This is more important than a sermon,” said Turrill. “Would you mind telling him that?” David would see him. He came to the door himself and led the gambler into the little study where the spatter-work motto, “Keep an even mind under all circumstances,” hung above the desk. He gave Turrill his hand and placed a chair for him, and the gambler dropped into the chair with a sigh of pain.

“I think you know who I am,” said Turrill, rubbing his hip. “I'm Turrill. I do a little in the gambling way.”

“Yes, so I understand,” said David, and waited. “It's not about myself I've come,” said Turrill. “I wouldn't bother about myself; I'm dead any day. I've been dead twenty-five years, as far as my gambling chance of life goes. Do you know Marty Ware?”

“Yes,” said David. “Is it about him?”

“He's going to kill himself,” said Turrill without emotion.

David waited.

“The fool!” said Turrill. “He came to me and told me. Why, I can't sleep anyway, with this hip of mine! How can I sleep, then, when I've got such a thing as that on my mind! So I came to you; that's what you're for, isn't it!”

“It is one of the things,” said David.

“He got that book of Ingersoll's,” Turrill complained. “The fool! I've read that book! Do you think, with this pain in my hip, I would be dragging along here day after day, if there was anything in that idea that a man has a right to blow himself out when he feels like it! But that's what Mart Ware has worked into his head. Suicide! He's going to do it!”

“Yes! Well!” asked David.

Turrill, rubbing his hip, looked at David. He had hardly expected anything like this calm query. He had pictured our dominie rushing for coat and hat, rolling his eyes, perhaps, and muttering prayers. Instead, David leaned back in his deep chair and placed the tips of his fingers together and waited.

“I won his money,” said Turrill.

“Yes, I supposed so, or you wouldn't be here, would you!” said David.

“The devil of it—” Turrill stopped. “The—”

“I dare say it is the devil of it,” said David. “Go on.”

“Well, then, the devil of it is, I'm strapped!” said Turrill. “If I wasn't—” He waved his hand to show how simple it would be. “He came yesterday, telling me the story. I'm a sick man; I close my place at one every morning; I can't stand any more than that; but last night I let them stay until daylight, and, curse it! I had no luck! I took the limit off and tried to win what Marty needs, and they cleaned me out and took my I. O. U.'s. So I came to you. It was all I could think of.”

He paused a moment while he rubbed his hip. “It wasn't his own money Marty lost,” he said then. “He's taken two thousand dollars of the city money, and I won it.” He stretched out his leg and fumbled in his trousers pocket and brought out a roll of money. “There!” he said; “there is five hundred dollars. I went around today and raised that among the men who come to my room. I can't raise another cent. That's all *I* can do; what can you do?”

Now David arose and walked the narrow space before Turrill.

“I suppose his bondsmen will make good! He has bondsmen, hasn't he? I don't know much about such things.”

“They'll have to make good what he is short,” said Turrill. “Seth Hardcome will have to make it all good. Tony Porter is on the bond, but he hasn't a cent. If he had a cent he wouldn't have gone on the bond—that's the kind he is. Hardcome is the man that'll have to make good. But he'll see Mart Ware in the penitentiary first.”

“Why!”

Turrill made a gesture with his hand.

“How do I know! Mart says so; Mart went to him. He told Hardcome the whole thing and asked him to see him through—said he would work his hands to the bone to pay it back. Hardcome won't do anything and Porter can't and Marty will kill himself before he goes to the pen. Hardcome is one of your deacons, or whatever you call them, isn't he!”

“No. He is not in my church at all,” said David. “But he is a just man; I am sure he is a just man.”

“He is a hard man,” said Turrill. “The most he would do for me was to say he would keep his mouth shut until the new treasurer goes in. He says he'll send Marty to the pen; he'll kill Marty instead.”

Turrill arose. There was no emotion shown on his inscrutable gambler's face. David stood fingering the money Turrill had handed him, and Turrill moved to the door. From the back he looked like an old, old man.

“You can see what you can do, if you want to,” Turrill said. “I can't do anything.”

“Wait!” David said. “You'll let me thank you for coming to me? You'll let me call on you for help if I need it?”

“Anything!” said Turrill, and with that he went.

'Thusia was in the kitchen and David went there.

“It's Marty Ware,” he said. “He's in trouble, 'Thusia. I'll have to go downtown and let my sermon go. We'll give them another from the bottom of the barrel this time. Do you suppose you can, presently, take Alice and drop in on Marty's mother for a little visit? Are you able?”

“In half an hour?”

“Yes, or in an hour. Marty is in dire trouble, 'Thusia, and I don't know whether he can be pulled out of it. I'm going to do what I can. I've been thinking of his mother; she is so—what's the word!—aloof! isolated! so by herself. If the trouble comes she will need someone, some woman, or she will break. I'd send Rose Hinch, but I think you would be better—you and Alice.”

“Yes, I understand,” 'Thusia said. “'Something not too bright and good for human nature's daily food.' Is Marty's trouble serious!”

David placed his hand on his wife's shoulder. “I can't tell you how serious, 'Thusia,” he said. “I don't want you to know. You'll not let his mother guess we know anything about it!”

“Let me think!” said 'Thusia. “Didn't she give a lemon cake for our last church dinner! I'm sure she did! It will be about that I happen to run in. You'll be back in time for supper, David! Hot rolls, you know!”

“Oh, if it is hot rolls you can depend on me!” David smiled.

Mrs. Ware was a peculiar woman. She was an old woman and alone in the world except for Marty, her only son, who had come late in her life. She was a proud woman. During her husband's life she had rather lorded it (or ladied it) over our mixed “good society” in Riverbank. Ware had been a commission man, now and then plunging on his own hook, as we say, buying heavily and selling when prices went up. He always had abundant money, and Mrs. Ware spent it for him. They built the big house overlooking the river—a palace for Riverbank of those days—and Mrs. Ware held her head very high, with four horses in the stable and a coachman and gardener and two maids and a grand piano and four oil paintings “done by hand” in Europe! And then, when Ware died, there was hardly enough money in the bank to pay for his funeral, no life insurance, and everything mortgaged. Marty was about fourteen then, a bright boy.

For a year or so Mrs. Ware tried to keep the big house, and then it had to go. Instead of the social queen, spending the largest income in Riverbank, she was almost the poorest of women. She moved out of the big house into a little three-room white box of a place on a back street that was then a mere track through the weeds. Her white hands had to do all the housework that was done; she had no maid at all, and hardly enough for herself and Marty to eat. No doubt it was a crushing blow, but she could not bare herself in her poverty to those who had known her in her flaunting prosperity. She shut her door, and became a proud, hard recluse.

Somehow she managed to get Marty through the high school, and then he went to work. He found some minor position in one of our banks and might have held it and have worked up into a better position, for he proved to be a natural accountant, but the “fast set” caught him, and, after it was learned that he spent his nights with the cards, the bank let him go. Until he was twenty-one he skipped from one temporary job to another. Sometimes he was in the freight office, then with a mill, then behind a counter for a few weeks. He had wonderful adaptability and seemed able to step into a position and take up the work of another man in an instant. He seemed destined to become a permanent “temporary assistant,” but he was making more friends all the while and he had hardly passed his majority when he was elected city treasurer. He seemed to have found his proper niche at last.

The salary attached to the treasurership was not large but it was enough, or would have been if Marty had not gambled. One good black winter suit and one good black summer suit will last many years in Riverbank, and Marty always seemed properly dressed in black. He was slender and what we called “natty.” His hair was as black as night. During his second term he began to show the effects of his nights. His face became paler than it should have been, and some mornings he was so tremulous he took a glass of whisky to steady his hands. With all this he was immensely popular, and when the chances of the campaign in which he was finally beaten were discussed Mart Ware was the one man no one believed could be beaten. He lost by twenty votes.

As David walked down the hill toward Main Street and Seth Hardcome's shoe store he thought of these

things. Mart Ware was one man, if there were any, who had been thrown out of office through David's part in the campaign. To that extent he was specifically responsible; in the broader sense that he was his “brother's keeper” it was his duty to do all he could to save any man or woman in such trouble as Marty was in.

A year or two earlier Seth Hardcome, his tough old body beginning to feel the draughts and changes of temperature of his long, narrow store, had had Belden, the contractor, partition off an office across the rear, and here David found the old man. He was standing at his tall desk, making out half-yearly bills against the coming of the first of January, and he pushed his spectacles up into his hair and turned to David with the air of a busy man interrupted.

“Well, dominie!”

David put his hand on the back of one of the chairs near the little stove that heated the office.

“Can you sit down for a minute or two!” he asked. “Have you time to talk facts and figures; to give me a business man's good advice!”

“Why, yes,” said Hardcome; “I guess you ain't going to try to sell me any stocks and bonds, eh! I guess you're one man I don't have to be afraid of that with. Facts and figures, eh! Fire away!”

David seated himself and put one knee over the other. The warmth of the stove was grateful after the chill air outside, and he rubbed his palms back and forth against each other.

“Do you know—or, if you don't know exactly, can you guess fairly dose to it—what the campaign we had last month cost our crowd!” David asked.

“County or city!” asked Hardcome. “I guess there wasn't much spent outside the city.”

“I was thinking of the city,” said David.

“Well, we *raised* pretty close to four thousand dollars,” said Hardcome, “and we *spent* more than that. We *spent* more than four thousand dollars. Halls, fireworks, speakers, printing—costs a lot of money! I guess the other fellows spent three times that, so we can't complain. I hear the liquor makers poured a lot of money into Riverbank, and I guess it's so. Wouldn't surprise me at all if they spent ten or twelve thousand.”

“To our four thousand,” said David. “Looking at it that way you couldn't call our money wasted, could you!”

“Wasted! What you talking about! To clean out these saloons! Four thousand dollars wasted, when we've as good as got the saloons closed by spending it! You don't take count of money that way when it's for a thing like that, do you!”

“Money is money,” said David sagely. “A half of four thousand dollars would be a wonderful help to our church. And yours is not too rich, is it! Four thousand dollars would buy the poor how many pairs of shoes! Eight hundred! A thousand!”

“Depends on the kind of shoes,” said Hardcome with a grim smile. “And a lot of good it would do to give them shoes into one hand, when they go right off and spend all they've got, in the saloons, with the other. Ain't they better off with the saloons closed and the money in their pockets to buy their own shoes!”

“Yes, I'll admit that,” said David. “Is that why we made the fight to close the saloons! So they could buy their own shoes! There are not so many poor in this town, Hardcome. You don't see many suffering for shoes. I thought our campaign had something to do with saving a few souls—a few bodies that were going down into the gutter.”

“So it did!” said Hardcome promptly. “I didn't start saying how many shoes the campaign money would buy, did I! I seem to remember you said it first.”

He smiled again, the pleased smile of a man who has got a dominie in a corner in argument. David smiled too.

“I believe I did first mention the campaign in terms of shoes,” he admitted. “I stand corrected. It should be mentioned in terms of souls—human souls, not shoe soles. And, looking at it that way, was it worth the price! Was it worth four thousand dollars!”

“My stars!” exclaimed Hardcome, and stared at David in genuine surprise.

“I mean just that,” insisted David; “was it worth four thousand dollars! How many souls will the campaign actually save! One! Ten! A thousand! Not a thousand. We can't say, offhand, that every man who stepped into a saloon lost his soul, can we! He might be saved later, and in some other way, at less cost. How many in Riverbank have died in the gutter in the last year? How many have killed themselves because of drink?”

“But—” Hardcome began. David raised his hand.

“Because,” he said, “next year we may have this all to do over again. Next year we may need another four thousand dollars, and the next year, and the next year. How many men in Riverbank actually die in the gutter each year!”

Now, there are not many. Riverbank men do not often die in the gutter, and but few of them kill themselves on account of drink. They live on for years, a handful of sodden, stupid, blear-eyed creatures.

“One!” asked David. “Is the average one a year? I don't believe it, but let us say it is one. Is it worth four thousand dollars to save one drunkard from death! To save one drunkard's soul! There is a plain business proposition: Is it worth that much cash! That's what I'm getting at.”

“To save a man!” exclaimed Hardcome, his hard face as near showing horror as it had for many long years. “To save a man and his eternal soul! What do you mean! We don't set prices on souls, that way, do we! My stars! I never heard of such a thing! And from a dominie! You can't count a soul in cash dollars. What if it is but one soul we drag back from hell-fire! What's four thousand, or five thousand, or ten thousand dollars when it comes to a soul!”

“I don't mean your soul, or mine,” said David. “I mean a drunkard's soul, or some soul like that. Is it worth while to spend four thousand dollars to save one soul!”

“Of course it is!” snapped Hardcome. “Couldn't we,” urged David, “save more souls, at a lower cost per soul, if we sent the money to foreign missions!”

“I don't know whether we could or we couldn't,” cried Hardcome. “That's got nothing to do with it. We got

to take care of the souls right at home first. I don't care if it costs ten thousand dollars a soul, it's our duty to do it!" David arose and turned and faced the shoe merchant. His face was white. His eyes were like gray steel. He had no smile now.

"Then, if you think souls are worth so much," he asked tensely, "why are you sending Marty Ware to eternal death for a miserable two thousand dollars! Two thousand! For a miserable fifteen hundred, for here are five hundred a benighted gambler dug up to save the boy!" Hardcome was on his feet too. He had turned as white as David, or whiter.

"Are drunkards' souls the only souls you prize, Seth Hardcome!" asked David. "Don't you know that boy will kill himself if he is exposed and ruined! A fool! Of course he is a fool! You knew he was a gambler—you must have known it—and you let him run his course when you might have brought him up short, threatening to get off his bond. You talk about ten-thousanddollar souls, and you will not turn over your hand to save Marty Ware's soul when it will not cost you a cent!"

"It'll cost me two thousand dollars," said Hardcome. "That's what it'll cost me!"

"And you call yourself a business man!" laughed David. "A business man! Look!"

He picked up the roll of bank notes he had thrown on the shoe merchant's desk.

"This is what a gambler gave to save Marty," he exclaimed. "Five hundred dollars! And you talk about it costing you two thousand to save Marty from suicide! Why, man, your two thousand is *gone!* You are his bondsman, the only responsible one, and you'll have to pay whether he is dead and in eternal fire, or alive and to be saved! Your two thousand is gone, spent, vanished already and it will not cost you a cent more to save Marty Ware's soul. Here, take this five hundred dollars; you can *save* five hundred dollars by saving Marty Ware's eternal soul!"

Hardcome was dazed. He put out his hand and took the money and looked at it unseeingly, turning it over and over in his fingers. Then he looked up at David, and in David's eyes was a twinkle. The dominie put his hand on the shoe man's arm, and laughed.

"Did I do that well?" he asked.

Hardcome did not smile. He turned his head and peered through the glass of the door into the store room, doubtless to see where his clerk was and whether he had heard, and then he looked back at David.

"Sit down," he said, still unsmilingly.

David seated himself. Hardcome stood, half leaning against the desk, turning the roll of bills in his hand.

"You don't know why I went on that boy's bond," he said. "His mother slammed a door in my wife's face, or what amounted to that, or worse. His mother was queen of Riverbank when you came, and for a long while after, so I needn't tell you how high and mighty she was before Ware died. You know, I guess. They came here in 'Fifty-three, and my wife and I came in 'Fifty-one, and I started this shoe business that year. That was on Water Street, in a frame shack where the Riverbank Hotel stands now. I didn't move the store up here until 'Fifty-nine. My wife and I lived at the old Morton House until the bugs drove us out—-bugs and roaches, and we couldn't stand them—and there were no houses to be had, so for a while we lived back of the store in the shack, getting along the best we could, waiting for houses to be built.

"The Wares had some money when they came, and Tarvole, who was building the house we hoped to rent, sold it to Ware and they moved in. You know how things are in a new town. Anyway, my wife took her calling cards and called on Mrs. Ware. She didn't find the lady at home, and that evening a boy brought my wife's card back to her. He said Mrs. Ware told him to say she wasn't at home, and wouldn't be, to a cobbler.

"My wife laughed at it, but it made me mad enough. I said I would get even with the Wares, and I meant it. I kept it in mind for years, waiting a chance, but you don't always have a chance. There are some men and women you can't seem to hurt, and the Wares were two of them. He seemed to make plenty of money and keep out of things where I could have done him a bad turn. I got to be a director in the Riverbank National, but he never needed to borrow, so I couldn't hurt him there. His wife was always at the top of things, too. I couldn't hit her.

"Well, Ware died and everything went. The widow was as poor as a church mouse; I don't know how she got along. She was so poor she couldn't be hurt; she was like the dust you walk on—it's dust, and that's an end of it: it can't be anything less. She shut herself up, and was nothing. My wife was dead, anyway, and I couldn't hurt the widow by flaunting my wife and the position she had in the widow's face.

"Then this boy grew up—this Marty. I got him the place in the bank."

"You did!" David exclaimed.

"It was the only way I could hit at the widow," said Hardcome. "I thought maybe it would annoy her, to know I was the one that was helping her boy. Maybe it did. I never knew. When the cashier said it wasn't safe to keep him any longer I told Marty to tell his mother not to worry; that I would try to fix it so he could stay. I did manage to get them to keep him a few months longer; then they outvoted me.

"Then I got him the place in the freight office, but he couldn't hold it. A couple of times, when he lost his jobs, I took him in the store here. I knew that would annoy the old dame, and I guess it did. Then some of the Democrats picked him up and ran him for this job he has now. It made me mad that I couldn't say I had been back of that, but when it came to getting a couple of bondsmen I saw another chance to bother the old lady. I went on his bond."

Hardcome unrolled the money in his hand and smoothed it out.

"You knew my wife, dominie;" he continued slowly. "Some people did not like her, but I did. I never had any complaint to make about her; she was a good wife. So it sort of seemed to me—when Turrill came to me and told me what Marty had done—and I remembered how that woman had slammed her door in my wife's face, so to say—that this was my chance—my chance to get even once for all."

He stopped, folded the bills, and slipped them into his pocket.

"You see," he said, "you didn't know the whole story. It would have been something of a windup to send the boy to the penitentiary. I guess that would have taken the old lady off her high horse. But I don't know. I don't

want to kill the boy's soul, or anybody's soul. I guess I'll make good what he is short, and take him into the store here again."

David was ont of his chair and his hand clasped Hardcome's hand. The old man laughed then, a little sheepishly.

"Sort of tickles me!" he said. "Wouldn't the old dame be hopping mad if she knew the cobbler was going to save the Riverbank queen's boy, and his life, and his soul, and the whole caboodle!"

"It would be coals of fire on her head," smiled David.

"'Twould so!" said Seth Hardcome; "and I reckon the hair is getting pretty thin on the top of her head now, too!"

Then he laughed. And David laughed.

He was still smiling when he stepped out into the street and was told by the first man he met that old Sam Wiggett had just dropped dead in his office.

XII. MONEY MATTERS

LOOKING back, in later years, the death of old Sam Wiggett seemed to David Dean to mark the close of one epoch and the beginning of another, and the day he heard of the engagement of his daughter Alice marked a third.

It was Monday and well past noon and the heat was intense. Although he was late for dinner—noon dinners being the rule in Riverbank—David paused now and then as he climbed the Third Street hill, resting a few moments in the shade and fanning himself with the palm-leaf fan he carried. Where the walk was not shaded by overarching maple trees the heat beat up from the plank sidewalks in appreciable gusts. All spring he had been feeling unaccountably weary, and these hot days seemed to take the sap out of him. He had had a hard morning.

His Sunday had held a disappointment. In one way or another Lucille Hardcome had induced John Gorst, whose fame as a pulpit orator was country-wide, to spend the day at Riverbank and preach morning and evening—in the morning at David's church and in the evening at the union meeting in the court square—and David had looked forward to the day as one that would give *him* the uplift of communion with one of the great minds of his church. He had dined at Lucille's with John Gorst and had had the afternoon with him, and it had been all a sad disappointment. Instead of finding Gorst a big mind he had found him somewhat shallow and theatrical. Instead of a day of intellectual growth David had suffered a day of shattered ideals. While he disliked to admit it he had to confess that the great John Gorst was tiresome.

He did admit, however, that the two sermons John Gorst preached were masterpieces of pulpit oratory. What he said was not so much, nor did he leave in David's mind so much as a mustard seed of original thought, but the great preacher had held his congregations breathless. He had made them weep and gasp, and he had thrilled them. Hearing him David understood why John Gorst had leaped from a third-rate church in a country village to one of the best churches in a large town, and then to a famous and wealthy church in a metropolis.

David's first duty this Monday morning had been to see John Gorst off on the morning train. Lucille Hardcome and four or five others had been at the station, and John Gorst had glowed under their words of adulation. Well-fed, well-groomed, he had nodded to them from the car window as the train pulled out, and David had turned away to tramp through the hot streets to the East End where, Rose Hinch had sent word, old Mrs. Grelling was close to death. John Gorst, in his parlor car, was on his way to complete his two months' vacation at the camp of a millionaire parishioner in the Wisconsin woods.

Old Mrs. Grelling, senile and maundering, had been weeping weakly, oppressed by a hallucination that she had lost her grasp on Heaven. Her little room was insufferably hot and close, and Rose Hinch sat by the bed fanning the emaciated old woman, turning her pillow now and then, trying to make her comfortable. Her patient had no bodily pain; in an hour, or a day, or a week, she would fall asleep forever and without discomfort, but now she was in dire distress of mind. Grown childish she could not remember that she was at peace with God, and she mourned and would not let Rose Hinch comfort her.

In twelve words David brought peace to the old woman in the bed. It was not logic she wanted, nor oratory such as John Gorst could have given, but the few words of comfort from the man of God in whom she had faith. David knelt by the bed and prayed, and read "The Lord is My Shepherd," and her doubts no longer troubled her. If David Dean, the dominie she had trusted these many years, assured her she was safe, she could put aside worry and die peacefully. David saw a Book of Psalms on her bedside table, less bulky than the large-typed Bible, and he put it in her hands.

"Hold fast to this," he said, "it is the sign of your salvation. You will not be afraid again. I must go now, but I will come back again."

He left her clasping the book in both her hands. She died before he saw her again, but Rose Hinch told him she held the book until she died, and that she had no return of the childish fear. She slept into eternity peacefully content.

From Mrs. Grelling's bedside David walked to Herwig's to give his daily order for groceries. The old grocer entered the small order and hesitated.

"Dominie—" he said.

David knew what was coming, or imagined he did, and felt sick at heart.

“Yes?” he queried.

“I guess you know as well as I do how I hate to say anything about money,” said Herwig, “and you know I wouldn't if I wasn't so hard put to it I don't know which way to turn. I don't want you to worry about it. If it ain't convenient just you forget I ever said anything. Fact is I'm so pressed for money I'm worried to death. The wholesalers I get my goods of—”

“My bill is much larger than it should be,” said David. “I have let it run longer than I have any right to. Just at this moment—”

“I wouldn't even speak of it if I wasn't so put to it to satisfy those I owe,” said Herwig apologetically. “I thought maybe you might be able to help me out somehow, but I don't want to put you to any trouble.”

He was evidently sincere.

“My wholesalers are threatening to close me out,” he said, “and I've just got to try every way I can to raise some cash. If it wasn't for that I wouldn't dun a good customer, let alone you, Mr. Dean.”

“I know it, Brother Herwig,” David said. “You have been most lenient. I am ashamed. I will see what I can do.”

The old grocer followed him to the door, still protesting his regret, and David turned up the street to do the thing he disliked most of anything in the world—ask his trustees for a further advance on his salary.

Already he was overdrawn by several hundred dollars, and he was as deeply ashamed of this as he was of his debts to the merchants of Riverbank. It had always been his pride to be “even with the world”; he felt that no man had a right to live beyond his means—“spending to-morrow to pay for to-day,” he called it—and he had worried much over his accumulating debts. That very morning, before he had left his manse, he had made out a new schedule of his indebtedness, and had been shocked to see how it had grown since his trustees had made the last advance he had asked. With the advance the trustees had allowed him, the total was something over a thousand dollars. He still owed something on last winter's coal; he owed a goodly drug bill; his grocery bill was unpaid since the first of the year; he owed the butcher; the milkman had a bill against him; there were a dozen small accounts for shoes, drygoods, one thing and another.

In Riverbank, at that time, business was nearly all credit business. Bills were rendered twice a year, or even once a year, and, when rendered, often remained unpaid for another six months or so. As accounts went David's accounts were satisfactory to the merchants; he was counted a “good” customer. His indebtedness had grown slowly, beginning with his wife's illness, and he had run in debt beyond his means almost without being aware of it. A semiyearly settling period had come around, and he had found himself without sufficient funds to pay in full, as he usually did. He paid what he could, and let the balance remain, hoping to pay in full at the next settling period. Instead of this he found himself still further behind, and each half year had increased his load of unpaid bills.

David worried. He questioned his right to think the church did not pay him enough, for he received as much as any other minister in Riverbank, and more than most, and his remuneration came promptly on the day it was due, and was never in arrears, as was the case with at least one other. As a matter of fact, his trustees had several times advanced him money, and had advanced him three hundred dollars on the current quarter year.

The dominie felt no resentment against the church or the trustees. More remunerative pulpits had been offered him, and he had refused them because he believed his work lay in Riverbank. Despite all this he could not accuse himself of extravagance. He had raised two children, and they were an expense, but he did not for a moment question his right to have children. He would have liked a half dozen; certainly two—in a town where larger families were the rule—could not be called extravagant. Neither were they extravagant children. Roger had been given as much college training as he seemed able to bear, and had been economical enough; Alice had wished for college but had been compelled to be satisfied with graduation from the Riverbank High School, and was at home taking the place of the maid David felt he could no longer afford.

In the final analysis, David's inability to make his salary meet his needs resolved itself into a matter of his wife's illness. 'Thusia, once the liveliest of girls, was now practically bedridden, although she could be brought downstairs now and then to rest on a divan in the sitting room. She was a permanent invalid now, but a cheerful one. In many ways she was more helpful to David than in their earlier married years; her advice was good, and, with Rose Hinch and Mary Derling, she made the council of three that upheld David's hands in his works of charity and helpfulness. But an invalid is, however helpful her brain may be, an expense, and one not contemplated by trustees when they set a minister's salary. Certainly 'Thusia's illness was not the fault of the church, but it was the cause of David's debts. He could not and did not blame the church for his financial condition, nor could he blame 'Thusia. Alice was doing her full share in the house, taking the maid's place, but Roger—alas, Roger! Roger, the well-beloved son, was a disappointment. He now had a “job,” but after David's high hopes for the lad the place Roger occupied was almost humiliating. David felt that Roger probably hardly earned the four dollars a week he was paid by his grandfather, old Mr. Fragg. He no longer called on his father good-naturedly for funds, but he still lived at home, and probably would as long as the home existed.

So this was our dominie as he walked through the hot Main Street on his way to see Banker Burton, now his most influential trustee. Our David was but slightly round-shouldered; his eyes still clear and gray; hair still curled gold; mouth refined and quick to smile; brow broad, and but little creased. His entire air was one of quick and kindly intelligence; a little weary after twenty-nine years of ministry, a little worn by care, but our Davy still.

I remember him telling me how the passing of the old and staunch friends and (occasional) enemies affected him—men like old Sam Wiggett—and how he felt less like a child of the patriarchs, and more like something bargained and contracted for. This was said without bitterness; he was trying to let me know what an important part in his younger years those old elders and trustees had played. They never quite stopped thinking of David as the boy minister, and to David they remained something stern and authoritative, like the

ancient Biblical patriarchs.

They had seemed the God-appointed rulers of the church; somehow the newer trustees and elders, the reason for the choosing of each of whom was known to David, seemed to lack something of the old awesome divine right. They seemed more ordinarily human.

“They let Lucille Hardcome walk on them,” I told David, but of course David would not admit that.

“Lucille is very kind to 'Thusia,” he said.

Mary Derling, having put up with Derling's infidelities long enough, divorced him. Her son Ben was now a young man. Mary herself was well along in the forties, and her abiding love for David Dean glowed in good works year after year, and in the affection of Mary, 'Thusia and Rose Hinch David felt himself blessed above most men. Rose was the best nurse in Riverbank, and those who could secure her services felt that the efficiency of their physician was doubled. She asked an honest wage from those who could afford it, but she gave much of her time to David's sick poor, and many hours to investigating poverty and distress. In this latter work Mary Derling aided, and it was at 'Thusia's bedside the consultations were held; for 'Thusia was no longer able to leave her bed, except on days when she sat in an easy-chair, or could be carried to a downstair couch. In a long, thin book 'Thusia kept a record of needs and deeds. David called it his “laundry list.” In this were entered the souls and bodies that needed “doing over”—souls to be scrubbed and bodies to be starched and creases to be ironed out of both.

'Thusia was a secretary of charities always to be found at home. Charity work soon grows wearisome, but 'Thusia could make the least interesting cases attractive as she told of them. Each page of her “laundry list” was a romance. 'Thusia not only interested herself but she kept interest alive in others.

And Lucille! Lucille tried honestly enough to be useful in the way Rose and Mary were useful. As the years passed she kept up all her numberless activities, glowing as a social queen, pushing forward as a political factor, driving the church trustees, ordering the music and cowing the choir—she was in everything and leading everything, and yet she was discontented. More and more, each year, she came to believe that David Dean was the man of all men whose good opinion she desired, and it annoyed her to think that he valued the quiet services of Mary Derling and Rose Hinch more than anything Lucille had done or, perhaps, could do. She was like a child in her desire for words of commendation from David.

As David Dean mounted the three steps that led up to the bank where B. C. Burton spent his time as president, Lucille was awaiting him in his study in the little white manse on the hill.

XIII. A SURPRISE

B. C. BURTON, the president of the Riverside National Bank, was a widower, and led an existence that can be described as calmly and good-naturedly detached. He was a younger son of a father long since dead, who had established the Burton, Corley & Co. bank, which had prospered, and finally taken a national banking charter. Corley had furnished the capital for the original bank, and the Burton family had run the business. B. C.—he was usually called by his initials—had married Corley's only daughter, and had thus acquired the Corley money. After his wife's death his wealth was estimated as a hundred thousand dollars; the truth was that old Corley had invested badly, and left his daughter no more than twenty-five thousand. At the time of his marriage B. C. owned nothing but his share of the bank stock, worth about twenty thousand.

In spite of his reputation as a banker, B. C. was a poor business man where his own affairs were concerned. During his wife's life his own bank stock increased in value to about twenty-five thousand dollars, but he managed to lose all of the twenty-five thousand his wife had brought him, and when she died he had nothing but his house and his bank stock. In the four or five years since his wife's death he had continued his misfortunes, and had pledged fifteen thousand dollars' worth of his bank stock to old Peter Grimsby, one of the bank's directors. Thus, while Riverbank counted B. C. Burton a wealthy man, the bank president was worth a scant ten thousand dollars, plus a house worth five or six thousand. The bank stock brought him six per cent, and his salary was two thousand; he had an income of about twenty-six hundred dollars which the town imagined to be ten or fifteen thousand.

Being a childless widower he could live well enough on his income in Riverbank, but, had it not been for his placidity of temper, he would have been a discontented and disappointed man. Even so his first half hour after awaking in the morning was a bad half hour. He opened his eyes feeling depressed and weary, with his life an empty hull. For half an hour he felt miserable and hopeless; but he had a sound body, and a cup of coffee and solid breakfast set him up for the day; he became a good-natured machine for the transaction of routine banking business.

Some twist of humor or bit of carelessness had marked the choice of the names of the two Burton boys. The elder had been named Andrew D., which in itself was nothing odd; neither was there anything odd that the younger should have been given the name of the father's partner, Benjamin Corley; but the town was quick to adopt the initials—A. D. and B. C.—and to see the humor in them, and the two men were ever after known by them. When they were boys they were nicknamed Anna (for Anno Domini) and Beef (for Before Christ), and the names were not ill-chosen. The elder boy was as nervous as a girl, and Ben was as stolid as an ox. They never got along well together and, soon after B. C. entered the bank, A. D.—who had been cashier—left it and went into retail trade.

A. D. was the type of man that seems smeared all over with whatever he undertakes. Had he been a baker

he would have been covered with flour and dough from head to foot—dough would have been in his hair. Had B. C. been a baker he would have emerged from his day's work without a fleck of flour upon him. A. D. blundered into things, and became saturated with them; B. C.'s affairs were like the skin of a ripe tangerine—they clothed him but were hardly an integral part of him. Life's rind fitted him loosely.

When David Dean entered the bank, B. C. was closeted with a borrower, and the dominie was obliged to wait a few minutes. He stood at the window, his hands clasped behind him, gazing into the street, and trying to arrange the words in which he would ask the banker-trustee for the advance he desired. The door to the banker's private office opened, the customer came out, and the door closed again. A minute later the cashier told David he might enter.

B. C. was sitting at his desk, coatless but immaculate. He turned and smiled.

“Good morning, Mr. Dean,” he said. “Another good com day. You and I don't get much pleasure out of this hot weather, I am afraid, but it is money in the farmers' pockets.”

He did nothing to make David's way easy. His very smiling good nature made it more difficult. David plunged headlong into his business.

“Mr. Burton, could you—do you think the trustees would—grant me a further advance on my salary!”

The banker showed no surprise, no resentment. “I dislike to ask it,” David continued. “I feel that the trustees have already done all that they should. It is my place to keep within my income—that I know—but I seem to have fallen behind in the last few years. I have had to run into debt to some extent. There is one debt that should be paid; it should be paid immediately; otherwise—”

“Don't stand,” said B. C., touching a vacant chair with his finger. “Of course you know I am only one of the trustees, Mr. Dean. I should not pretend to give you an answer without consulting the others, but I suppose I was made a trustee because I know something of business. They seem to have left the finances of the church rather completely in my hands; I think I have brought order out of chaos. Here is the balance sheet, brought down to the first of the month.” David took the paper and stared at it, but the figures meant nothing to him. He felt already that Burton meant to refuse his request “Let me see it,” B. C. said, and his very method of handing the statement to David and then taking it again for examination was characteristic. “Why, we are in better shape than I thought! This is very good indeed! We are really quite ahead of ourselves; you see here we have paid five hundred dollars on the mortgage a full six months before the time the payment was due. And here is payment made for roofing the church, and paid promptly. Usually we keep our bills waiting. Then here is the advance made you. This is a very good statement, Mr. Dean. And now let me see; cash on hand! Well, that item is low; very low! Twenty-eight dollars and forty cents. You understand that, do you! That is the cash we have available for all purposes.”

He had not refused David; he had shown him that his request could not be granted.

“Of course, then,” said David, “the trustees have nothing to advance, even were they so inclined. I thank you quite as much.”

“Now, don't hurry,” said B. C. “You don't come in here often, and when you do I ought to be able to spare you a few minutes. Sit down. At our last meeting the trustees were speaking of your salary. We think you should receive more than you are getting; if the church could afford it we would arrange it at once, but you know how closely we have to figure to make ends meet.”

“I have not complained,” said David.

“Indeed not! But we think of these things; we don't forget you, you see. I dare say we know almost as much about your affairs as you know. I believe I can tell you the name of the creditor you spoke of. It's old Herwig, isn't it!”

“Yes.”

“I thought so,” said B. C. “Of course I knew you traded there, and it is a good thing to patronize our own church members, but it is a pity we haven't a live grocer in the church. I had to leave Herwig; my housekeeper couldn't get what she wanted there. Now, just let me tell you something, and put your mind at rest: if you paid Herwig whatever you owe him you might as well take the money down to the river and throw it in! Herwig is busted right now, and he knows it. If he collected every cent due him he would be just as insolvent. He is dead of dry rot; it is all over but the funeral. The only reason his creditors haven't closed him up is that it is not worth their while; I don't suppose they'll get a cent on the dollar. So don't worry about him—he's hopeless.”

“But what I owe him—”

“Wouldn't be a drop in the bucket!” said B. C. “Don't worry about it. Don't think about it. And now, about a possible increase in your salary; I think we may be able to manage that before long. Lucille Hardcome seems to be taking a great interest in your outside church work.”

“She seems eager to give all the help she can.”

“That's good! She is a wealthy woman, Mr. Dean; wealthier than you imagine, I believe. Do what you reasonably can to keep up her interest. She has done very little for the church yet in a money way. She can easily afford to do as much as Mary Derling is doing. Of course we understand she has had great expense in all these things she is doing; that house done over and all; she has probably used more than her income, but she can't get much more into the house without building an addition. She is thoroughly Riverbank now, and we have let her take a prominent part in the church and the Sunday school; she owes it to us to give liberally. I think she could give a thousand dollars a year, if she chose, and not feel it. The hundred she gives now is nothing; suppose we say five hundred dollars. If we can get her to give five hundred we can safely add two hundred and fifty of it to your salary. And you deserve it, and ought to have it. If we can add that two hundred and fifty dollars to your salary during my trusteeship I shall be delighted. We all feel that way—all the trustees.”

“That is more than I ever dared hope,” said David. “It is kind of you to think of it.”

“I wish we could make it a thousand,” said B. C. sincerely. “Well, I don't want to keep you all day in this hot

office. Just humor Lucille Hardcome a little; she's high-handed but I think she means all right."

David went out. The sun was hotter than ever, but for a block or two he did not notice it. Two hundred and fifty dollars increase! It would mean that in a few years he could be even with the world again! Then, as he toiled up the hot hill, his immediate needs returned to his mind, and he thought of Herwig. Whether the old grocer must inevitably fail in business or not the debt David owed him was an honestly contracted debt, and the old man had a right to expect payment; all David's creditors had a right to expect payment. His horror of debt returned in full force. There was not a place where he could look for a dollar; he felt bound and constrained, guilty, shamed.

Before the manse Lucille Hardcome's low-hung carriage stood. He entered the house.

"David!" called 'Thusia from the sitting room, and he hung his hat on the rack and went in to her.

"Lucille is waiting in the study," said 'Thusia. "She has been waiting an hour; Alice is with her."

"'Thusia, what has happened!" he cried, for his wife's face showed she had received a blow.

"Oh, David! David!" she exclaimed. "It is Alice! She is engaged!"

"Not Alice! Not our Alice!" cried David. "But—"

'Thusia burst into tears. She reached for his hand, and clung to it.

"Oh, David! To Lanny Welsh—do you know anything about him!" she wept. "I don't know anything about him at all, except he was a bartender, and Roger knows him."

"Our Alice! Lanny Welsh!" said David, "But nothing of the sort can be allowed, 'Thusia. It cannot be!"

"Oh, I hoped you would say that!" said 'Thusia. "But don't wait now. Go to Lucille at once!"

So David bent and kissed his wife, and walked across the hall to his study.

XIV. LUCILLE HELPS

THE shock of his wife's news regarding Alice had the effect of a slap with a cold towel, and momentarily surprised David Dean out of the weary depression into which the heat of the day, his inability to secure an advance on his salary and the delay in his midday meal had dragged him. A blow of a whip could not have aroused him more. Like many men who live an active mental life, he was accustomed to digging spurs into his jaded brain when and where necessity arose, forcing himself to attack unexpected problems with a vigor that, a moment before, seemed impossible. Neither he nor 'Thusia had had the slightest intimation that Alice was in love, or in any way in danger of engaging herself to Lanny Welsh. The event, as David saw it, would be most unfortunate. He had heard Roger mention the young fellow's name now and then, and perhaps Alice had discussed Lanny's ball playing with Roger in the presence of her parents; David could not remember. He entered his study briskly. The matters in hand were simple enough; he would get through with Lucille Hardcome as quickly as possible, remembering Burton's suggestion that some attention should be paid her. This would release Alice for the moment, and she could get the dinner on the table, for the dominie was thoroughly hungry. After dinner he would have a talk with Alice, and he had no doubt she would explain her engagement, and that he would find it less serious than 'Thusia imagined.

When David entered the study Alice, who had been curled up in his easy-chair, unwound herself and prepared for flight. She was in a happy mood, and kissed Lucille and then her father.

"No doubt you know that Dominie Dean is about starved, Alice," her father said. "I'll be ready for dinner when dinner is ready for me. If Mrs. Hardcome and I are not through when you are ready for me perhaps she will take a bite with us."

"I shan't be long," said Lucille. "I waited because—"

Alice slipped from the room and closed the door and Lucille, as if Alice's going had rendered unnecessary the giving of a reason, left her sentence unfinished. She was sitting in the dominie's desk chair with one braceleted arm resting on the desk, her hand on a sheet of sermon paper that lay there. She picked it up now.

"I couldn't help seeing this, Mr. Dean," she said. "'Thusia was asleep when I came, and Alice brought me in here and left me when she went about her dinner-getting. I saw it without intending to."

David colored. The paper contained a schedule of his debts, scribbled down that morning. He held out his hand.

"It was not meant to be seen," he said. "I should have put it in the drawer."

Lucille ignored the hand.

"It was because I saw it I waited," she said. "This is what has been worrying you."

"Worrying me?"

"Of course I have noticed it," she said. "You have been so different the last month or two; I knew you had something on your mind, and I knew dear 'Thusia was no worse. You must not worry. You are too important; we all depend on you too much to have you worrying about such things. Please wait! I know how stingy the church is with you—yes, stingy is the word!—and Mr. Burton with no thought but to pay the church debt, whether you starve or not. These financier-trustees—"

"But the church is not stingy, Mrs. Hardcome—indeed it is not. I have been careless—"

"Nonsense! On your salary? With a sick wife and two children and all the expenses of a house? Well, you shall not worry about it any longer. I'll take care of this, Mr. Dean."

She folded the paper and put it in her purse. “But I can't let you do this,” said David. “I—do you mean you intend to pay for me? I can't permit that, of course. I know how kind you are to suggest it, but I certainly cannot allow any such thing.”

Lucille laughed.

“Please listen, Mr. Dean! Do you think I haven't seen Mr. Burton looking at me with his thousand-dollar eyes! I know what he expects of me; I've heard hints, you may be sure. And no doubt he is right; I ought to give more to the church than I do. And I mean to give more; I meant to give a thousand dollars—subscribe that much annually—and I have been waiting for the trustees to come to me. So you see, don't you, I am doing no more than I intended? Only I choose to give it direct to you.”

David dropped into his easy-chair and leaned his head against his slender hand, as was his unconscious habit when he thought. To get his debts paid would mean everything to him, and, as Lucille explained it, she would be merely giving what she had intended to give. But had he a right to take the sum when she had meant to give it to the church! If she gave it to the church the trustees, as Burton had said, would set aside a part for him as an increase of his salary, but Burton was clear enough in suggesting that two hundred and fifty dollars a year more was what they thought Dean should receive out of whatever Lucille might give. If he took the entire thousand would he not be breaking a tacit agreement made with the banker! One thing was certain, he would not accept charity from Lucille or from anyone; it would be disgraceful. And if the thousand dollars went through the proper channel the most he could expect was a quarter of the sum. If he took it all he would be robbing the church. He raised his head.

“No,” he said firmly, “I can't take it. I can't permit it.”

“Then I give not a cent more to the church than I am giving now!” said Lucille. “You see I have made up my mind. This year I want you to have the thousand, Mr. Dean: Next year, and other years, the trustees can do as they please.”

There could be no doubt that Lucille meant it. She was headstrong and accustomed to overriding opposition: to having her own way. The horns of the dominie's dilemma were two: he must sacrifice his proper pride and take her money—which he could not bring himself to do—or he must lose the church the additional income he had been urged by Burton to try to secure. His duty to his manhood demanded that he refuse Lucille's offer; his duty to his church demanded that he secure her increased monetary support if possible.

“You are kind, and I know your suggestion is kindly meant, Mrs. Hardcome,” he said. “I admit that my debts do worry me—they worry me more than I dare say—but, if your generosity is such as I believe it to be, my case is not hopeless.” He smiled. “May I speak as frankly as you have spoken? Then, I do *not* find my salary quite enough for my needs, but—except for one creditor—no one is pressing me. I, and not they, am doing the worrying. Well, my trustees have promised me an ample increase as soon as the church income warrants it. To be quite frank, if you should give—as you have suggested—a thousand dollars annually, or even half that sum, my stipend will be increased two hundred and fifty dollars. No, wait one moment! With such economies as I can initiate that would permit me to be quite out of debt in a very few years.”

“If I were in your place,” said Lucille frankly, “I would prefer to get out of debt to-day.”

“But I repeat,” said David, “I cannot take the money.”

“Very well,” said Lucille haughtily, and she opened her purse and placed the schedule of debts on the dominie's desk. She arose and David also. “I'll tell you plainly, Mr. Dean, that I think you are foolish.”

“Not foolish but, perhaps, reluctant to accept personal charity,” said Dean.

Lucille was not stupid, but she looked into his eyes some time before she spoke.

“Oh, it is that way, is it!” she said cheerfully, “Yes, I understand! But that is quite beside the point I had in mind. I did not want you to feel that at all! Of course you would feel that! It is quite right. But we can arrange all that very easily, Mr. Dean; we can make it a loan—there is no reason why you should not accept a loan as well as any other man. I'll lend you the money—temporarily—and when your increase of salary comes you can pay it back. With interest, if you wish.”

“If I could make the payments quarterly, on my salary days—” hesitated David.

“Certainly!” cooed Lucille, delighted to have won her point. “It can be that way.”

“I should like the transaction to be regular; a note with interest. Seven per cent is usual, I believe.”

“Certainly. You see,” she beamed, “how easy it is for reasonable people to arrange things when they understand what they are trying to get at! And now I must go; you are starved. I will come again this afternoon; I will bring you the money and the note. You see we are quite businesslike, Mr. Dean. Well, I have to be; I manage my own affairs. I'll just run in a moment to see 'Thusia before I go. And—I almost forgot it—congratulations!”

“Congratulations?”

“Alice! She told me! I am so glad!”

David did not know, on the spur of the moment, what to say. Before he could formulate words Lucille, jingling her bracelets and rustling her silks, had swept voluminously from the room.

XV. LANNY

ON those days when 'Thusia was able to be downstairs Alice set a small dinner table in the sitting room so that she might enjoy the company of her husband and children. When David entered the sitting room Lucille had departed, and Roger was there, waiting for his belated dinner. Luckily his labors were not of sufficient importance to require prompt hours—his dinner hour sometimes lasted the best half of the afternoon. As David entered the room Alice ran to him, and threw her arms around him; he could do no less than embrace her, for anything else would have been like a slap in the face. He kissed her, but his face was grave.

"Father! Mother told you?" Alice said, still holding him. "Aren't you surprised! Why," she pouted, "you don't look a bit happy! But I know why—you don't know Lanny. They don't know him, do they, pop?"

Her brother, who had already taken his place at the small table, fidgeted. He was hungry.

"He's all right!" he said. "Lanny's fine." Somehow the young Roger's approval did not carry far with David.

"I think," he said, "we are all hungry. We will have our food, and discuss Alice's affairs later. I know I am too hungry to want to talk."

"And you aren't even going to congratulate me!" pouted Alice playfully.

The dominie cut short further talk by saying grace, following it by the operation of serving food from the dishes that were grouped around his plate, and then:

"How is your grandfather, Roger?"

"Fine as a fiddle, father. And, I say! we are going to play Derlingport this Saturday. We've arranged a series of three games, unless one or the other of us wins the first two. We play the first here, and the second in Derlingport. Honestly, I am glad to play a nine I'm a bit afraid of; this licking the spots off the grangers is getting monotonous. Derlingport has a pitcher that knows his business—Watts. But I'll chance Lanny against him any day."

"I should think so!" said Alice.

"Oh, you!" said Roger. "Because he has curly hair? A lot you know about pitchers."

"Well, I'm going to learn," said Alice.

David broke the thread of the conversation. "'Thusia," he said, "I have arranged to clear up the bills we owe."

"David!" his wife exclaimed, her pale cheeks coloring with pleasure. "Did the trustees grant the advance on your salary?"

"No, hardly that," he answered. "I saw Burton, but there is no money available. He was very kind. The trustees are going to give me an increase of salary—two hundred and fifty dollars more. It will be a great help. You see, with the increase, I can pay off the loan I am contracting in two or three years."

'Thusia looked frightened.

"A loan? Are you borrowing money, David?"

"Lucille Hardcome offered it; she practically forced me to accept it, 'Thusia. It was all I could do to keep her from forcing it on me as a gift. That I would not hear of, of course."

"How much are you borrowing?" asked 'Thusia, with an intake of breath.

"It will be about a thousand dollars; a thousand, I think."

"She could hand you ten thousand and not feel it, from what I hear," said Roger.

"'Thusia, you don't approve?" asked David. "Oh, I wish it could have been anyone but Lucille!" said 'Thusia. "It seems so—But I know so little of money matters. You would do what was best, of course, David. It will be a great blessing to feel we are not making the tradesmen wait for what is honestly theirs."

"I should have consulted you," David said, entirely without irony, for he did consult her on most matters of importance. "It is not too late to decline even now. I have not signed the note. She is to bring the money this afternoon. But, if I refuse—"

He related his conversation with Lucille, as well as he could recall it.

"I hardly see how you could refuse," 'Thusia admitted. "If she was angered she would do something to show her displeasure. Deep as she is in the church affairs I hardly feel that she is with us heart and soul yet. She always seems like an outsider taking an interest because—I shouldn't say it—she likes the prominence. That is why I wish you could have had the money from another. I'm sure Mary would have lent it."

"And of all the women I know," said David, "Mary is the last I should wish to borrow from. Had I my choice I would choose an entire outsider; the more completely it is a business transaction the more pleased I am."

No more was said then. Roger hurried away, not because his job called him, but because, as catcher of his nine, it was his duty to keep in practice; and some members of the nine might be on the levee willing to pitch to him. Alice still waited.

"Will you let me speak with your mother awhile, daughter!" David said. "Then we will call you."

"Shall I take the dishes out first!" asked Alice.

"Yes."

'Thusia raised herself a little on her pillows when Alice had quitted the room, and David drew a chair to the side of her couch. For a few moments they were silent.

"How did it happen!" David asked finally.

"David, you must not think unkindly of her; Alice is such a child—such a dear girl! She has no worldliness; how should she have with you and me for her parents! I think I am to blame if she has chosen wrongly. I am afraid I have neglected her, David."

"What an idea, 'Thusia! That is preposterous. Of course, I do not think unkindly of her; but I do think she has chosen foolishly, as girls sometimes will."

"Yes, but I mean what I say, David. I am tied here, of course, but I have given her so much freedom. I have

trusted to her instinct to choose suitable companions, when I should have remembered how careless and foolish I was when I was her age."

"What nonsense, dear!" said David. "If anyone is to blame it is myself. How could you do any more than you have done, kept close here as you are? How serious is it, 'Thusia?"

"I have hardly had time to decide; I am afraid it is very serious. She was all ecstasy and happiness until she saw I was not as happy as she was. I am afraid I let her see it too plainly. We must not let her think we are angry with her, David; she is very much in love with him. Oh, she praised him as a girl will praise a lover—her first lover!"

"I suppose she met him through Roger," said David thoughtfully.

"No," 'Thusia said. "I imagine Alice rather scorns Roger's ball-playing friends. I think Lanny Welsh called something after her one evening when she was passing the *Eagle* office—passing the alley there. He thought she was some other girl, I suppose. She was furious; she thought it was the rudest thing she had ever known, but the next time she passed he stopped her and apologized. She thinks it was noble of him. After that he tipped his hat whenever she passed, and she nodded to him. Then Roger introduced them. Lanny Welsh asked him to, I suppose. Now they are engaged."

David rested his head on his hand, and was silent. 'Thusia watched his face.

"It is unfortunate; most unfortunate," he said wearily.

"David, do you know anything about him!" 'Thusia asked.

"Only hearsay," he answered.

"Has he been a bartender!"

"I have heard that. You know what his father is—little better than a blackmailer."

"David, what can we do?" asked 'Thusia.

"I don't know," he answered. "No doubt she would give him up if we asked it."

"I'm not so sure of that," said 'Thusia. "She is a good girl, but you do not realize how she loves the boy—or thinks she loves him. She might think we were unjust to him."

What she implied David knew. Alice was, above all else, loyal. The very intimation that Lanny Welsh lacked friends might strengthen her partisanship, for she was like her father in having always a kindly feeling for the under dog. The most uncompromised earthly happiness is not the portion of those who feel for the under dog, for some dog is always under. If a person is to take any interest in the world's dog fights, and seek enjoyment therefrom, he must be thoroughly callous, and not care a snap of his fingers what happens to the under dog. This hard-hearted placidity must yield those who possess it a fund of unvexed joy; most of us find our joy alloyed by our pity for Fortune's unfavorites. A fair amount of carelessness regarding the under dog is necessary for the most complete worldly success; and our dominie, seeking to know himself, felt that if he had desired to prosper greatly in a worldly way he should have been born without his keen desire to see the under dog on top for a while, or at least without his inclination to prevent all dog fights.

On the whole he did not think, however, that the callous-hearted got the best out of life. The tough tympanum of a bass drum yields one sound, and the tom-tom may be a fine instrument for war or joy dances, but a delicately attuned violin quivers with more varied vibrations, and even the minor chords must satisfy some of its fibers. In the museum of eternity the tom-tom may have a place as a curiosity—as the musical instrument of a crude people—but even a child can imagine its one note; the fingers of the virtuoso tingle to touch the glass-enclosed violin, and the imagination pleasures in the thought of the notes of joy and sorrow it has given forth in its day.

Youth—as Alice—when born and brought up with a pity for the despised is apt to carry the good quality over the line so far that it becomes unreasonable. There is such a thing as innate devilishness that deserves chastisement; some of the things other men scorn deserve our scorn also; some men and women, too. But a girl in love, as Alice was, or thought she was, is not a very reasonable being. With her love as a certainty, she scorns the past and sees perfection in the future. Young lovers are all egotists to the extent of thinking: "If I chose him he must be good at heart and, no doubt, his past weakness was because he had not known me." In herself she sees his needed opportunity, and her loyalty to her ideal of herself and to him resents the interference of those who would interpose obstacles. Alice, being by nature loyal, and by nature and training inclined to pity, might easily be driven to a blind and gently berserk, but none the less everlasting, battle for Lanny Welsh by the very opposition that sought to win her away from him.

David was the less inclined to do anything instantly because his sense of justice was so strong. He knew too little about Lanny Welsh to condemn the young man in his own mind without further facts. Had he had the giving he would not have presented Alice to anyone like Lanny, for he would have chosen some youth he knew better—and that meant Mary Derling's boy Ben—but, having his innate desire to do justice to all men, and as Alice had already chosen Lanny, David felt he should learn more about Lanny before he made an absolute decision to oppose his daughter's choice. He knew enough of men and life to believe the tags the world put on young fellows were not always the proper tags. If the match was to be opposed the method of opposition to be adopted would depend on his knowledge of Lanny's character and circumstances, and as yet he knew little—too little to base an active opposition upon.

"What have you said to her, 'Thusia!" he asked.

"I told her I was surprised, and that I must speak to you before I could be sure what to say."

This was close enough to the fact. The saying had taken an hour or more and had been flavored by affectionate weepings and embraces, but in what she told David 'Thusia did not miss the fact far.

"I'm glad of that," he said. "I'll ask Alice to come in."

She came, rosy-cheeked and tremulously happy, and the interview left her happy and less tremulous. Of her father's affection she was sure, and of his justice she never had a doubt. She was not surprised that he should wish to know more of Lanny before he ventured to feel enthusiastic about the engagement, and she was so sure Lanny was the best of men that she had no fear of the final result of her father's gentle investigations.

From an interview so kindly, and permeated with affection, she went back to the kitchen happily.

"I imagine you'll have very little trouble in finding out all about him," 'Thusia said, and then, her bravery shattering itself a little against her motherly ambition: "David, I'm sure it is a mistake! I'm sure she should not marry him!"

"I am afraid Alice has been too hasty," said David.

They both meant the same thing: nothing more unfortunate could have happened. 'Thusia gave words to one of the reasons when she added: "Mary will be so disappointed!"

Not a word had ever been said on the subject, but the tacit hope had long been existent in the hearts of Mary and the two Deans that Alice and Ben Derling might become lifemates. Until Alice had dropped the bombshell of her engagement into the placidly intrenched hope everything had seemed trending that way. There was no question that Ben admired Alice, and Alice had seemed fond enough of Ben.

Although David had never allowed the filmy intuition to become an actual thought, the gossamer suggestion had floated across his mind more than once that it would be a good thing if Alice and Ben married. He thought, boldly enough, that it would be a suitable match in some ways—marrying in the same faith; marrying one who would be a good husband; marrying one whose social position in Riverbank would increase rather than lower David's own capacity for good in the community. Of the marriage as a financial matter beneficial to himself and 'Thusia he refused to think, but that gossamer ghost of thought would come floating by at times: an alliance with the Derling wealth would make old age less to be dreaded; somewhere there would be food and winter warmth and a nook by the fireside, where he and 'Thusia might end their days without dire penury in case, as is so often the case with ministers, he outlived his usefulness. He felt the thought, gossamer light as it was, to be unworthy, but it came unbidden, and there was comfort in it. And no man is a worse man for not wishing to end his life in an almshouse. Certainly no man is a better man for wishing to end his days on the Riverbank Poor Farm. The youth, Roger, unluckily, seemed little likely to be able to support himself; if Alice married into poverty, or worse, the state of the family in days to come threatened to be sad indeed.

But David went back to his study in hopefulness, for all that. Lanny Welsh might be better than he feared, and if Lucille Hardcome subscribed even half what she had suggested David might be able to keep even with the world or even save a little. He had hardly entered his study before Lanny Welsh and Alice came tapping on his door.

XVI. AN INTERVIEW

IN a small town men find themselves tagged far sooner and far more permanently than in the large cities. Let a young fellow attend church for a few weeks, behave decently for a year, and get a job as soon as one offers, and he is tagged as a "good" young man; thereafter it requires quite a little rascality to convince people he is otherwise. The small town is like a pack of cards; the rank of the components being once established, it is vain for them to attempt other values. Let young Bud Smith start out as a Jack-of-all-trades, and he is expected to remain one; and when he attempts steady work of one kind, his efforts are talked about as something phenomenal. If Bill Jones, the contractor, gives Bud a job it is considered a bit of eccentricity on Jones' part; what reason can a man have for taking on a Jack-of-all-trades as a steady carpenter! It might be just as well to be a little careful in making contracts with Jones; it looks as if he was a little too easy-going! Thus Jones gets his tag, and Bud Smith does not lose his. They cling.

Something of this sort had happened to Lanny Welsh. His father, old P. K. Welsh, was an oldtime character in Riverbank. For years he had been a familiar figure, trudging about town with his stooped shoulders, his long and greasy black coat and his long and pointed beard. His head was a little too large for his body, and his eyes, seen through his spectacles, were apparently too large for his face. They were blue. His hair often hung down upon his collar. Once a year or so he had it cut, and when he had it cut he had it cut short enough to last awhile. The change was as noticeable as if a large building had been tom down from one of the prominent Main Street comers.

In the side pockets of old P. K. Welsh's coat were always bundles of folded newspapers—his pockets bulged with them. He was a newspaper man. Day after day and year after year, old P. K. Welsh trudged up and down the two business streets of Riverbank, from eight in the morning until four or five in the afternoon, and so he had trudged for years. Thursday was an exception, for on Thursday he "published," running off the one or two hundred copies of the *Declarator* that constituted his edition. The paper was a weekly, five cents a copy, one dollar a year, and the total income from subscriptions was probably never more than one hundred dollars. This did not pay for his paper and ink, and he tried to make up the difference in advertising income; but as an advertising medium the *Declarator* was not worth the paper on which it was printed, and everyone knew it. He spent his life nagging the merchants into throwing him crumbs of petty patronage. His credit was nil, he never had any cash, he gave all his advertising in exchange for trade. When he sallied forth in the morning he carried a list of the groceries his wife needed; getting them for her meant nagging some grocer until he agreed to send up the groceries in exchange for a few inches of unwanted advertising space in the *Declarator*. Old P. K. grew wise in wiles. He knew the hour when Beemer's drivers came back to the store with their orders for the day, when Beemer and all his clerks would be madly measuring and tying and filling baskets. That was when old P. K. would appear. To get rid of him the grocer would often scribble down his order, and figure the bill as sufficiently repaid by the time saved through getting rid of old P. K. so easily.

The *Declarator* itself was an example of a good idea gone wrong through stress of necessity. The sheet was

small, four pages, often filled with plate matter, and the original matter was set in the most amateurish manner. The old type from which it was set was worn until some of the letters were mere smudges of black. From time to time old P. K., being in funds, would buy a few pounds of cast-off type from the *Eagle*, and this mixed with his worn supply, gave the paper a bizarre, hit-and-miss appearance. Old P. K. did not bother about reading proof. The paper came out with all the errors, with letters of one font mixed with letters of another font, and with some paragraphs set in large type and some in small. It was the column headed "Briefs," however, that tagged the *Declarator*.

It was known that old P. K. had come from somewhere in Kansas, and it was understood that he had known John Brown, the famous John Brown, whose soul goes marching on in the ballad. Welsh came to Riverbank in the years following the war, and started his little paper in opposition to the *Eagle*, which was then scarcely larger. Riverbank was once more Democratic. The *Declarator* was violently Republican and violently pro-negro. Across the first page, just under the title, P. K. ran the motto "All men—white or black—are equal." He knew his Bible by heart and scattered Biblical quotations through his pages, each chosen because of its sting. There were but a dozen or twenty negroes in the town, and the negro question did not worry anyone, and P. K. Welsh's loyalty was an asset. Although the Republicans were in a helpless minority they were glad to have an organ, and the *Declarator* did fairly well.

Time passed and the *Eagle* blossomed from a weekly into a daily. It contracted for telegraph news of the outside world. A group of Republicans started the *Daily Star*, staunchly but sanely Republican, and the *Declarator* slumped into the position of an unneeded, unwanted sheet. A few of the old-time, grit-incrusted Republicans, who believed every Democrat was destined for hell fire, still took the *Declarator*; the other subscribers dropped it. Old P. K. grew bitter; his subscription book became his list of friends and enemies. Those whose names once appeared on the list, or had ever appeared on it, and who canceled their subscriptions, became the recipients of his hatred. Welsh brooded over them and waited. Sooner or later he spat venom at them in the column headed "Briefs."

To anyone not acquainted with Welsh the *Declarator* appeared to be a blackmail sheet. It was not. Old P. K. was firm in the belief that he was doing God's work and that the *Declarator* was meant to be God's instrument. He quoted Scripture in his columns to declare that those who were not with him were against him, and that those who were against him were against God. One by one he took up propaganda that he believed righteous, and took them up with all the violence of a fanatic. He was the first man in Riverbank to cry aloud for prohibition, but he was also the first to shriek anti-Catholicism. He held up good, old Father Moran as an Antichrist, and pleaded that he be driven from town. He was continually advocating violence in words that to-day would have landed him in prison. With his abusive "Briefs" and his inflammatory editorials he became, in a small way, a nuisance to the town; with his nagging for advertisements he became a nuisance to the merchants. His wife was a simple-minded, easy-going creature, wrinkled and with a brown wig inclosed in a hair net. The wig looked less like a head covering than some sort of brown-hair pudding. On the whole, ridiculous as the wig was, it was better than nothing, for Mrs. Welsh was as bald as a billiard ball.

These were the parents of Lanny Welsh; they might well have served as an excuse for worthlessness in the boy, but this may be said for Riverbank—it does not damn the child because of the parents. Lanny Welsh won his own tag; at any rate it was given him through what the town knew of the boy, and not through what it knew of old P. K. and Lanny's mother.

You may imagine Lanny Welsh with bright, blue eyes and curly, brown hair, slender, lithe and a little taller than the average. He had a smile that would charm the heart out of a misanthrope. When he smiled his eyes brightened, the corners of his lips seemed to become alight with good nature, and a dimple flickered in his left cheek. As a boy he was needlessly cruel, but perhaps no more than the average boy, and charmingly sweet in his ways and words when he was not cruel. His mother let him tread on her in everything; old P. K. seemed hardly to know the boy was alive except when he arose in Biblical wrath over some escapade, and beat the boy outrageously with a leathern strap. Lanny howled when he was being beaten, and forgot the admonitions that accompanied them as soon as he was safe outside the woodshed.

He smiled his way through school, graduated, and went into his father's printing office as a matter of course. He worked there six or eight months, and left because he could not earn anything either for himself or for his father. The old man hardly missed him until, some months later, he learned that Lanny was working in a billiard room. He took the boy to the woodshed and Lanny knocked him down, not unkindly but firmly, and the old man cursed him in good, round, Old Testament phrases, and disowned him then and there. It did not worry Lanny in the least. He simply declined to take any stock in the curse or the casting off, and probably old P. K. himself soon forgot it. Lanny continued to live at home.

He worked in Dan Reilly's saloon. All told he worked for Dan Reilly three weeks. Two weeks he swept out the place, polished brasses and glasses and did odd jobs. One week he stood behind the bar. One week was enough of it. The week was in August, and Dan Reilly's saloon was on the sunny side of the street; there was no hotter place in Riverbank on a sunny August afternoon, and Lanny simply threw up the job on account of the discomfort. The one week, however, was enough; he was tagged. He was "old crank Welsh's son, the bartender fellow."

Lanny loafed awhile, and then the *Eagle* planned and put to press the first town directory of Riverbank, and during the preparation of the book Lanny found a place in the *Eagle* rooms setting type. There he remained. The typesetters were an easy-going lot; the side door of the composing room opened on an alley, and Dan Reilly's saloon was just across the alley. The little printer's devil was kept busy on hot days running back and forth with a tin beer pail. The *Eagle* was a morning paper, and between the blowing of the shrill six o'clock whistle and the time when the reporters turned in their late copy the printers were in the habit of sitting in the alley near the street, eating a snack, sipping beer and teasing the girls who passed. It was nothing particularly bad, but it was sufficiently different from what the bank clerks and counter-jumpers did to impress some Riverbankers with the idea that the printers were a bad lot. Thus Lanny grew up.

The town had a baseball craze just then, and the *Eagle* boys formed a nine. Van Dusen, the owner of the *Eagle*, gave them suits—red, with Eagle Nine in white letters on the shirts—and Lanny, tall, slim and quick-witted, was the pitcher. And he could pitch! It was not long before he was gathered into the Riverbank Grays

when critical games were to be played, and he was the first man in Riverbank to receive money for playing ball; the Grays gave him five dollars for each game he pitched for them. It was when he began pitching for the Grays that Lanny became well acquainted with Roger Dean, who was generally known among the ball players as “Old Pop Dean,” a compliment to his ball-playing ability, since “Old Pop” Anson was then king of the game, and the baseball hero.

Young Roger had been meant for the church, and David and 'Thusia had dreamed of seeing him fill a pulpit, but he seemed destined to be an idler. The money David had saved with infinite pains to provide a college education was thrown away. The boy departed for college with blessings enough to carry him through, but he was a born idler—good-natured and lovable, but an idler—and long before his course was completed it was known that he had come home and, before long, it was known he was not going back. The more kindly people said he preferred a business career to the ministry; others said he was too lazy. He was not a bad boy and had never been; as a young man he had no bad habits or desires; he had no ambition.

Had David been a farmer Roger would have been a model son; on a farm he would have milked the cows for his father, cut the grain for his father, done a man's work for his father. Had David been a merchant Roger would have sold goods behind the counter for his father, as well as any other man could have sold them, and would have stood in the sun at the door in his shirt sleeves when idle, making friends that would have meant custom. But in a minister's work there are no cows to milk for father, and no goods to sell for father; a minister's son must be bitten by ambition or his place in the world is hard to find. He cannot learn his father's trade by working at it; and Roger was the sort of youth who does only what is easily at hand to do. When he had been home a few weeks he was most often to be found on the back lot playing ball with smaller and far younger boys, and he was always the first taken when sides were being chosen. He was big, and a natural ball player, as Lanny was. His place was behind the bat, catching, but he was equally good when at the bat. The “curve” and “down shoot” and “up shoot” were just coming into the game, but they held no mysteries for Roger. He hit them all.

Henry Fragg, 'Thusia's father, now an old man, had given up the agency for the packet company he had long held, and now had a small coal office on the levee. He took Roger in with him, giving him the utmost the business could afford, a meager four dollars weekly—more than Roger was worth in the business, which was dead in the summer—and Roger transferred his ball playing to the levee, where bigger youths played a more spirited game. Before the end of that season Roger was wearing a baseball suit, one of the dozen presented by Jacob Cohen, the clothier, in consideration of permission to have the shirts bear the words Jacob Cohen Riverbank Grays, and Roger was a member of the nine, and its catcher. Thereafter, he gave more time than usual to baseball. In the rather puritanical community a minister's son playing ball was at first something of a shock, but Roger did not play on Sunday and the Grays would not play without Roger when the game promised to be close, so the result was less Sunday ball. Roger received the credit and baseball came to be less frowned on. David himself attended one or two of the Saturday games, but some of his church members felt he should not, and, as he cared nothing for the game, he went no more. Alice went occasionally when the game was important enough to draw large crowds and other nice girls were sure to be present.

It is remarkable how easily mortals accept genial incapacity as normal. In a year Roger was accepted as a satisfactorily conducted young man, permanently dropped into his proper place, and even David and 'Thusia no longer fretted about him. He was always present at meals; he was no different one day than another; he was cheerful and happy and contented. Henry Fragg said he did his work well, which was true enough, but there was very little work; once a day or so Roger came in from the sandy ball ground, weighed a load of coal, jotted down the figures and went back to his “tippy-up” game. There was always the hope that the business would grow, and that Roger would eventually succeed his grandfather in the coal business and prosper. Neither was there any reason why he should not.

But Lanny and Alice are still tapping on David Dean's door.

“Father, this is Lanny,” Alice said, and fled. The dominie looked up to see a tall, slender, curly-haired youth with eyes as dear and bright as stars. There was no bashfulness in him, and no overconfident forwardness. David liked him, and he was sorry to like him so well. He had a halfformed hope that Lanny would show himself at first glance to be impossible. He was not that so far as his exterior was concerned.

“I don't think we have ever met, Mr. Dean,” he said, extending his hand, “but of course I feel as if I knew you—everyone does. Alice told you I want to marry her. Well, I do. I suppose I should have spoken to you before I spoke to her—that's the right way, isn't it?—but I didn't think of that until afterward. I asked her sooner than I meant. I made up my mind I'd wait a year—in another year I'll have saved enough to begin housekeeping right—but it came out of itself, almost. I liked her so much I just couldn't help it; I guess that's the answer.”

“Yes, Alice told me you had asked her,” said David. “She also told me she had accepted.”

“Yes,” said Lanny, taking the chair David indicated. “I can't tell you, Mr. Dean, how much I think of her—how much—well, I never thought for a minute she would have me. Or, I did and I didn't. I thought she would, but I didn't believe it would be true. Of course she liked me, but a dominie's daughter, and she's such a nice girl—”

“You felt she was not in your class, is that it?” said David.

“That's it,” said Lanny with relief. “You know I tended bar once.”

“So I have heard,” said David.

“That was a mistake,” said Lanny, “and I'm glad I got sick of it when I did. It's no business for a man in a town like this, or any town, if he wants to be anybody. If you can't be a preacher or a lawyer or a doctor you've got to be in business. I'm going to get into business as soon as I can. I think there's room in this town for a good job office—job printing. A live man ought to make good money. That's what I have in mind—an up-to-date job office—as soon as I can raise the money. I'm doing pretty well now,” he added, and he mentioned his wage. “I can support a wife on that.”

David nodded. He had had no idea compositors were so well paid. He was constantly being surprised to learn how many men in the trades were receiving more than he himself was paid.

“Yes,” said Lanny, returning to what seemed uppermost in his mind, “you hit it when you said Alice was not in my class.”

“But I did not say that,” said David. “I only formulated your own thought for you.”

“Yes, that's it,” said Lanny. “I suppose, being a minister, you don't take as much stock in classes as some folks do. You care more whether a man is good or bad. But I figure a man has got to take some stock in such things in this world. I can feel I'm not in Alice's class—yet. My folks are not like you and Mrs. Dean. I don't know, but I guess if I was marrying a girl out of my family I'd want to feel I was marrying her out of the family, not marrying myself into it. That's what worried me, Mr. Dean, when I thought of having to talk to you about Alice. I'm making good wages, and I'm good for a job any time, and since I've been a compo I've been clean enough to be a dominie's son-in-law, but I know I'm not in your class. If I was I wouldn't be wanting to get into it. I'd be in. But I guess you know a man can't be blamed for the kind of parents he has. But, just the same, he is.”

“Have you spoken to your parents!” David asked.

“To mother. Father don't care whether I'm alive or not. Mother—well, I'll tell you: I've been giving her part of my wages. She wasn't any more pleased than she had to be.”

“Alice says you don't think of being married for a year,” said David.

“Well, I thought that was best,” said Lanny. “We talked it over and—I guess you know we've seen some thin picking at our house, Mr. Dean. It makes everything go wrong. I don't like it, and I made up my mind long ago that if ever I married it wouldn't be until I had at least enough in the bank to carry me over the between-jobs times. I've got three hundred in the bank now, but I don't want to chance it on that. Alice and I both think it is safer to wait a year. I don't know what I can save, but it will be every cent I can.”

David appreciated the exclusion of his own home from the example of those that had thin picking, although it was evident enough that the loverly confidences had included Alice's experience with lack of ready money. David arose and gave Lanny his hand again.

“I think the year of waiting is a wise idea, Mr. Welsh,” he said. “Either of you may have a change of mind.”

“If I thought that,” said Lanny with a smile, “I'd want to get married right away,” and he moved to the door. “It's mighty kind of you to talk to me without throwing me out of the door,” he added. “I know how much nerve I have, picking Alice for a wife.”

David was aware of a sudden flood of affection for the boy. He put his hand on Lanny's shoulder.

“Welsh,” he said, “I can say what I must say without offending you, I see.”

Lanny drew his breath sharply, and looked into David's eyes. The hand tightened a little on his shoulder. It stilled the fear that the dominie was about to tell him he could not have Alice, and his eyes smiled, for if Alice was not refused him outright no task would be too difficult to undertake, whatever it might be her father was about to propound.

“We don't know you yet,” said David. “You understand that, of course—it is all so unexpected. I'll say frankly, my boy, that I like you; and that Alice likes you and has chosen you means much. You have not asked me for her out and out, but that is what you meant, of course. Will you let me reserve my word temporarily?”

“Well, that's right,” said Lanny. “You ought to look me up and find out something about me before you give me anything as precious as Alice. If she was mine I wouldn't give her to anyone, no matter how good he was. I'll tell you, Mr. Dean, I don't pretend to be good enough for her; I don't expect you to find that I am; but I hope you don't find that I'm too bad for her.”

“And might it not be as well,” said David, “that the engagement be not widely heralded at present!”

Lanny's face fell.

“I've told mother,” he said. “There is no telling who she has told by now.”

“I cannot object to your having told your mother,” said David. “But let us tell no others for the present. Unless you wish to tell your father,” he added. Then: “Good-by, Mr. Welsh. You understand you will be welcome here any time.”

David hastened the departure because he saw Lucille Hardcome's low-hung carriage at his gate, and Lucille descending from it in state. Outside the door Lanny met Alice and to her query he said:

“He was fine, Alice! He's a fine man. All he wants is time to look me up a little.”

“The idea!” exclaimed Alice. “And when I have looked you up already,” but it was said joyfully and she tempered it with a kiss, quite clearly seen by Lucille Hardcome through the colorless glass of the upper panel of the front door.

XVII. LUCILLE TO THE RESCUE

LUCILLE HARDCOME, having observed the kiss, instantly pulled the bell, and Lanny and Alice started apart guiltily, and Alice opened the door. Seeing Lucille was a relief, for the visitor might have been anyone, and Lucille further relieved her by pinching her cheek and shaking a playful finger at her, accompanied by a jingling of many bracelets.

“So this is he!” she teased. “Am I to meet him, Alice, or are you too jealous to let him know other women!”

Lanny stepped forward. He shook hands warmly, making Lucille's bracelets jingle like miniature cymbals, and Lucille exchanged a few words, half grave and half gay, taking his measure meanwhile—or thinking she

was taking it, for she was a poor judge of individual character, however well she understood it in the gross. She liked the impressive. Henry Ward Beecher's hair meant more to her than Henry Ward Beecher's mind; she could never have understood a blithe statesman or one not in a frock coat. In time, not being an utter fool, she was apt to see through hollow impressiveness or to see real worth under unimpressive exteriors, but this came slowly. Her first impressions were usually wrong, as when she had misjudged Dominie Dean. In Lanny, standing in the illy lighted little hall, she saw nothing of the inner Lanny. She thought, “A male trifle; hardly worth serious consideration; a girl's first love material,” and felt she had him properly scheduled.

“Your father is in the study?” she asked, and tapped on the study door lightly, not to injure the knuckles of her kid gloves. If David had not heard the light tap—which he did, knowing Lucille was in the hall—he would have heard her bracelets. He opened the door.

We are apt to give men and women too much credit for pursuing a definite course. The hard heads that, at the beginning of a career, lay clean-cut plans of ambition are in an infinitesimal minority. With most ambition is not much more than a feeling of uneasiness, an oyster's mild irritation at the grain of sand that intrudes into the shell. Just as some forms of indigestion cause an inward uneasiness that urges the sufferer to eat and eat, regardless of what is eaten, and only seeking relief from what seems a pang of hunger—but is actually a pathologic condition—so the victim of ambition feeds on whatever comes to hand. Lucille was such a victim.

When David opened the door of his study Lucille sailed in like a full-rigged ship, and seated herself at his desk. She opened her purse, and disgorged the roll of bank notes, which opened itself like something alive. She pushed the money to the edge of the desk.

“You'll find that right,” she said, and dipped into her purse again. “This is the note, if you insist. I've left the time blank—shall I make it a year?”

She picked up David's pen.

“I think six months—”

“It is to be just as you wish it,” she said, and inserted the time, and slid the note toward David, handing him the pen. He was standing, and he bent over the desk and signed his name. Lucille blotted it briskly, and put the note back in her purse. The money still remained where she had pushed it. She put it into David's hand.

“There!” she exclaimed. “Now, no more worry!”

“I can't tell you how I appreciate this, Mrs. Hardcome,” said David.

“Please!” she begged, raising a hand. She snapped her purse and dropped it into her lap. “Alice told me of her engagement, the dear girl!” she said. “I met the happy man in the hallway just now.”

“Alice told you?” said David, surprised. “Oh! this morning, of course. She said nothing just now? We think it best not to make the engagement public yet; they will not be married for a year, at least—they agree to that—and I thought she might have told you.”

Lucille put out her hand; there was nothing for David to do but take it.

“I'm so glad!” she cried effusively. “Glad the engagement is not to be announced, I mean; glad the wedding is not to be for a year. I wonder if you feel as I do, that so many marriages are too hastily made? Alice is such a dear girl, Mr. Dean; no man could be too good for her.”

The implication was plain; Lanny was not good enough for Alice.

“It isn't as if dear 'Thusia could be up and about,” said Lucille, still holding David's hand. “We know 'Thusia would do all a mother should do, but she is so handicapped. Young girls are so impulsive; they need just a bit of guiding here and a word there. We should let them think they are making a free choice, but should help them in making it. Mr. Dean, frankly, don't you think Alice is making a mistake!”

She dropped the dominie's hand, and settled herself in his desk chair again. It was impossible to shake off the confidential air she had imparted to the interview. David was not sure that Alice was not making a mistake. He hesitated, seeking some word that would deny that 'Thusia had not done all she should have done for Alice. What he wanted to tell Lucille Hardcome was that he and 'Thusia were quite able to manage Alice's affairs, but it was necessary to tell Lucille more than politely, and he felt at heart that Lucille was perhaps right—someone should have guided Alice's choice a little.

“I know you think so,” Lucille said without waiting for his reply. “I know just how you feel. I feel the same—quite as if Alice was my own daughter; we all feel as if Alice was that; the daughter of the church. Not but what this young man may be thoroughly praiseworthy, Mr. Dean, but is he the son-in-law our dominie should have! Oh, no! No!”

In anything he said in Lanny's favor, David must be on the defensive. He did not know enough of the young man yet to speak with unbounded enthusiasm or calm certainty.

“My short interview with him was quite satisfactory,” he said. “In the essentials he seems to meet any reasonable requirements. His manner is manly.”

Lucille interrupted him.

“Oh, all that, of course! Alice is not a baby, she would not choose anyone utterly impossible, I dare say.” Then, leaning toward David, she said: “Mr. Dean, you know and I know that Alice ought not marry this Lanny, or whatever his name is. This Welsh—do you know what his father is? He's an awful creature. You know Alice can't be permitted to marry into such a family. Now, please,” she urged, “just leave it all to me. Men can't manage such things, and poor dear 'Thusia—”

“But, my dear Mrs. Hardcome,” David began. “Oh, my dear Mrs. Nonsense!” she cried, rising and mocking him. “I think it is about time someone took you in hand, David Dean; I think it is just about time! 'Thusia is a dear soul, and Mary and Rose are dear souls too, but the whole lot of you haven't enough worldly gumption to say boo to a goose. You'd sit here and let Alice marry a bartender (well, then, an ex-bartender!) and you wouldn't see it would be the ruin of the whole lot of us, and of him, too, or if you did see it you wouldn't raise a hand.”

She spoke rapidly but without excitement; teasingly.

“Mr. Dean,” she continued in a more serious tone, “I am worldly and I know the world. Alice must not

marry this young fellow; she must not! And she is not going to!"

"But, Mrs. Hardcome," cried David, thoroughly frightened. "I cannot let you interfere in what is so completely a family matter."

"David Dean, will you please stop Mrs. Hard-coming me? My name is Lucille quite as much as Mrs. Derling's is Mary, and you are not going to frighten me away by calling me Mrs. Hardcome. Now," she said, "will you leave Alice to me?"

"I will not!" said David; "I must beg you not to interfere in any way. I understand Alice; 'Thusia understands her. We are not, perhaps," he said with a smile, "as lacking in worldly wisdom as you imagine."

Lucille shook her head and laughed. "Incorrigible!" she exclaimed. "You'll never understand how much you need someone like me. A business manager? Shall I call it that? Then it is all settled—I am to see that Alice does not make this mistake."

"No!" cried David, but she was at the door. "It is all settled!" she triumphed.

"Mrs. Hardcome!"

"All settled!" she laughed, and went out and closed the door.

David put his hand on the knob and hesitated. After all was said, Lucille was right, no doubt. The marriage would be more than annoying; he himself was too prone to consider character as canceling worldly objections. There was one thing about Lucille Hardcome—she usually had her way. She was a "manager."

Lucille had gone from David to 'Thusia. David waited until she had left the house. He found 'Thusia more complacent than he had expected to find her. Lucille's visits sometimes annoyed her.

"I feel so relieved, David," she said. "Lucille has been here and spoken about Alice. There was so little I could do, tied down as I am, and Ruth could hardly help, and of course Mary would hesitate, feeling as she does about Alice and Ben. Lucille is just the person we needed."

"'Thusia! And I thought, of all the women in Riverbank, she was the one we would want to have keep hands off!"

"But you see," said 'Thusia cheerfully, "she is going to keep her hands off, in a way. She is going to be my hands."

David had his own idea of Lucille's being anyone's hands but her own, but he said nothing then. He had the money in his pocket with which to pay his debts, and he was eager to settle with Herwig. He kissed 'Thusia and went out.

XVIII. MR. FRAGG WORRIES

AS David entered Herwig's store P. K. Welsh was leaving it. He was the same greasy, unkempt figure as usual, his pockets stuffed full of copies of the *Declarator* and exchanges, his bent shoulders carrying his head low, and his bushy brows drawn into a frown. He pushed by the dominie as if not seeing him. David turned, but the old man was already in the street, crossing it, and David went into the store. He had had a momentary impulse to stop P. K., and speak of the engagement, but he decided that telling his father was Lanny's affair. He went back to where Herwig sat at his desk.

The grocer was working on his books, with a pile of bills and statements before him.

"That man Welsh is a town nuisance," he said. "Can't drive him away with a club; been pestering me an hour."

He did not say how he had finally driven Welsh away. P. K. had wanted a dollar's worth of sugar, and had set his mind on getting it from Herwig in exchange for advertising. Herwig had told him he couldn't afford to give a dollar's worth of sugar for advertising or anything else. He couldn't afford to give a cent's worth. He showed P. K. the bills he owed, and the bills owed to him. It happened that David's statement was the top of the pile.

"He ought to pay you," P. K. had snarled. "Man getting a salary like his; big church, rich congregation. What right has he to owe money!"

"Well, he owes me," said Herwig. "Everybody owes me. Credit is the curse of this town. I can't get money in, and I can't pay my bills, and if I don't I'm going to be shut up."

"One dollar's worth of sugar won't—"

"Oh, go away! I tell you no, and I mean no! Get out!"

P. K. had gone. Going he had seen the dominie plainly enough, and bitter hatred had been in his glance. Lanny had not told him of the engagement, but his wife had; and that alone was enough to anger the embittered, old man. On the street his anger grew. Why had the dominie not stopped him and said something about the engagement? Too stuck-up! Stuck-up, and with an unpaid grocer's bill! He went mumbling down the street, coaxing his ill humor.

"I'm glad to say I've been able to raise some money," David said, "and we will just settle that bill without further delay. And right glad I am to be able to do so, Mr. Herwig. The amount is?"

"It will be a help, a great help," said Herwig gratefully. "Thank you! When a man is pressed on all sides—"

He was distraught with worry, it was easy to see.

"That Welsh pesters the life out of me. I can't afford to advertise in his vile sheet; it's blackmail; money

wasted—thrown away. He ought to be run out of town—tarred and feathered. Brought up a good-for-nothing, bartending son—"

"Let me see—yes, this is the right change," said David hastily. "You might send me—or I think I'll let Mrs. Dean give her order to the boy to-morrow, as usual."

He hurried from the store. He did not know why hearing Herwig talk about Lanny annoyed him so. When he was on the street he felt ashamed of having fled without saying a word in defense of Lanny. He turned to go back and did not go. Instead he went the rounds of his creditors, paying bills.

It was after banking hours, but the door of the bank stood open and he went in. He found the banker in his office, for Burton never hurried home, and David went straight to the matter in hand. Lucille's loan had been enough to cover the advance made by the trustees, and David felt he should repay the church the advance. It had been included in the schedule of his debts Lucille had seen. He placed the bank notes on the banker's desk, and explained what they were for. B. G. took them and counted them.

"You know there is no necessity for this, dominie," he said. "It was understood the money should be deducted from your next salary payment."

"But, having it, I prefer to pay it now," said David. "I was able to raise what I needed. A—friend came to my assistance."

Burton stacked the banknotes, and pushed them back on his desk. It was on the tip of his tongue to say he hoped David had said something to Lucille about an increased subscription, but he thought better of it. That Lucille had loaned David the money he was morally certain, for the bank notes were Riverbank National notes, crisply new and with Burton's signature hardly dry. He had handed them through the window to Lucille himself, remarking to her that she would like some brand-new money, perhaps. He remembered the amount of the check she had presented; no doubt it was the amount of the loan she had made David.

When the dominie left Burton sat in thought. Lucille had not made David a present of the money, he decided, for he could not imagine David accepting any such gift, and it was fairly sure that David would not accept the money as a loan unless he felt sure of repaying it. That meant that he must be sure of an increase in salary, and that in turn meant that Lucille must have promised an increased subscription, doubtless asking that her intention be kept secret for the present. All this was not difficult to imagine, but B. C. was pleased that he was able to follow the clew so well. He decided that it would be safest to let David handle the matter, with an occasional hint to David to keep him working for the subscription. He derided this placidly and with the pleasant feeling that the dominie's refund, added to the cash already on hand, made the church's bank balance more respectable. He liked a good bank balance; the bank paid the church four per cent on its balances and he was always pleased when the item "bank interest" in his report amounted to a decent figure. He walked home feeling well satisfied. As he passed the old Fragg homestead he nodded to David's father-in-law who was coming through the gateway. The old man crossed the street.

"My housekeeper is sick," he said, as a man who feels the necessity of telling his banker why he is neglecting his business during business hours. "She's pretty bad this time, I'm afraid. I've got Rose Hinch, and the doctor has been here. No hope, I'm afraid."

"Mary Ann is an old woman," said the banker philosophically.

"Yes, yes!" agreed Fragg nervously. What he did not say was that if Mary Ann died he would have to find another housekeeper, and that—in Riverbank—would be a hard task. Mary Ann had been with him while his wife was alive, had been with him when 'Thusia was born. She knew his ways, and a new housekeeper would not. "Yes, we must all die!" he said. "I got your notice that my note comes due next week. I suppose it will be all right to renew it again?"

"Quite. Not much coal business in midsummer, I imagine," said the banker.

"Very little. Well—"

He looked at the house and then down the street, and hurried away. The banker continued his easy, homeward way.

The note worried Fragg more than it worried the banker, because Fragg knew more about his affairs. He had mortgaged the homestead to go into the coal business, because the coal business eats up capital, but this did not worry either the banker or Fragg. What worried Fragg was his last winter's business. Ever since he had gone into the coal business the bank had loaned him, each year, more or less money to stock up his coal yard against the winter trade. Last winter he had lost money; bad accounts had eaten into his reserve, had devoured it and more; he had been obliged to use a good part of the money the bank loaned him in paying for coal already sold and consumed. He owed the bank; he owed the mines; he owed the holder of the mortgage. He wondered how he could get enough coal to supply his trade during the coming winter. When he reached his office on the levee, he saw the little card "Back in five minutes" stuck in the door, just as he had left it when called to Mary Ann's bedside. Roger was practicing ball; he waved his hand to his grandfather and went on playing, and the old man entered the office, to pore over his books again, seeking some way out of his difficulties. Through the window he glanced at Roger; he was very fond of the boy.

XIX. "BRIEFS"

WHEN the *Declarator* for that week appeared, David found a copy in his box at the post office, for Welsh made it a practice to let his victims see how they were handled. He had given nearly all the space in the “Briefs” column to David. The dominie did not open the paper immediately. He had a couple of letters to read, and one or two denominational papers to glance through, and he was well up the hill before he tore the wrapper from the *Declarator*, and looked into it. As he read he stopped short, and stood until he had read every word in the column. Then he tore the sheet to bits, and threw it into the gutter. His first thought was that 'Thusia must not see the paper, or hear how Welsh had attacked him in it. The attack was less harmful than venomous. It was a tirade against “The Spiritual Dead Beat”—for so he chose to dub David—mentioning no name, but pointing clearly enough at the dominie. Choice bits:

“Who is this hypocrite who preaches right living, and owes his butcher, his grocer, his baker, his shoe man, and can't or won't pay?”

“I can't skin my grocer; he knows I'm a dead beat. I'm a fool; I ought to have set up as a parson.”

There was an entire column of it. David's thought, after 'Thusia, was thankfulness that he owed not a tradesman in Riverbank.

And this was to be Alice's father-in-law!

Lanny came to the house that evening; he asked to see David in the study.

“Of course you saw the *Declarator*, Mr. Dean,” he said when they were alone. “I don't know what to do about it. I saw father, and if he hadn't been my father I would have knocked him down with my fist. It's a dirty piece of business. I know what's the matter with him: he's sore because I'm going to marry somebody decent, when no decent person will have anything to do with him. Mother told him I'm engaged to Alice. I talked to him straight; you can believe that! I would have taken it out of his hide if I hadn't thought how it would look. You wouldn't want a son-in-law that was in jail for beating up his own father. What can I do about it, Mr. Dean?”

David said nothing could be done about it; he said he was glad Lanny had not attacked his father with physical violence, and he urged him to avoid words with his father.

“He has had a hard life; you and I do not know how hard. It has embittered him; he is not rightly responsible.”

“But why should he attack you, of all men?” Lanny cried. “Or if he don't like you what kind of a father is it that tries to spoil things for me—that's what he's trying to do. It's meanness.”

“He has had a hard life,” David repeated. “You don't think I ought to do anything? You can't suggest anything for me to do?”

“Avoid quarreling with him,” said David. There was no other advice to give; it was unfortunate that Alice should have chosen to love a man with such a father; there was nothing Lanny or any other person could do. Welsh was a town nuisance.

The next week the *Declarator* retracted, in the manner in which it always retracted when a retraction was necessary. The item in the “Briefs” was headed “An Apology!!!” and ran: “We apologize. The Spiritual Dead Beat has paid his debts. We wonder who lent him the money?” The banker-trustee, Burton, meeting David, spoke to him of this.

“I see our respected fellow townsman, Welsh, is touching you up, dominie,” he said. “It is a pity we can't run the fellow out of town. Worthless cur! He gave me his attention last year; I put an ad in his paper and he shut up. What do you suppose ever started him against you?”

“He is an embittered man; his hand is against the whole world.”

“That's probably so,” agreed the banker. “A sort of Donnybrook Fair; if you see a head, hit it. Well, I don't know what we can do about it. He keeps inside the law.” He hesitated. “Dominie,” he said, “you'll not feel offended if I say something? I guess you know I'm only thinking of the good of the church and of your own good. You don't suppose Welsh knows who lent you the money he's talking about, do you? I'll tell you—I imagine you make no secret of it—I know who lent it! I couldn't help knowing—”

“It was entirely a business transaction; I stipulated that,” said David.

“Certainly. We know that; anyone would know it that knew you, dominie. Well, I've no scruples about borrowing and lending; it is my business, I'm a banker. I'll make a guess that Lucille Hardcome came to you with the loan idea, and that you didn't go to her; and I'll make another guess that before you were willing to borrow the money from her you heard her say she was going to increase her subscription, maybe five hundred dollars, and maybe a thousand. Am I right? I thought so! Because it wouldn't be like you to borrow unless you saw where you could pay it back, and I told you that if Lucille raised her subscription you'd get your share. It's all right! The only thing—you won't mind if I say it?”

“I can imagine what it is,” said David.

“Yes. If this man Welsh knows what he is talking about—if he isn't just guessing—he can be very nasty about it. I can't imagine why he is picking on you, but if he wants to keep it up, and knows you borrowed money from Lucille Hardcome, he can make it—well, he'll make it sound as if there was something wrong about it. He'll twist some false meaning into it—invalid wife and gay widow and money passing. I hate to say this, but people are always looking for a chance to jump on a minister—some people are, that is. I don't know how we can get at Welsh—he's so low he's threat-proof. I was going to suggest that you let me put in an application for a loan at our bank, say for the amount you borrowed from Lucille Hardcome. Borrow the money from us and pay her, and then let us get after Welsh.”

David thought a moment.

“It might offend her,” he said. “She was extremely insistent. I might almost say she predicated her possible increase of subscription on my accepting the loan. I felt so or I would have refused her.”

“Let me handle her,” urged Burton. “I'll say nothing until the bank agrees to the loan, anyway. You'll let me make the application for you!”

David agreed. It was, if the bank was willing, the wisest course, or so it seemed at the moment.

David went about his duties as usual, and it was not for several days that he heard from Burton. The bank's discount committee had declined the loan.

Lucille, in the meantime, had not been idle. She set herself the task of saving Alice from Lanny Welsh, and she went about it in a manner that would have done credit to an experienced diplomat. One of the men she had tried hardest to induce to become a frequenter of the "salon" she had attempted to create was Van Dusen, the owner of the *Eagle*, and in a certain satirically smiling way he admired Lucille. He had once had literary ambitions and, like most small town editors, he had his share of political hopefulness, especially with reference to a post office; and he recognized in Lucille a power such as Riverbank had not previously possessed. She knew congressmen and senators, and dined them when they came to town; and they seemed to think her worth knowing. A word from her might, at the right moment, throw an office from one applicant to another. Van Dusen cultivated her friendship. He was a good talker and a great reader, and Lucille enjoyed him. He was a busy and a sadly overworked man, hard to draw from his home after his day's work was done, but he did accept Lucille's invitations. His presence at her house meant much; the town considered him one of its illustrious men.

Lucille jingled into his office one morning, rustled into a chair and leaned her arms on his desk.

"Are you going to do something for me, like a good man?" she began.

Van Dusen leaned back in his chair and smiled.

"To the half of my kingdom," he said.

"That's less than I expected, but I suppose I'll have to make it do," she returned playfully. "Isn't there, Mr. Van Dusen, some newspaper or printing office in Derlingport that pays more than you pay! Some place where a deserving young man could better himself?"

"Some of them pay more than the *Eagle,*" he admitted.

"And you could get a young man a place there?"

"I might. The *Gazette* might do it for me; Bender is an old friend of mine."

"Then I want you to do it," said Lucille. "You won't ask why, will you? Just do it for me?"

"What position does your protégé want?" Van Dusen asked, drawing a scratch pad toward him, and poising a pencil.

"Compositor—isn't that it—when a man sets type? It's Lanny Welsh; I want him to have a better job than he has—in Derlingport." She saw Van Dusen frown. "I think I'll tell you all about it," she said; "I know I can trust you."

"With your innermost secrets, on my honor as a bearded old editor," smiled Van Dusen.

"Then it is this," said Lucille and she told about Lanny and Alice.

Van Dusen demurred a little. He said Lanny was good enough for any girl, dominie's daughter or king's daughter, no matter whose daughter.

"And have you seen the *Declarator?*" Lucille demanded. "Is the editor of the *Declarator* good enough to be a dominie's daughter's father-in-law?"

Van Dusen admitted that this was another matter, and good-naturedly let Lucille have her way. When she had departed, he wrote to Bender of the *Gazette*. A few days later Lanny came to the manse, half elated and half displeased.

"Old Van is all right!" he told David. "I can't blame him for bouncing me when there's no work for me to do, and there's not one man in a thousand that would take the trouble to look up another job for me, and hand it to me with my blue envelope. I'm going up to work on the *Gazette*, at Derlingport, Mr. Dean. It just rips me all up to go that far from Alice, even for a little while, but I've got to do it. If we're going to be married in a year I need every day's work I can put in, and when you think that the *Gazette* job will pay more than my *Eagle* job, I guess you'll admit I've simply got to grab it."

"When are you going?" asked David. "To-morrow," said Lanny. "These jobs don't wait; you've got to take them while they're empty. Between you and me, Mr. Dean, I think I wouldn't have had a chance in the world if it hadn't been for Mr. Van Dusen. He's that sort, though."

To David, knowing nothing of Lucille's having a hand in this, it seemed almost providential, this removal of Lanny to another town.

"I've got another idea, too," Lanny said. "I think maybe I can get father to come to Derlingport. He's dead sore on Riverbank, I know, and mother will be anxious to be where I am. I may be able to make father think there is a better field for the *Declarator* there than here. I don't know. After I've been there awhile I'll try it. I wish he would leave this town, and let people forget about him."

David heartily wished the same thing, and he was soon to wish it still more heartily. At the moment he liked Lanny better than he had ever liked the boy.

"I expect you'll excuse me, now," Lanny said. "I expect you know I'm wanting to spend all the time with Alice I can, going in the morning and all that. And, oh, yes! I'm going to look around up there for a job for Old Pop—for Roger. I'm pretty sure to get on the Derlingport nine, and I want Old Pop to be behind the bat when I'm pitching. I think it would be a good thing for him to get up there, if I can land a job for him. There's no future in that coal office, Mr. Dean, to my mind. They are a live lot of men back of the Derlingport nine, and if I want Old Pop to catch for me, and won't listen to anything else, some of them will hustle up a job for him. Maybe there is a coal man connected with the nine someway. I don't know, but in a big place like Derlingport there's always room for anybody as clean and straight as Roger."

David was touched. He saw, in imagination, a new Roger winning his own way, spurred on by the brisker business life of the bigger town, bettered by the temporary breaking of home ties, inoculated with Lanny's enthusiasm.

Roger spoke of the chance Lanny might get him, and spoke of it voluntarily and enthusiastically. It would be

a great thing for him, he said. Grandfather Fragg was all right, of course, but there was nothing in the way of a future in his coal business. He said he hated to take money from him when he knew the business was running behind every day.

“Is it as bad as that, Roger!” David asked. “Every bit, father,” Roger replied. “I don't see how he's going to pull through the winter and keep the business going.”

“Isn't there anything you can do!”

“Do! It isn't a case of do, it's a case of money. He didn't have enough capital to start with, and he hasn't any left. Brown & Son have got all the business. I could get some of it away from them but grandfather can't supply the coal. He can't buy it; he hasn't the money to do a big business on, and a small coal business is a losing proposition. The profit is too small; you've got to do big business or you might as well quit.”

The talk left David with a new source of worry. 'Thusia's father was showing his infirmities more plainly each day; if he lost his coal business—and David knew the loss of the Fragg home was to be included in that loss—the old man would have but one place to turn to: David's home. It would mean another mouth to feed, perhaps another invalid to care for and support.

XX. LANNY IS AWAY

TWO weeks in succession, after going to Derlingport, Lanny spent Sunday in River-bank, and Alice enjoyed the visits immensely. Their brief separation gave zest to the mere being together again. The third Sunday Lanny did not come down, but wrote a long letter. The Derlingport nine had jumped at the chance of securing him as a pitcher; they were to give him ten dollars a game. He was mighty sorry, he wrote, that the nine's schedule included Sunday games, but every ten dollars he could pick up in that way made their wedding day come just so much nearer. He guessed, he said, that it would be all right for him to play the Sunday games in Derlingport, and in other towns than Riverbank; if Derlingport played any Sunday games in Riverbank they could get another pitcher for the games. He mentioned Roger; he had talked to the bosses of the nine, and they were willing to find a job for Old Pop, and would do so if Roger would sign up for the season, or what remained of it, but Lanny wrote that he supposed the Sunday game business would shut Roger out of that.

Alice volunteered to let David and 'Thusia read the letter—it was the first out-and-out love letter she had ever received—but they declined, feeling that to do so would be to take an unfair advantage of Alice's dutifulness, and she read them such portions as were not pure love-making. The letter came Saturday. Alice was not greatly disappointed that Lanny was not coming down, for he had suggested that he might not come. She went to church Sunday morning, and Ben Derling walked home with her. The Presbyterian Sabbath school was held in the afternoon, and about the time Lanny was warming up for the first inning of the Derlingport-Marburg ball game Alice was leading her class in singing the closing song. Below the pulpit Lucille Hardcome beat time with her jingling bracelets, and she smiled to see Ben Derling close his hymn book, and edge past his class of boys with a glance in Alice's direction. He hurried out as soon as the benediction was said, and Lucille rightly guessed that he meant to wait for Alice in the lobby, but Lucille captured Alice before she could escape.

“If you are not needed at home, Alice,” she said, “you must come with me. I have the most interesting photographs! Dozens of them, pictures of Europe. My carriage will be here directly.”

The photographs were not new. Lucille had made a flight through Europe as soon as her husband was dead. It was her first use of the money she inherited, and she had bought the photographs then—it was before the days of picture postcards.

For six months after her return she had inflicted the photographs on all her friends and acquaintances, and had then tired of them. They had reposed peacefully in a box ever since, and might have remained there forever, had she not invited Ben Derling to her house.

Lucille played a harp—a great gilded affair, and she asked Ben, who was a fair violinist, to try a duet, suggesting that they might make part of a program when she gave a concert for the church fund. Ben went willingly enough, and played as well as he could, and enjoyed the evening immensely. He found Lucille but an indifferent harpist, but willing to let him make suggestions. She asked him what he thought of a series of musical evenings, and he took to the idea enthusiastically. This was Wednesday.

Lucille's real reason for asking Ben to her house had been to study him a little more closely than she had had opportunity to do before. She mentioned Alice, and Ben was enthusiastic enough to satisfy Lucille that he liked Alice well. If Alice would be willing to try out a few things with him, piano-violin duets, it would be a pleasing part of the musical evenings, he said. Lucille thought so, too. They talked music; and Lucille happened to mention that she had first heard the harp in Paris, and Ben said he had not taken time to hear any music when he was in Europe. It was the first Lucille had heard of Ben's European tour, and she left him in her parlor while she hunted up the photographs.

She was not quite sure where they were. As she rummaged for them she thought Ben over, and almost decided he would not do as a substitute for Lanny Wesh. There was something gayly sparkling about Lanny, and Ben was anything but gay or sparkling. He was short and chunky, serious-minded and sedate. Some ancestor had given him a little greasy knob of a nose, but this was his most unpleasant feature. It is easiest, perhaps, to describe him as a thoroughly bathed young man, smelling of perfumed soap, and with yellowish hair, ever smooth and glistening from recent applications of a well-soaked hair-brush. He had no bad habits

unless, in one so young, incessant application to business is a bad habit. He had taken his place in his grandfather's office the week the old man died. Already, from bending over a desk, he was a little rounded in the shoulders. His violin and his Sunday school class were his only relaxations. He was a good boy, and a good son; but Lucille was afraid he was not likely to appeal to the romantic taste of a girl like Alice. When she discovered the photographs she was inclined to leave them where they were, and tell Ben she could not find them, and let the musical evenings be forgotten. The picture that happened to be on top was one that pictured some city or cathedral of which Van Dusen had spoken when last in her home, and more for Van Dusen than for Ben she gathered the pictures in her arms, and carried them downstairs. Ben seized them eagerly.

His trip abroad had been the one great upflaring of his life. He had gone with a “party,” and had raced from place to place, but he had a memory that was infallible. His eyes brightened as he saw the photographs. He talked. He talked well. He made the pictures live. He was in his element: he would have made an admirable stereopticon lecturer had business not claimed him. He remembered dates, historical associations, little incidents that had occurred and that had the foreign tang. Before he had gone one quarter through the pile of pictures, Lucille gathered them up.

“No more to-night!” she laughed. “We young folks must have our beauty sleep,” and she sent him away. “He must show the pictures to Alice,” she said to herself. “She will be made to visit Europe when she hears him tell of it. He is quite another Ben.”

When, Sunday afternoon, Lucille found that Ben, as she had guessed, was waiting in the lobby she hailed him at once, saying:

“How fortunate! I am taking Alice to look at my European pictures. You 'll come, won't you?” Ben was eager. There was room in the carriage for him, crowding a little, which was not unpleasant when it was Alice who was crowded against him. Lucille left them with the photographs while she went to induce the maid to make a pitcher of lemonade. When she returned Ben was talking. He and Alice were seated on a couch by the window, and Alice was holding a photograph in her hands, studying it. Ben sat turned toward her; he leaned to point out some feature of the picture, and Alice asked a question. Lucille placed the pitcher of lemonade on a stand, and went out; they were doing very well without her. She felt she had made an excellent beginning; Lanny banished, and Alice at least interested in what Ben was interested in. When she interrupted them it was to suggest the musical evenings.

“It will be delightful!” Alice exclaimed. She had, for the moment, quite forgotten Lanny. The moment had, in fact, stretched to something like two hours. Ben walked home with her.

XXI. A FAILURE

AUGUST and September passed, and, in passing, seemed as placid and uneventful as any two months that ever slipped quietly away. To Alice no day and no week held any especial significance; if she had been asked to tell the most important event of the two months, she would probably have said that it was the completion of the set of twelve embroidered doilies, and the centerpiece to match, the first work she had undertaken for her new home—the home to be—since her engagement to Lanny had come about. David Dean could have thought of nothing of particular importance. Old Mrs. Grelling had died, but she had been at death's door so long her final passing through was hardly an event, and nothing else had occurred. Lanny would have said everything was running smoothly; his pitching arm kept in good condition, his work was steady at the *Gazette* office, and Alice's letters to some extent took the place of the visits to Riverbank which the Sunday ball games made impossible. Old P. K. Welsh seemed to have forgotten his anger against the dominie, and used the “Briefs” to lambaste other Riverbankers. Herwig was still in business and Mary Ann, Mr. Fragg's housekeeper, clung to life. Rose Hinch was still nursing the old housekeeper and getting Fragg's meals. 'Thusia was no better and no worse. The two months were uneventful. They were months of which we are accustomed to say: “Everything is going the same as usual.”

We deceive ourselves. The quiet days build the great catastrophies. The greatest builder and demolisher is Time, and he works toward his ends on quiet days as well as on noisy days; works more rapidly and more insidiously, perhaps. If Time does nothing else to us on quiet days, he makes us a day older each day. To-day I am the indestructible granite; to-morrow a speck of dust touches me and is too small to see; the next day it is a smudge of green; the next it is a lichen; it is a patch of moss that can be brushed away with the hand; it is a cushion of wood violets and oxalis; it is a mat in which a seedling tree takes root; the roots pry and the moisture rots and the granite rock falls apart, and I am dead.

The two months that passed so quietly and happily for Alice Dean were equally happy months for Ben Derling. He was never the youth to make of courtship a hurrah and a race; he hardly considered he was courting Alice—he was seeing her oftener than he had seen her, and enjoying it. Alice was but filling in the days and evenings as pleasantly as possible during Lanny's absence. If Ben had been the eager instigator of their meetings Alice would have drawn back, but Ben instigated nothing; Lucille Hardcome stood between them, and was the reason they met. Alice went to Lucille's because Lucille wished her musical evenings to be a success; Ben was there because he was a part of the proposed programs. The two young people were musicians, not susceptible male and female, and they met as musicians, interested in a common desire to assist Lucille. By the end of the two months Alice had greater respect and liking for Ben than she had ever imagined possible. She had thought him a dull boy; she found him solid, sincere and more than comfortable. By the end of the two months Ben, not aware that Alice was pledged, had decided that she was the girl he

wished—but no hurry!—to have as a wife. Lucille was pleased but impatient. Mary Derling, seeing how things were going, was pleased but not impatient.

Alice was unaware of any change in her feeling for Lanny. She wrote him letters that were as loving as love letters should be, and Lanny wrote with equal regularity. He wrote daily. Toward the end of September Alice was not quite as eager in her reading of his letters, mainly because their mere arrival was satisfactory evidence that Lanny still loved her. She wrote a little less frequently; there was not enough news to make letters necessary, except as expressions of affection. Without knowing it, she was reluctant to express her affection as unrestrainedly as at first. She let one of Lanny's letters remain unopened a full day. Once she passed old P. K. Welsh on the street: he did not notice her, probably did not know she was Alice Dean, but Alice felt an irritation; it was too bad Lanny had such a father. Without anything having happened, the end of the two months found this difference in Alice: whereas, at the beginning of August she was in love with Lanny, and eager for the wedding, at the end of September she was in love with him, and not eager for the wedding. Probably if Lanny had made a few trips to Riverbank just then it would have made all the difference possible. He was magnetic; he was not a magnetic correspondent.

The unimportant two months had for David Dean several vastly important littlenesses. Lucille, preliminary to her “evenings,” asked David to run in and hear how well her amateurs were progressing, and she asked Mary Derling, too. She had in mind a trial of the effect of a family grouping, as if the presence of Mary and David would be an unwitting approval of growing intimacy of Ben and Alice. David, always music hungry, enjoyed the evenings of practice; Mary did not care much for music, and cared a little less for Lucille. She made excuses. After one evening she declined and went to the manse instead; she enjoyed being with 'Thusia. At the far end of Lucille's rather spacious parlor David and Lucille sat, while Ben and Alice tried their music. Lucille talked of everything that might interest David. She adopted the fiction that she and the dominie were in close confidence, and attuned her conversation to the fiction. She was continually saying, “But you and I know—” and, “You and I, however—” David as consistently declined to share the appearance of close confidence, but how could he be too harsh when the twin thoughts of what Lucille was doing for Alice and what he owed Lucille in cash (and hoped to get from her in subscription) were always present! The two eventless months also brought the note sixty days nearer due. They did not bring the subscription Lucille had hinted. Now and then a flush of worry ran through David—how would he be able to reduce the amount of the note when the six months were up? Certainly not out of any savings; his expenses seemed to be running a little in advance of his salary, as usual.

For 'Thusia's father the two months brought closer and clearer the certainty that he could not keep the coal business intact much longer. After the January settlements, or after the April settlements, at latest, the bank would see that his affairs were hopeless. Concerning his business, all he hoped now was that he could keep things going until Mary Ann died. He had an idea, hazy and which he dared not think into concreteness, that —once out of business—he might make a living doing something. At the same time he knew he could do nothing of the sort; he had not the health. He was merely trying to avoid admitting to himself that he was about to become a charge on David Dean.

The crash—and it was a very gentle crash, and well deadened by the bank which did not want unprofitable reverberations—came in April. As the fact reached the newspapers and the public, it appeared that Mr. Fragg was selling out on account of his failing health, and that before embarking in another business he would rest and recuperate. His books showed that when everything was turned into cash he would still be indebted to the bank, and the coal mines or factors, something over four thousand dollars. The house was gone, of course. Mary Ann had died in December, and Mr. Fragg had not tried to replace her; for several months he had been boarding. It was evident to him and to David that the old man could not board much longer; there was no money to pay the board bills. There was one room vacant at the manse, the room that had been “fixed up” for a maid, under the roof, used now as a storage place since Alice did the work of the dismissed maid. Here old Mr. Fragg took the few belongings the room would accommodate.

For many years after this the old man was often seen in Riverbank. Bad days he was unable to go out; on bright days he walked slowly downtown. He had his friends, merchants who were glad, or at least willing, to have him sit in their offices, and with them he spent the days. Now and then 'Thusia gave him a little money—a dollar or two, all that could be afforded—and so his life ran to a close. He would have been quite happy if he could have paid his own way. Love and kindness enveloped him in David's home; he was the dearly loved grandfather. He would have been quite happy, without paying his way, if he had not known how hard it was for even David to live on his salary. He worried about that constantly.

XXII. A TRAGEDY

I KNEW David Dean so well and for so many years that I may see a tragedy in what may, after all, be merely an ordinary human life. As I think of him, from the time I first knew him, on through our many years of friendship, I cannot recall that he ever had a greater ambition than to serve his church and his town faithfully. He had a man's desire for happiness, and for the blessings of wife and children, and that they might live without penury; but he was always too full of the wish to be of service to waste thought on himself. Love and care and such little luxuries as the shut-in invalid must have he lavished on 'Thusia, but the lavishment of the luxuries was in the spirit, and not in the quantity. It was lavishness to spend even a few cents for daintier fruit than usual, when David's income and expenses were considered. 'Thusia did not suffer for luxuries, to tell the truth; for Mary and the church ladies sometimes almost overwhelmed her with them,

but the occasional special attention from David was, as all wives will appreciate, most necessary.

The Riverbank Presbyterians considered themselves exceedingly fortunate in having David Dean. The rapid succession of Methodist pastors, with the inevitable ups and downs of character and ability, and the explosions of enthusiasm or of anger at each change, made David's long tenure seem a double blessing. His sermons satisfied; his good works were recognized by the entire community; his faith was firm and warming. He was well loved. When Lucille Hardcome finally recognized his worth, there did not remain a member of the congregation who wished a change. It may be put more positively: the entire congregation would have dreaded a change had the thought of one been possible.

A few of the members, Burton among them, may have recognized that David—to put it brutally—was a bargain. He could not be replaced for the money he cost. The other members were content in the thought that their dominie was paid a little more than any minister in Riverbank, nor was it their affair that the other ministers were grossly underpaid. Certainly there was always competition enough for the Methodist pastorate and hundreds of young men would have been glad to succeed David.

When the six months—the term of the note David had given Lucille Hardcome—elapsed he was unable to make any reduction in its amount. Casting up his accounts he found he was not quite able to meet his bills; a new load of debt was accumulating. He went to her with the interest money, feeling all the distress of a debtor, and she laughed at him. From somewhere in her gilded escritoire she hunted out the note, took the new one he proffered, and made the whole affair seem trivial. He mentioned the subscription she had half, or wholly, promised and she reassured him. Some houses she owned somewhere were not rented at the moment; she did not like to promise what she could not perform or could only perform with difficulty. It would be all right; Mr. Burton understood; she had explained it to him. She made it seem a matter of business, with the unrented houses and her talk of taxes, and David was no business man; it was not for him to press matters too strongly if Lucille and Burton had come to an understanding. She turned the conversation to Alice and Ben.

“Lanny Welsh hasn't been down at all, has he?” she asked.

“Yes, once or twice,” David said.

“Alice says he is buying a shop in Derlingport.”

“Has bought it. It is one reason he cannot come down.”

Lucille looked full into David's eyes.

“Tell me!” she smiled. “Don't I deserve to know the whole? Has she said anything!”

“Yes,” said David, “she has said something. She doesn't know what to do. She came to me for advice; I told her to trust her own heart.” Lucille laughed gleefully.

“These girls!” she exclaimed. “Well, you told her exactly the right thing! Mr. Dean, she is in love with Ben! She is in love with both of them, of course, or she is in love with Love, as a young girl should be, and she doesn't know behind which mask, Ben's or Lanny's, Love is hiding. She will never marry Lanny!”

“You are so sure?”

“You wouldn't know the Ben I have made,” said Lucille. “Ben does not know. Six months ago he had no more of the lover in him than a machine has; if any youth was left, it was drying up while he clawed over his business affairs. I think,” she laughed, “if I ever needed a profession I would take up lover-making. What do you think Ben has done?”

David did not hazard a guess.

“Bought a shotgun,” Lucille laughed. “Ben Derling going in for sport! I'd have him learning to dance, if dancing was proper. I believe I am really clever, Mr. Dean! I saw just what Ben lacked, and I had George Tunnison come here—he plays a flute as horribly as anyone can—and I made him talk ducks and quail, until Ben's muscles twitched. If Alice had been a man she would be a duck hunter.”

David smiled now.

“She would,” he admitted.

“So Ben is spending half his spare time banging at a paper target with George, and he brings the targets to show to Alice. He has bought a shanty boat with George. It's romance! Danger! Manliness!”

She laughed again. David smiled, looking full at her with his gray eyes, amusement sparkling in them. He had a little forelock curl that always lay on his forehead. Lucille thought what a boy he was, and then—what a lover he would be; quite another sort from Ben Derling. She drew a deep breath, frightened by the daring thought that flashed across her mind.

At no time, I am sure, was Lucille Hardcome in love with David. The pursuit she began—or it would be better to call it a lively siege—was no more than a wanton trial of her powers. She was a born schemer, an insatiable intrigante, lacking, in Riverbank—since she was now social queen and church dictator—opportunity for the exercise of her ability. It is doubtful whether she ever knew what she wanted with David Dean. There are cooks and chambermaids who glory in their “mashes,” and tell them over with gusto; they collect “mashes” as numismatists collect coins, and display the finer specimens with great pride. It may be that Lucille thought it would be a fine thing to make the finest man she knew fall in love with her. The proof of her power would be all the greater because he was a minister and married, and seemingly proof against her and all other women.

'Thusia was an invalid, and it may have flashed across Lucille's brain that 'Thusia might not live forever; it is more likely that she did not think of a time when David might be free to marry again. She doubtless thought it would be interesting, and in harmony with her character as social queen, to make a conquest of David, and have him dangling. There is no way of telling what she thought or what she wanted beyond what we know: she came to courting him so openly that it made talk. Lucille had sufficient conceit to think that no man could withstand her if she gave her heart to a conquest. She did not hurry matters. She had all the rest of her life, and all the rest of David's, in which to play the game. For a year or two she was satisfied to think that David admired her secretly; that he was struggling with himself, and trying to conceal what he felt, as a

man in his position should. Instead, he was unaware that Lucille was trying to do anything unusual. She had her ways and her manners; she was flamboyant and fleshily impressive. That she should coo like a dove-like cow might well be but another of her manifestations. David really had no idea what she was getting at, or that she was getting at anything except—by seeming to be on close terms with the dominie—strengthening her dominance in the church. She had enveloped the elders and the trustees, and now she seemed to wish to envelop the dominie, after which she would grin like the cat that swallowed the canary. David, having a backbone, stiffened it, and it was then Lucille discovered she had teased herself into a state where a conquest of David seemed a necessity to her life's happiness.

Long before she reached this point, she had the satisfaction of knowing that Alice had broken with Lanny, and was engaged to Ben Derling. The break with Lanny came less than a year after Lanny went to Derlingport, and was not sharp and angry but slow and gentle—like the separation of a piece of water-soaked cardboard into parts. Distance and time worked for Lucille; propinquity worked for Ben Derling. Thirty miles and eleven months were too great for Lanny's personal charm to extend without losing vigor, and Lucille groomed Ben, mentally and otherwise, and brought out his best. There was no doubt that Ben would make the best husband for Alice; he was a born husband. No matter what man any girl picked it was safe to say Ben would make a better husband than the man chosen; it would only remain for the girl to be able to get Ben, and to feel that—the world being what it is, and perfection often the dullest thing in it—she wanted a best husband. Alice, aided by Lucille, decided that she did want Ben.

It would be untruthful to deny that David and 'Thusia were pleased. They liked Ben and loved his mother; Lanny's unfortunate father no longer lurked a family menace. With these and other considerations came, unasked but warming, the thought that the future would not hold poverty for all concerned. It was well that Alice need not add her poverty to David's and 'Thusia's, for Roger—well beloved as he was—seemed destined to be helpless in money affairs. The George Tunnison who had been used to tempt Ben Derling to so much sportiness as lay in duck hunting kept a small gun and sporting goods shop—a novelty in Riverbank—and Roger had found a berth there. His ball playing made him a local hero, and he did draw trade, and George gave him five dollars a week. This was to be more when the business could afford it, which would be never.

No time had been set for Alice's wedding. Ben was never in a hurry, and there seemed no reason why the wedding should be hastened. If Ben was slow in other things he was equally slow in changing his mind and, having once asked Alice to marry him, he would marry her, even if she made him wait ten years. Except for their worry over money matters—for Lucille meant to withhold her increased subscription as long as the withholding made the trustees, and especially Burton, fawn a little—David and 'Thusia were quite happy. The engagement had brought Mary Derling closer than ever, and Rose Hinch was always dearer when young love was in the air. She had missed love in her youth, since David was not for her, but her joy in the young love of others was as great as if it had been her own.

The day was early in the spring, and the hour was late in the afternoon. David, just in from some call, had thrown his coat on the hall rack, and entered the study. He was tired, and dropped into his big easy-chair half inclined to steal a wink or two before supper. In the sitting room 'Thusia and Mary Derling, Alice and Rose Hinch, were sewing and talking.

“I'll tell you one thing,” he heard Alice say; “I'm not going to spoil my beautiful blue eyes sewing in this light.”

He heard a match scrape, and a strip of yellow light appeared on his worn carpet. Against it Alice's profile, oddly distorted, showed in silhouette. Mary's voice, asking if Alice saw her scissors, and Alice's reply, came faintly. He closed his eyes.

The jangling of the doorbell awakened him. “Never mind, I'll use Rose's,” he heard Mary say, so brief had been his drowsing, and Alice went to the door.

“Yes, Mrs. Derling is here,” he heard Alice say in reply to a question he could not catch. “Will you come in!”

Evidently not. Alice went into the sitting room. “Someone to see you, Aunt Mary,” she said, for so she called Mary. “He won't come in.”, Mary went to the door. David heard her querying “Yes!” and the mumbling voice of the man at the door and Mary's rapid questions and the answers she received. He reached the door in time to put an arm around her as she crumpled down. She had grown stout in the latter years and her weight was too much for him. He lowered her to the lowest hall step and called: “Rose!” Rose Hinch came, trailing a length of some white material. She cast it aside, and dropped to her knees beside Mary.

“What is it!” she asked, looking up at David. “I think she fainted,” he said. “Ben is dead—is drowned.”

“Ah!” cried Rose in horror and sympathy and put her hand on Mary's heart.

“And Roger,” said David. “Roger, too!”

XXIII. SCANDAL

THE bodies were recovered, had been recovered before George Tunnison started on the long trip back to Riverbank. It seemed that Ben could not swim, and when the skiff turned over he grasped Roger, and they both went down. The river was covered with floating ice. Tunnison, according to his own account, did what he could, but if the two came up it must have been to find the floating ice between them and the air. They were beyond resuscitation when they were found. Of Mary the doctor's verdict was fatty degeneration of the heart; any shock would have killed her.

In the sad days and weeks that followed Rose Hinch was the comforter, offering no words but making her

presence a balm. She neither asked nor suggested that she come, but came and made her home in the manse. It is difficult to express how she helped David and 'Thusia and doubly bereaved Alice and querulous old Mr. Fragg over the hard weeks. She was Life Proceeding As It Must. It might almost be said that she was the normal life of the family, continuing from where sorrow had wrenched David and 'Thusia and Alice and the grandfather from it, and, by mute example, urging them to live again. Her presence was comfort. Her manner was a sweet suggestion that life must still be lived. She made the grandfather's bed in Roger's room, for a room vacated by death is an invitation to sorrow; she began the sewing where it had been dropped, and 'Thusia and Alice, because Rose sewed, took their needles. Work was what they needed. They missed Mary every hour, and David missed her most, for she had been his ablest assistant in his town charities, but the greater work thrown on him by her going was the best thing to keep his mind off the loss that caused it, and Rose Hinch intentionally refrained from giving her usual aid in order that the work might fill his time the more. Lucille Hardcome alone—no one could have made Lucille understand—doubled her assistance. The annoyance her ill-considered help caused him was also good for David; it too helped him to forget other things.

Grandfather Fragg died within the year. Rose had long since left the manse, unwilling to be an expense after she was no longer needed, and had taken up her nursing again, for she was always in demand. As each six months ended David carried a new note to Lucille, and had a new battle with her, for she wanted no note; she urged him to consider the loan a gift. This he would not listen to. He had cut his expenses to the lowest possible figure, and was able to pay Lucille a little each time now—fifty dollars, or twenty-five, or whatever sum it was possible to save. He managed to keep out of debt. Alice, who had rightly asked new frocks and this and that when Ben was alive, seemed to want nothing whatever. She did not mope but she seemed to consider her life now ordered, not completed, but to be as it now was. She was dearer to David and 'Thusia than ever, and they did not urge her to desert them. In time she would, they hoped, forget and be young again, but she waited too long, and they let her, and she was never to leave them. Her indifference to things outside the manse and the church permitted David to save a few dollars he might otherwise have spent on her. So few were they that what he was able to pay Lucille represented it.

For some time after the tragedy that had come so suddenly David had no heart to take up the question he had discussed with the banker. Burton, of course, said nothing when not approached, regarding the increase in David's stipend. He did mention to David, however, the desired increase in Lucille's subscription, and with the death of Mary Derling this increase became more desirable than ever. Old Sam Wiggett and, after his death, Mary, had been the most liberal supporters of the church. It was found, when Mary's will was read, that she had left the church ten thousand dollars as an endowment. Of this only the interest could be used, and her contributions, with what Ben gave, had amounted to far more—to several hundred dollars more.

More than ever Lucille loomed large as the most important member of the church. With the wiping out of the last of the Wiggett strain in Riverbank, the Wiggett money went to Derlings in other places, and Lucille became, by promotion, seemingly the wealthiest Presbyterian. Burton wrinkled his brow over the church finances, but, luckily, no repairs were needed, and there was a little money in the bank, and Mary's endowment legacy made his statements look well on paper. I think you can understand how the trustees and the church went ahead placidly, month following month, unworried, because feeling sure Lucille would presently do well by the church. She was like a rich uncle always about to die and leave a fortune, but never dying. It was understood that when her investments were satisfactorily arranged she would act. At first this reason may have been real, but Lucille knew the value of being sought. Like the rich, undying uncle she commanded more respect as a prospective giver than she would have received having given.

It was extremely distasteful to David to have to ask Lucille to give; it seemed like asking her to pay herself what he owed her, and when he had done his duty by asking her several times, he agreed with Burton that the banker could handle the matter best. A year, more or less, after Mary Derling's death the banker was able to announce that Lucille had agreed to give two hundred dollars a year more than she had been giving, and that as soon as she was able she would give more.

She spoke of the two hundred dollars as a trifle. It brought the church income to about where it had been before Mary Derling's death.

Without actually formulating the idea, Lucille had suggested to herself that she would celebrate her conquest of David Dean by increasing her yearly gift to the church to the utmost she could afford. Her blind self-admiration led her to think she was making progress. David was always the kindest of men, gentle and showing the pleasure he felt in having companionship in good works, and Lucille probably mistook this for a narrower, personal admiration. It was inevitable that he should be intimate with her, she directed so many of the church activities. If he were to speak of the choir, the Sunday school, church dinners, any of a dozen things, he must speak to Lucille. They were often together. They walked up the hill from church together, Banker Burton often with them; Lucille, in her low-hung carriage, frequently carried David to visit his sick, and he considered it thoughtful kindness.

Many in Riverbank still remember David Dean, as he sat back against the maroon cushions of the Hardcome carriage, Lucille erect and never silent. He seemed weary during those years—for Lucille courted him slowly—but he never faltered in his work. If anything he was doubly useful to the town, and doubly helpful and inspiring to his church people. Sorrow had mellowed him without breaking him. He had been with Lucille on a visit to a boy, one of the Sunday school lads who had broken a leg, and Lucille had taken a bag of oranges. The house was on the other side of the town, and Lucille drove through the main street, stopping at the post office to let David get his mail. He met some friend in the office, and came out with a smile on his lips, his mail in his hand. Lucille dropped him at the manse. He walked to the little porch and sat there, tearing open the few unimportant letters, and glancing at the contents. There was one paper, and he tore off the wrapper. It was the *Declarator*. He tore it twice across, and then curiosity, or a desire to know what he might have to battle against, made him open the sheet and look at the “Briefs.” The column began:

“It is entirely proper for a minister of the gospel to ride hither and yon with whomsoever he chooses, male or female, wife or widow, when his debts are paid. We should love our neighbors.”

“A minister of the gospel is, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. *Honi soit!* Shame upon you for thinking evil

of the spotless.”

David read to the bottom of the column. It was stupid venom, the slime of a pen grown almost childish, lacking even the sparkle of wit, but it was aimed so directly at him that he burned with resentment. The last line was the vilest: “Who paid the parson's debts?” suggesting the truth that Lucille had paid them, as the rest of the column suggested that she and David were more intimate than they should be. He sat holding the paper until 'Thusia called him. Before he went to her he walked to the kitchen, and burned the paper in the kitchen stove, and washed his hands.

XXIV. RESULTS

THE following day was Sunday. Lucille, who had received and read the *Declarator*, was present at both morning and evening services, as usual, and took her full part in the Sunday school in the afternoon. Welsh's column had annoyed her, undoubtedly, but in another way than it had annoyed David. To David it had seemed the cruel and unfounded spitefulness of a wicked-minded old man; to Lucille it was as if Welsh had guessed close to the truth, but had carried his imagination too far. It had made her furiously angry, as such a thing would, but she felt that it would do her little harm. Welsh was known to be so vile that she had but to hold her head high, and the town and her friends would think none the less of her for the attack. Those who did believe it, if there were any, would by their belief be offering her a sort of incense she coveted.

Several spoke to David about the column, and all with genuine indignation. The story of Welsh's attack had spread, of course, but none of us who knew David Dean thought one iota of truth was in it; the thing was preposterous. It came down to this: David Dean was not the kind of man of which such things were possible. We did not believe it then, and we never believed it. The town did not believe it; even his few enemies knew him better than to believe such a thing; Welsh himself did not believe it. But Lucille Hardcome did, conceit-blinded creature that she was! Some day during the week, Wednesday it may have been, she drove her low-hung carriage to the manse. The driver's seat was a flat affair on X-shaped iron rods, so arranged that it could be turned back out of the way when Lucille wished to drive and dispense with her coachman, and she was driving now. David came to the door, and went in to get his hat. He wished to visit the same broken-legged boy, and the carriage was a grateful assistance. He spread the thin lap robe over his legs, and Lucille touched the horses with the whip.

“Jimmy's first?” she asked, and David assented.

“You have oranges again, I see,” he said. “How he enjoys them!”

“Doesn't he?” Lucille replied, and then: “I'm glad you do not mean to let that *Declarator* article make any difference. I was afraid it might. You are so sensitive, David.”

It was the first time she had called him David. Mary had called him that, and Rose did; he was David to many of us; but the name did not sound right coming from Lucille's mouth. She was so lordly, so queenly, usually so rather grandly aloof, calling even dear Thusia “Mrs. Dean,” and Rose “Miss Hinch.”

“Sensitive! I have never thought that of myself,” he answered.

“Oh, but you are!” she said. “I know you so well, you see. I almost feared that article would frighten you away; make you afraid of me. As if you and I need be afraid of each other!”

“I'm sure we need not be,” David answered, and she glanced at his face. She did not quite like the tone.

“I thought you might not come with me today,” she said. “If you had suggested that, I meant to rebel, naturally. Now, if ever, that would be a mistake. That would be the very thing to make people talk. Your friendship means too much to me to let it be interrupted by what people say.”

“It need not be interrupted,” said David.

“It means so much more to me than you imagine,” Lucille said. “Often I think you don't realize how empty my life was when I began to know you. You are so modest, so self-effacing, you do not know your worth. If you knew the full story of my childhood and girlhood, so empty and loveless, and even my short year of married life, so lacking in love, you would know what your friendship has meant. Just to know a man like you meant so much. It gave life a new meaning.”

Unfortunately you cannot see Lucille Hardcome as David saw her when he turned his face toward her, perplexed by her words, not able to believe what her tone implied, until he saw her face. She had grown heavier in the years she had been in Riverbank, and flabbier—or flabby—for she was not that when she came to the town. She wore one of the flamboyant hats she affected, and she was beautifully overdressed. The red of her cheeks was too deep to be natural. She was artificial and the artificiality extended to her mind and her heart, and could not but be apparent to one so sincere as David Dean. Her very words were artificial, as she spoke. The same words coming from another woman would have been the sincere cry of a heart thankful for the friendship David had given; coming from Lucille they sounded false; they sounded, as they were, the love-making of a shallow woman.

David was frightened; he was as frightened as a boy who suddenly finds himself enfolded in the arms of a lovesick cook, half smothered, and only anxious to kick himself out of the sudden embrace. He saw, as if a dozen curtains of gauze had suddenly been withdrawn, the meaning of many of Lucille's words and actions he had formerly seen through the veils of misunderstanding. There was something comical in his dismay. He wanted to jump from the low-hung carriage and run. He said:

“Yes. I'm quite sure—”

“So it means so much to me that we are not to let anything make a difference,” Lucille continued. “I think we need each other. In your work a woman's sympathy—”

“I think I'll have to get out,” David said. “I'll just run in here and—”

He waved a hand toward a shop at the side of the street. It happened to be a tobacconist's, but he did not notice that. He threw the lap robe from his knees, and put a foot ont of the carriage. Lucille was surprised. She stopped her horses. She thought David might mean to buy a package of tobacco for some old man he had in mind. He stepped to the walk. Once there he felt safer; his wits returned.

“I think I'll walk, if you don't mind,” he said. “I need the exercise. No, really, I'll walk. Thank you.”

Lucille looked after him.

“Well!” she exclaimed, and then: “I'm through with you, Mr. David Dean!”

She thought she was haughtily indifferent, but at heart she was furiously angry. She turned her horses, and drove home. To prove how indifferent she was she told her coachman, in calm tones, to grease the harness and, entering the house, she told her maid to wash the parlor windows. She went to her room quite calmly and thought: “What impudence! He imagined I was making love to him!” and then, as evidence that she was calm and untroubled, she seated herself at her desk, and wrote a calm and businesslike note to David Dean. It said that, as she was in some need of money, she would have to ask that his note be paid as soon as it fell due. She still believed she was not angry, but how does that line go? Is it “Earth hath no fury like a woman scorned”?

XXV. LUCILLE LOSES

WHEN it was announced that Lucille Hardcome was to marry B. C. Burton, Riverbank was interested, but not surprised. The banker went up and down the hill, from and to his business, quite as usual, but with a little warmer and more ready smile for those he met. He accepted congratulations gracefully. After the wedding, which was quite an event, with a caterer from Chicago, and the big house lighted from top to bottom and every coach the town liverymen owned making half a dozen trips apiece, there was a wedding journey to Cuba. When the bridal couple returned to Riverbank Lucille drove B. C. to and from the bank in the low-hung carriage, and B. C. changed his abode from his own house to Lucille's. Otherwise the marriage seemed to make little difference. For Dominie Dean it made this difference: the only trustee who had, of late years, shown any independence lost even the little he had shown. Having married Lucille, he became no more than her representative on the board of trustees.

Never a forceful man, Burton became milder and gentler than ever after his marriage. He had not married Lucille under false colors (Lucille had married B. C.; had reached for him and absorbed him), but, without caring much, she had imagined him a wealthy man. When it developed that he had almost nothing but his standing as a suave and respected banker, Lucille, while saying nothing, gently put him in his place, as her wedded pensioner. She had hoped she would be able to put on him the burden of her rather complicated affairs, but when she guessed his inefficiency as a money-manager for himself, she gave up the thought. Lucille continued to manage her own fortune. She financed the house. All this made of B. C. a very meek and gentle husband. He did nothing to annoy Lucille. He was particularly careful to avoid doing anything to annoy Lucille. He became, more than ever, a highly respectable nonentity. Having, for many years, successfully prevented the town from guessing that he was a mere figurehead for the bank, he had little trouble in preventing it from saying too loudly that he was only not henpecked because he never raised his crest in matters concerning Lucille, except at her suggestion.

Lucille did not marry B. C. to salve her self-conceit only; not solely. She felt the undercurrent of comment that followed Welsh's ugly attack in the *Declarator*. She feared that people would say if they said anything: “David Dean is not that kind of man” and “Lucille Hardcome probably thought nothing of the sort, but she is that kind of woman.” Marrying B. C. Burton was her way of showing Riverbank she had never cared for David Dean. It also gave her a secure position of prominence in Riverbank. Her house was now a home, and we think very highly of homes in Riverbank. None the less Lucille still burned with resentment against David Dean. The mere sight of him was an accusation; seeing him afflicted her pride.

The dominie went about his duties as usual Then or later we saw no change in David Dean, although we must have known how Lucille was using every effort to turn the trustees and the church against him. He must have had, too, a sense of undeserved but ineradicable defilement, the result of P. K. Welsh's virulence. You know how such things cling to even the most innocent. If nothing more is said than “It is too bad it happened,” it has its faintly damning effect on us. We won for David at last, but Lucille's fight to drive him away had its effect. At home David hesitated over every penny spent, cut his expenses to the lowest possible, in an effort to pay Lucille as much as he might when the note came due. He had no hope of paying it in full.

Pay it, however, he did. One afternoon Rose Hinch came into his study and closed the door.

“David,” she said, “you surely know that I know you owe Lucille something—some money?”

“I suppose you do, Rose,” he said sadly. “Everyone knows!”

“'Thusia told me long ago,” she said. “I asked her about it again to-day. I would rather you owed it to me, David.”

She had the money with her, and she held it toward him questioningly. He took it. That was all; there was

no question of a note or of repayment; no spoken thanks. He was not surprised that Rose had saved so much out of her earnings, neither did he hesitate to take the money from her, for he knew she offered it in all the kindness of her heart. He hoped, too, that by scrimping, as he had been, he could repay her in time.

'Thusia was neither better nor worse in health than she had been. Bright and cheerful, she had learned the great secret of patience.

“If I must go,” David told her when there was no doubt that Lucille had set her heart on driving him from Riverbank, “I will go, of course; but until I know I am not wanted I will do my work as usual,” and 'Thusia was with him in that.

In the long battle, never above the surface, that Lucille carried on, David never openly fought her. He fought by being David Dean, and by doing, day by day, as he had done for years. He visited his sick, preached his sermons, busied himself as always. The weapons Lucille used were those a woman powerful in a congregation has always at hand if she chooses to try to oust her pastor, and in addition she used her husband.

Here and there she dropped hints that David was not as satisfactory as formerly. His sermons were lacking in something. Was it culture or sincerity! she asked—and she questioned the advisability of long tenure of a pulpit. By hint and question she tried to arouse dissatisfaction. It was the custom for ministers to exchange pulpits; she was loud in praise of whatever minister occupied David's pulpit for a day.

Slowly she built up the dissatisfaction, until she felt it could be crystallized into a concrete opposition. She was a year or more doing this. With all the wile of a political boss she spread the seed of discontent, trusting it would fall on fertile soil. There were plenty of toadying women who gave her lip agreement when she uttered her disparagements, and at length she felt she could strike openly. She used B. C. for the purpose.

B. C. did not relish the job. Like most of us he admired David, and had high esteem for him, but Lucille's husband would have been the last man to oppose Lucille. It really seemed an easy task. Lucille was an undisputed ruler in the church; the trustees were nonentities; the older members—those who had loved the young David in his first years in Riverbank—were dead or senile. B. C. spoke of the finances when he broached the matter of getting rid of David, and he had lists and tables to show that the income of the church had been stagnant. He suggested that a younger man, someone livelier, was needed—a money-raiser.

The trustees listened in silence. For some minutes after B. C. had spoken no one answered. Then one man—the last man B. C. would have feared—suggested mildly that Riverbank itself had not grown. He ventured to say that Riverbank, to his notion, had fewer people than five years before, and all the churches were having trouble in keeping their incomes up to their expenses. He said he rather liked David Dean; anyway he didn't think a change need be made right away. They might, he thought, ask some of the church members and get their opinions. He said he did not believe they could get a man equal to David for the same money.

B. C. was taken aback. If he had spoken at once he might have held his control of the board, but he stopped to think of Lucille and what she would wish him to say, and the daring trustee spoke again.

“Seems to me,” he said, “the trouble is not with the dominie. Seems to me we trustees ought to try to get more money from some of the members who can afford to give more.”

He had not aimed at B. C. and Lucille, but B. C. colored. One shame that lurked in his heart was that Lucille had never kept her promise to give more to the church, and that he did not dare ask her to give more now.

“I can assure you,” he said, “I do not feel like giving more—if you mean me—while Dean remains.”

“Oh! I didn't mean anyone in particular,” the trustee said. “I wasn't thinking of you, B. C.” The fact remained imbedded in the brains of the trustees that Lucille and B. C. would give no more unless David was sent away. This leaked, as such things will, and those of us who loved David were properly incensed. Some of us were tired enough of Lucille's high-handed rulership and we said openly what we thought of her carrying it to the point of making herself dictator of the pulpit, to dismiss and call at her will. There was a vast amount of whisper and low-toned wordiness, subsurface complaint and counter-complaint. There was no open flare-up such as had marked the earlier dissensions in the church, but Lucille and her closest friends could not but feel the resentment and her growing unpopularity. A winter rain brought her a fortunate cold, and she turned the Sunday school singing over to one of the younger women. She never took it up again. The same excuse served to allow her to drop out of the management of the church music. Her cold, actually or from policy, hung on for the greater part of that winter, preventing her from attending church. With the next election of trustees B. C. refused reëlection, pleading an increase of work at the bank, and when next Lucille went to church she sat under the Episcopalian minister. Several of her friends followed her; few as they were, their going made a sad hole in the church income and, with the closing of the mills and Riverbank seemingly about to sink into a sort of deserted village condition, there followed years in which the trustees were hard put to it to keep things going. Before the inevitable reduction in David's salary came, he was able to pay Rose Hinch, and that, in the later years, was one of the things he was thankful for.

XXVI. “OUR DAVID”

I GET back to Riverbank but seldom. I have just returned from one of my infrequent visits there, the first in many years. First I had my business to attend to; later, at the office of the lawyer and on the street, I met many of those I had known when I lived in Riverbank. The faces of most puzzled me, being not quite remembered. My memory had to struggle to recognize them, as if it saw the faces through a ground glass on which it had to breathe before they became clear. Many seemed glad to see me again and that was a great

pleasure to me. It was almost like a game of “hidden faces” but with faces of living men and women to be guessed. This all happened in the first hour or so after I had finished my business, and rapidly, and then I turned from one of these resurrected faces to find a young girl standing waiting to speak to me.

“You don't remember me,” she said with a smile, because she saw my puzzled face. “I was a baby when you went away. Dora Graham. You wouldn't remember me. Mack Graham is my father. I dared to speak to you because father has spoken of you so often—of you and Mr. Dean.”

“Oh, I do remember Mack!” I exclaimed. “I must see him if I can before I go.”

“Please,” she said. “It would mean so much to him.”

She was not too well-dressed. She reminded me of Alice Dean in the days when Lanny was courting her, making the bravest show she could with her cheap, neat hat and neat, inexpensive garments. I guessed that Mack Graham was not one of the town's new rich men.

“I'll see him if I have to stay over a day,” I told her. “And our dominie, Dominie Dean, you can tell me how to get to his house!”

“I'm just from there,” she said. “Are you going to see him? He will be so pleased; he spoke about you. You know he is very poor? It's pitiful; it makes my heart ache every time I go there.”

“But I thought—” I said.

“About his being made pastor emeritus? Yes, they did that for him. Father made them do that, when they were going to drop him out of the church as they always used to drop the old men. Father fought for that. We were so proud of father, mother and I. He was like a rock, like a mountain of rock, about it. They were afraid of him. But the money was nothing, almost nothing.”

“How much?” I asked, but she did not know that. She only knew that it must be very little; the new dominie would not come for what had been paid David; there had not been much to spare for a discarded and worn-out old man.

I walked up the hill and over the hill and down the other side, to where the cheap little cottages stand in a row facing the deserted brickyard which will, some day, be town lots. I found David on the little porch, sitting in the sun, and he arose as I entered the gate, and stood waiting to grasp my hand, although he could not yet see me distinctly enough to recognize me; his eyes were failing, he told me.

He was very feeble, but as gently cheerful as ever, still striving to keep an even mind under all circumstances. Alice came out when she heard us talking; she looked older, in worry, than her father. It was evident they were very poor.

I went up to see 'Thusia. I did not mind the narrow stairs nor the low-ceiled room in which I found her, for a home and happiness may be anywhere, but I felt a hot, personal shame that anything quite so mean should be the reward of our David.

It was harder to speak cheerfully with 'Thusia than with David. I would not have known her, so little of her was there left, the blue veins standing out under the skin of her shrunken hands, and her face not at all that of the 'Thusia I had known when I was a child. I talked of myself and of my family and of my little successes, and all the while I felt that she must see through me, and that she must know I was chattering to hide the pain I felt at seeing these dear friends so changed, and so deep in poverty. In this I was mistaken. Her only thought was gratitude that I had found time to come to them, and pleasure to know all was well with me.

“You'll come when you come to Riverbank again,” she said when I had to leave her, “It has done me so much good to see you. Now go down and give David the rest of your visit.”

She raised her hand for me to take in farewell.

“God has been very good to us,” she said.

When I went down Alice had brought her sewing to the porch, and had carried out a chair for me—such a shabby chair—and Rose Hinch was there. She hurriedly hid a paper parcel behind her skirt when she arose to greet me, but it toppled over and a raw potato rolled out. I pretended to be unaware of it. I knew then that our David still had one friend, and guessed who reminded the older church members that David and 'Thusia might some days go hungry, unless they received such alms as were given to the very poor.

I sat for an hour, talking with David and Rose and Alice, and for an hour tried to forget that this poverty was David's reward for a life spent in serving God and his people, and then Rose and I left, and I walked over the hill with her. We talked of David, and when I told her I was going to see Mack Graham she said she would go with me.

The small real estate office, on a second floor, was not as shabby as I had expected, nor was Mack Graham as shabby.

“Big family, that's all the matter with me,” he told me cheerfully. “I want you to come up to dinner if you can and meet my brood. So you've been up to see our David! How is he to-day!”

“Mack,” I said, “can't something be done! Can't someone here start something! I know how a place gets in a rut—how we forget the things we have with us day by day. If you could go away, as I went, and come back to see our David as he is now, poor, discarded, neglected—”

“Rose, what do you mean, neglecting our David!” Mack asked, almost gayly.

Rose smiled sadly.

“Well, I'll tell you,” Mack said, reaching for an envelope on his desk. “Our church is changed. Most of the old people are gone now. I felt the way you did about it—it was a pity our David wasn't a horse instead of a man; then we could have shot him when we had worn him out and were through with him. Folks forget things, don't they! Well—”

He drew a letter from the envelope and passed it to me.

When I had read the letter I was not quite as ashamed of my kind as I had been a moment before. The letter did not promise much. It seemed there was not a great deal of money available and the calls were many, but, after all, there was a Fund and it could spare something for David, as much, perhaps, as a child could earn

picking berries in a season each year. But it would mean all the difference between penury and dread of the poorhouse on the one hand and safety on the other to David. I thought how glad David would be and how grateful. I handed the letter to Rose Hinch.

She read it in silence and when she looked up there were tears in her eyes.

“I am so glad—for 'Thusia,” she said. “She has worried so for fear David might have to go to the poorhouse—alone! She has been afraid to die; David would have been so lonely in the poor-house.”

“Well, it is great anyway!” said Mack more noisily than necessary. “So come up to the house to dinner. You, too, Rose. We'll give our dominie the letter. We'll have him come to dinner, too, and Alice, and we'll celebrate—”

Rose smiled, as she used to smile in the days when I first knew her.

“No, Mack,” she said. “We will give him the letter when he has put on his hat and coat, and is going home. He will want 'Thusia to be the first to be glad with him.”

So that was how it was done.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DOMINIE DEAN: A NOVEL ***

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