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BEGINNING A PASTORATE.

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A CERTAIN theological student, named Peter, received one winter's morning a call from one of his professors. The student was apparently busy with his Hebrew, but as it was growing to the close of his last year in the seminary, he was privately wondering where, when, and how he should find some corner of the vineyard to till. In this student's room sat his Cousin Dick. Dick had life-long been troubled with too much money to spend; he was so rich that he found nothing to do; nothing spurred him to action; he lounged about generally with his hands in his pockets, and was as astute and as cynical as old Socrates. About once a month he visited Peter at the seminary, criticised the professors, the studies and the students; affirmed and proved that there were too many ministers, and one while pitied and again upbraided his cousin for not having chosen law or physic, or some profession wherein he could make bread and butter.

The professor did not delay to tell his errand. "My friend, Doctor Stamford, is looking for a colleague, and he has written to me to send him a man. I give you the chance; I think he would be pleased, and that you would also. Will

you go? You must start in two hours, if you consent."

"Why," said Peter, doubtfully, "I particularly wanted to be here on Monday morning, and I don't know as I've any sermon ready, which"—

"You'd better go," dictated the professor. "Doctor Stamford's praise is in all the churches. I tell you, Peter, it would be worth your while to go to Rock-top just to see that noble old man,—to see how grace can exalt our fallen nature; how it can purify, and lift us up toward heaven. It will do you good to see what can be made of a man through a long course of care, and vexation, and poverty, working out for him patience, experience, and the 'hope that maketh not ashamed.' I see you are going."

The professor departed.

"Well, Dick, I see you think something—what is it?" said Peter.

"O, yes, go by all means, but not for the reasons offered you by your venerable professor. Don't go to see a perfect man. 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace,' says David. But there's some mistake about it, Peter; that man is not to be found. You may go to this Doctor

Stamford, looking for grace in action, grace getting full play in a man, and making him a model; you will be disappointed. There will be a flaw in your doctor. Yet, go."

"And what shall I go for?"

"Why to take your chance of a call, to be sure, my boy; jump at it. You may never get another. Calls, let me tell you, are scarce as roses in December. How often must I explain to you this matter of calls and vacancies. Here in your denomination are some six seminaries, turning out ministers, say at a rate of one hundred and thirty a year. Not thirty of them go into the mission field. But taking out the missionaries and the broken in health, let us say we have one hundred men to provide with churches. There are not one hundred openings made by new churches starting, and by deaths in the ministry, each year; therefore, we find a surplus,—an excess of supply. Each year this surplus is increasing. There is a glut in the market ministerial. For this reason, my cousin, I say to you go in for your first chance. You are a lucky dog to have one. Unless you want to stand round all the day idle, run in at the first opening. If Rocktop has but ten members, and three of them can't pay, and four of them won't come to church, still get elected to minister to the remaining three if you can. If the salary is but two-fifty, take it; that is better than nothing. Go to Rocktop, electioneer after that half of a pulpit, my Peter, even if half the people are deaf, if the other half are at loggerheads, and none of them are in good standing."

Thus exhorted by his Cousin Dick, Peter packed his valise in a melancholy mood, and set out for the depot. Dick accompanied him to the train, and shaking hands, bestowed on him as his benediction, "Expect nothing, and you won't be disappointed."

The double agency of cars and sleigh brought Peter to Doctor Stamford's door. As the soul of David clave to that of Jonathan, so the souls of these two men sprang to meet each other. There was a clear ease of love at first sight between the old man, here at the close of his min-

istry, and the young man just entering upon his own. All that filial love and veneration which Peter had long buried in his father's grave experienced a resurrection, and was bestowed with the added strength of maturity upon Doctor Stamford.

As for the good doctor, his genial spirit welcomed his younger brother; and his gracious heart could love him for honest intention, even if imperfectly executed, and for joint heirship in that elder Brother, into whose likeness this aged man had grown, through years of prayer and patience.

The doctor had already preached to his people what proved to be his last sermon. A disease, which he secretly knew to be fatal, had fastened upon him. Now in his old age, a daughter devoted to his declining years, and the wife who for more than half a century had shared his joys and cares, were ties to hold him to an earth whence he would away.

Heaviest burden of all, lay his congregation upon his soul. With two or three exceptions, the men with whom he had first associated in this place had dropped out of the ranks of the church militant, and were laid down to await the last réveille. Their children and their children's children gathered about him, and crowded his ancient church on Sabbath mornings. Who should break unto them the bread of life? The old man desired that sound doctrine and loving entreaty should be his people's portion; the strong meat and sincere milk of the word were coveted by him in behalf of those in his care, very much more perhaps than they were sought by the people themselves.

By some supreme intuition the doctor immediately recognized in Peter his desired successor, one who would feed and train his charge after his own heart; and wherein the younger apostle would fail it would not be for want of earnest desires, neither from insufficient instruction, but for lack of facility of presentation, a lack which Doctor Stamford believed fifty years of experience would be able to supply.

During the afternoon Peter had an opportunity of meeting a number of the

congregation who called at the parsonage, and on Sunday morning, shortly after breakfast, found himself seated in the sleigh beside Miss Maggie Stamford, ready to be taken to church.

Neither the doctor nor his wife was able to attend service, but the dear patriarch came to the door to see the younger people off.

"I hope you'll go and come in safety," said the good doctor, "but the sleigh is like its owner, nearly worn out."

"Done a whole lot of good work in its time, t' a, an' dat's anudder way it's like him," quoth the black driver, as he gathered up the lines.

We regret to state that this African's appreciation of the doctor was shortly after exhibited in the somewhat injudicious form of stealing the sleigh robes and bells.

Peter was welcomed with all that cordiality common to country churches who are not entrenched in the formalities of life.

His "preach" was so acceptable that after service the dignitaries of the church pressed about him, shaking hands and insisting upon a sermon in the evening—which was not customary during the heavy winter snows—and urging his return for the next Sabbath. Matters looked so encouraging that Peter glowed and was genial, and little Miss Maggie stood in her pew, answering queries about her parents, and quietly smiling to think how pleased her father would be in his people's pleasure.

Under these fair auspices, Peter having made an engagement to return on next Lord's day, took his departure for the seminary on Monday morning, blessing Doctor Stamford, the Rocktop church, and all creation generally.

It seemed to Peter that it would be no hardship to follow Dick's advice, and go to Rocktop if he could, and the prospect was that he would have the chance.

Dick was lounging at the station.

"Is it over?" he asked with simulated sympathy; "and how did you survive the operation?"

"Glad I went," said Peter, heartily.

"And you are going to settle there?"

"If I have the chance. They have invited me to be present at their donation on Wednesday, and I think I shall."

"Donation! Rural population! Rustic simplicity!" sniffed Dick. "I wish you joy of them. I say, Peter, if you *do* get called there, have me elected as your elder. I should teach them a wrinkle or two, I promise you. I have my notions about that office."

"I wish you a more suitable office, myself a better officer," said Peter.

"There's one thing," quoth Dick, "I'm dead tired of doing nothing; if you get that call I shall go there with you, and help you farm that plantation. It would be truly refreshing to mingle with such 'human wariuous' as would be found there; besides, I want to see the doctor."

"And I want you to see him," said Peter, fervently. "Ah, he would show you life in earnest, and the beauty of the new life. You may go with me to the donation, and give a fifty."

"If this is the way you begin," said Dick, "it will be dangerous for me to live in your charge. It will be, 'Dick, we want a library—fork over. Dick, new cushions for the pulpit. Dick, build us a parsonage; roof the church; buy a bell.' By the way, have you a bell?"

"No, Richard. The church is primitive."

"An organ? a steeple? a modern pulpit—a nice building?" queried Dick.

"None of these," said Peter, "a wretched old building, leaks a little, needs painting—pulpit high up, like a swallow's nest. In that pulpit, Dick, I felt like a man down in a hole digging potatoes, and flinging them out over the top."

"And yet you are of the race of the giants. Blessed fate, that I am not the candidate for Rocktop; what would such a pigmy do in that pulpit?"

They went to the donation. The Rocktoppians felt that it might be Doctor Stamford's last, and they wished to make it his best, even surpassing the occasion when they had celebrated his golden wedding, and his fiftieth year as their pastor. The large old parsonage overflowed with guests—the barnyards and lanes were crowded with their horses and con-

veyances. The tables were loaded with all manner of luxurious provisions, and squeaked their satisfaction as each ponderous turkey and rosy ham was added to the display. The ladies of the church were flying about urging everybody to eat five times as much as they wanted, or as was good for them; a proceeding on which the physicians of the place looked benignly; the donation visit, being to them generally the seedtime of a full harvest, was by them greatly encouraged. Rocktop abounded with doctors; there were nine within the not wide limits of the place; the habit of overfeeding, in which the excellent inhabitants indulged, affording a fine scope for medical advice.

While Rocktop village boasted nine doctors, Rocktop church was enriched by no less than eight ruling elders.

These high dignitaries having eaten a high dinner suitable to their lofty position, retired to Doctor Stamford's study, to discuss the subject of calling Peter to come among them, as Doctor Stamford's colleague. This board of eight dignitaries—we are almost constrained to write the word in capitals, it was such a capital institution—had never before had the business of recommending the election of a pastor. They were all men ordained within the fifty-eight years of Doctor Stamford's pastorate. It was right they should call in aid for the old gentleman; it was an exceedingly jubilant and delightful occasion altogether. They were as pleased with the hitherto unused privilege as children with a new toy, and in a happy meeting sandwiched between a glorious gala dinner and an equally gala and glorious supper, they decided for Peter with one acclaim, knowing from previous investigations that the meeting of the congregation would be a mere form of assent.

The donation was over. Dick's crisp fifty had thrown into ecstasies the committee in charge of the purse; the cousins had departed; Peter had been called, and was prayed to come at once, as Doctor Stamford could not officiate at present in his pulpit; and a cold, keen, frosty evening of early March saw the new apostle with books and baggage whirling

through Rocktop village, in Doctor Stamford's sleigh. The vehicle, with its jingling bells and panting old horse, climbed the steep hill, at the top of which stood, in its gray white paint and old-time soiled shutters, the parsonage.

The shutters of the dining room were open; the old horse shook his bells, glad to be at home; the doctor caught the sound as he waited within. Leaning forward to look at his future home, Peter saw the window shade lifted and a figure step behind it; the lamp-light, falling clearly through the buff-holland curtain, set this figure in bright relief. The erect, portly old doctor stood there, resting on his cane; his hair snow-white about his broad brow, his face beaming with that grand benevolence and hearty loving of his race which made this man so beautiful above other men. It was a face which could fix a wavering faith in humanity, and teach the power of piety; a face which had well nigh converted that cynical Dick, though at present he was too proud to say so. Often afterwards, when Peter was tempted to ask whether any good thing could be in the sloughs and darkness of this lower world, the memory of that goodly old man framed in his window with a background of light, saved the race from a too sweeping condemnation.

Having been called to Rocktop, our bachelor apostle's first business had been to secure a boarding place, which he had done by proxy, his representative in the business being one of his eight elders. To the amazement of Peter, his erratic cousin Dick insisted upon accommodating himself to the new mode of life, and going with him to his congregation.

"I am a philosopher," quoth Dick. "I desire to study life in its developments in your charge; to contrast and compare the pastoral and parochial mind."

Peter's elder had been easily suited with a boarding place for his pastor. He had engaged a room from one who was not a sheep of Peter's fold, but an stray from a less orthodox flock, one Mistress Graves. This lady's name was eminently suitable to her state in life, she being

the village undertaker, appearing always in the wake of the Angel of Death, and presiding solemnly over what we are constrained to call the *funeral festivities*. Honest, well-meaning, shrill-voiced, and easily provoked, her friends and furnishings were of the plainest; and while she was expert at robing the dead, she was also given to decorating the living, being a dressmaker in a small way. Into this dame's house our apostle and his cousin entered at eventide.

Madam Graves pressed them to sit down in her domestic circle, and "make themselves at home." This Dick, the fastidious, was not inclined to do, and curtly asked for his room. Peter was looking after the baggage, Mrs. Graves took fire at Dick's supercilious airs, opened the door of a crooked, uncarpeted staircase, and bade her boarder "walk up." The stairway, without ceremony of a door, ended abruptly in the room designed for Dick and Peter. There being no railing about the opening thus made in the floor, Dick decided that he and Peter must beware of peregrinations in the dark; and he also saw that the door below, being entirely in control of the Graves family, could be very inconveniently left ajar, and the villagers be given unpopular versions of his philosophical discussions with his clerical relative.

The day was very cold, but this promising apartment was only warmed by a ten by sixteen inch stove, fed with chips, which fuel a small box stood at hand to supply. Being thus generously warmed, the room was lighted with equal prodigality by a dormer window, set in the sloping ceiling, and having a multiplicity of minute panes.

Mrs. Graves threw three green chips in the stove, "reckoned she'd better bring a light before long," and left her guest to his own devices.

Dick sat down and looked about. Two pine bedsteads, with legs between three and four feet high, furnished with his favorite aversion, immense feather beds supplemented by microscopic pillows. These beds being full-grown, while the bedsteads were half-width, they over-

flowed on every side, like dough unduly light, and were further ornamented by amazing patchwork quilts, whose red and yellow glories set Dick's teeth on edge. The window was curtainless, a rag carpet—to Dick an unaccustomed luxury—adorned the floor, the washstand was a trembling pine table, the towels were crash, and the chairs were of the favorite Windsor variety.

"Behold!" sighed Dick, "how I am become a martyr to my cousin's profession, and my own pursuit of human philosophy! How am I stranded here after days of free and happy Bohemianism? Will the study of Mrs. Graves' peculiarities be a recompense for such surroundings? Will her conversion to orthodoxy be Peter's compensation?"

Mrs. Graves returned with a "thumb lamp," holding a gill of oil, and twinkling like a glow-worm.

"Madam," said Dick, "it may surprise you to learn that my darkness is so great that so small a lamp fails to enlighten it. Is there no large one?"

"There are one," said Mrs. G., speaking elaborately, "but which I need to sew the buttings on Mrs. Pinker's dress. She sent me wrong buttings, and then too fine silk, and then she changed it for wrong colored twist; and she changed her mind, likewise, until her dress ain't done, which must be done immeidit, she being going to a wedding."

"Really," said Dick, "I'm distressed to hear of her mistakes, and hope she will enjoy the wedding festivities. But ma'am, I'd rather finish the dress than be deprived of the large lamp."

"Which you won't get," said madam, tartly. "I hope the room will suit you. *Lafayette* slept in it, my mother told me, and my aunt from the city comes here to use it of the summers; what will suit her, I 'spose will suit you."

With this mild fling, Mrs. Graves went down stairs, and as her head disappeared below the level of the floor, Dick remarked that Lafayette's ghost, or the visible presence of the city aunt, would fail to console him for the feather bed and wooden chairs.

Peter had delayed at the gate with a

friend; this friend he now brought up and introduced to Dick.

"How does the place suit you?" asked Peter.

"It's beastly," said Dick, lighting a cigar. "I hope Mrs. G. objects to smoking; the weed will be a mild revenge on her. Behold the fire and the light, will-o'-the-wisp and a glow-worm. A lovely place for you to study, Peter."

"She has promised me the parlor, with a fire in the evenings," said the pastor of Rocktop.

"Ah! happy you. I'm chilled, and my feet ache. I perceive in myself signs of the small-pox; mention them to Mrs. Graves, will you, Peter, and stir her up a bit. Hark you, how the voices from below rise through this floor. Those village gossips chatter like a barn full of swallows."

As Dick said this he heard a rustle by a door leading to an adjoining room; it caused him to turn his head that way for an instant. It afterwards proved to be the indignant skirts of one of the Graves feminines, who having followed the example of the ancient Rhoda, and "come to hearken," had heard "things not convenient."

"Peter," said the inconsistent Dick, "have I not often warned you not to take charge of a bourgeois congregation? You do not assimilate; your profession has not imparted any delicate flavor to German silver spoons, nor rounded and modified the confounded angles of these Windsor chairs. I'm bound to see you through, my boy, but it is a hard pull; did not I charge you to wait for a city call, where there was some hope of chicken salad and muffins? This mansion savors of sausage, and I detest the smell of cabbage."

Poor Peter! Between his hostess, his cousin, his discomforts and his parochial duties, he was in a hard case. He had a sermon to write, and in these early days of his ministry a sermon meant a week's work. There was now but a small part of a week left him. He must, therefore, begin at once.

He asked Mrs. Graves for a fire in the parlor, as per agreement. The bedroom

had no table, no convenience for study; moreover, Dick was there, and Dick and his philosophy were poor assistants in preparation for the pulpit. Peter signified to Dick that he must conduct his evening investigations alone.

The fire was made, and the young minister betook himself to the sepulchral parlor, with books, pens, paper and ink, all his clerical paraphernalia, after the fashion of the Indian warrior, who goes to his tomb in his war paint, and with all his weapons.

The fire smoked.

Then the lamp smoked.

Next, the fire began to go out. Slowly and surely it died away.

Peter despondingly called Mrs. Graves to the rescue.

This much persecuted woman calmly remarked that her parlor fire *never would burn in the winter*; she confessed her ignorance as to whether the difficulty lay in the stove, the stove pipe, the fuel or the chimney; there was a very large difficulty lying somewhere, and the fire suffocated under the incubus.

Hapless Peter resolved to write in the cold; his fingers tingled, his feet ached. Peter the modern began to sneeze.

Just here in walked Dick, and suggested that Peter should come upstairs, clear off the wash-stand, and use that for a writing desk. "I may be of material use to you," said the complacent Dick, "and throw light on your subject." He did so in absolute fact, for the stand being small when Peter moved his paper, he edged the lamp along, and finally pushed it off. Dick dexterously caught it. This happened three times; then Dick obligingly held it, being useful for nearly the first time in his life. Before long the chips gave out; the oil in the lamp followed suit.

Peter in despair proposed that they should commend themselves and the sermon to Providence, and go to bed.

Of the ideal minister and his wife we have heard a great deal; they wandered one day out of Arcadia with olive chaplets on their brows, and crooks in their hands, and spotless garments flowing about them in classic folds. Somebody

caught them, and kept them for samples. They are a gracious pair, living on faith and love, instead of beef and bread; and in serenely contemplating them, congregations have forgotten to imitate their virtues or raise a suitable salary.

My mind not having been recently refreshed by a sight of these good people, I am compelled to depict unfortunate Peter, and that sad dog Dick, who would try ministerial experiences. The world is full of compensations, and when our Peter, and consequently his cousin, were greatly perplexed and driven to despair in Mrs. Graves' mansion, and were worried by striving to please everybody, and finding, especially Dick, that they had signally failed, it was provided that they might go up to Doctor Stamford's and get the benefit of the experiences of himself and his aged lady.

They had gone to the upper parsonage when the time of Peter's installation was drawing near.

"When I see that," said Doctor Stamford to his young coadjutor, "my mind will be easy about my people, and I shall be ready to depart in peace."

The doctor, we see, believed with Solomon, that "the thing that hath been is the thing that shall be," and as he had kept his place for more than half a century, he felt that once installed, Peter would fill that same position for fifty years to come. He held the primitive idea that the ties between pastor and people are sacred, and not easily broken; no temptations of greater emolument had been able to draw him from his charge, and he was sure they would not beguile his younger brother; and no suspicion entered his noble mind that those who promised to support their new pastor in his arduous labors, could ever prove recreant to their vow, or that right hands given in fellowship would strive to pluck asunder the new-made tie.

"My mind is anything but easy," said Peter. "I can't impress men; can't reach them; see no fruits of my labors."

"Peter's blue," said Dick, comfortably. "Constitutional blues. Takes a voyage to the doldrums every once in a while."

"My brother," said the doctor to his colleague, "God will gather in his harvests, and save the product of the tear-wet seed. Don't be too eager to grasp results. Work and wait. God has called you; he will use you as he pleases. You are sowing the truth; perhaps the ripe sheaves will only be carried home when the sower is not there to see. Your cousin says you are blue. Perhaps so. Get a wife to cheer you up. My wife always cleared away the clouds for me! She has made peace in all congregational quarrels, and shown me the bright side when affairs looked dark."

The doctor gave his usual genial smile to the aged companion of his labors and sorrows; and Pastor Peter followed his glance across the room to the "dear auld wife" sitting by the window, a shaft of sunlight resting like a benediction on her white cap and gray hair. She was not one of the old ladies who make use of wigs or dyes to conceal the touches of time; a Christian life was ending in growing old gracefully, and there was a beautiful reverence in her age.

"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God," thought our Peter, considering how many times this woman had poured the oil of healing on the waters of strife. At this time Dick quite made up his mind to help Peter preserve his soul in patience; unfortunately he frequently failed to do so, because he lost his own equanimity.

The somewhat dismal train of Peter's reflections was here interrupted by the appearance of a couple who had come to get married. The old doctor and his colleague had made an amicable little arrangement, that they should equally divide all the wedding fees; an arrangement more to Peter's pecuniary advantage than the doctor's. When the newly married pair had departed, Doctor Stamford proceeded to divide his "five," according to compact. "Doctor," said Peter, "what has been your experience in these fees? Amusing, some of it? How small a fee did you ever receive?"

The old doctor, telling reminiscences of his experience, was an enjoyable spectacle. He leaned back in his easy chair,

his grand white head comfortably rested, his feet on a hassock, his inseparable companion, the cane, between his knees, his dressing gown falling about him like a Roman toga, his eyes twinkling with pleasure. "I remember," he said, "that a countryman brought his girl here, and requested me to marry them, adding that he would give me *what it was worth*. The ceremony concluded, he turned over some loose change for a time, and then gave me a battered quarter! And after all, I was constrained to think the man had kept his bargain, for from the slatternly appearance of that young woman, I could not expect for him more than twenty-five cents worth of wedded bliss.

"At another time," continued the doctor, "a colored man and woman came here on the same errand. The man gave me fifty cents before the tying of the nuptial knot. As he was leaving, he returned from the gate and said, 'Doctor, will you lend me a dollar? I want to take my woman out for a ride.' I lent, of course, and he never referred to the matter again; so that time I was fifty cents out of pocket, and I think that was my lowest fee."

The doctor regarded for some moments his slipped feet, then said to young Peter, "I have to keep them up impolitely high, and that reminds me of a story of my old friend, Doctor Miller. Just after he had published a book on ministerial manners or decorum, or something of that sort, he came to spend a Sabbath with me, and reached our place desperately tired. He looked for some time longingly at a chair before him, then laid first one leg, and then the other across the seat. 'Doctor,' he said, '*will you pardon such a breach of politeness?*' 'Dear brother,' I said, '*I have never written a book!*' That left him to be his own censor—and he kept his feet on the chair."

By such little anecdotes of the past, amusing chiefly from the grace and relish with which they were told, Doctor Stamford was wont to beguile his young colleague from fits of despondency, which were due both to Rocktop and constitutional tendency.

"Peter," said Dick, that night when they returned home, "I wouldn't mind being such a man as Doctor Stamford. Really now I wouldn't; age, small means, ill health, near death, and all considered. No, Peter, I believe after all, I'd change with him if I got a chance."

"And even you have not found the flaw you promised in him."

"No, I haven't," said Dick, shortly; then asked, "Peter, is a belief in human perfection reckoned orthodox by your seminary men?"

"No," replied Peter.

"Well, I believe it's possible to get so near it you can't tell the difference," said Dick, as he tumbled into bed. Presently he spoke with flattering lips from under the bed-clothes.

"I say, Peter, if ever you turn out to be such a man as the doctor, I'll be agreeably disappointed in you. To-morrow is your installation, sir; and if you toil here for fifty odd years in the teeth of everything—why, you'll be a brick, Peter."

The day for the installation had been set in April, in hopes of good roads and bright skies, that all the Rocktoppians might be present at that to them happily unusual event, an ecclesiastical wedding.

Doctor Stamford had at one time been requested by a parishioner to come and marry him to the beloved of his soul, *provided the weather was fair*. No such proviso had been thought of by the "powers that be," when arrangements were making for Peter's installation, and these arrangements stood fast as the decrees of the Medes and Persians.

About the tenth of April "the direful age of Pyrrha" returned; Rocktop roads became rivers, the fields ponds, and the quince orchards looked like cranberry plantations. The waters subsided, leaving mud some two feet deep.

Slowly upon the sullen retreat of a stormy night, crept the gray dawn of the day set for the marriage of Peter to the Rocktop church.

Leaden skies closed the dismal quince-growing village all around; a fine pelting rain, more aggravating than a pelting storm, fell persistently.

Out of the mist and clouds crawled the mud splashed buggies of two or three ministers doomed to officiate at the approaching ceremony.

The old pastor was on that doleful day unusually feeble, and was unable to leave his house. Dick put on his best clothes, and endeavored to look encouragingly, though the weather, the anxieties of Peter, who was in a fit of the blues, and especially the absence of his admired Doctor Stamford, all did much to depress him. But Dick was to-day making a principle of being cheerful. Even Mrs. Graves' smoky rooms and a breakfast of sausages did not quench him.

With a sigh over the mud that should splash his new buggy, Dick took his seat beside his cousin, and drove toward the church. Deeper and deeper grew the mud. "Did you ever hear that the direct road to Rocktop church lay through the slough of Despond?" asked Dick, anxiously.

"I know it to be a fact," said Peter, mournfully.

"We'll pull through," said Dick, brightly. "I've faith in this horse."

"No one is going to be present. It seems as if all interest were dead," said Peter. "I wonder if I did right in coming here?"

"Why," replied Dick, "if I were a minister—glad I'm not—if I believed the Lord sent men here and there, and if he had sent me, it would take more than a rainy day to make me go back on all these beliefs."

Out of a membership of nearly two hundred, and a congregation of double that number, about seventy persons had gathered to this first installation in over fifty years.

The weather and the roads were supposed to be sufficient reason why nobody but dignitaries, trustees, and their immediate families, should appear at this time. The small assembly, damp and muddy, scattered over the barn-like church; the damp and muddy ministers in the high old-fashioned pulpit, damp and muddy Peter in a corner near a smoking stove—these were the accessories of the long expected occasion.

There was singing, praying, reading, preaching. There was a "preach" to Rocktop, by Chiswick, D. D., capable of being condensed in this fashion: "O, happy Rocktop, raised to be saints by the life-long ministry of a saint, we may praise you, but it is not needful that we instruct you. Need we say, 'obey them that have the rule over you?' You have been taught that by your numerous ruling elders. Shall we charge you that this union of the pastor and people is solemn, and should be enduring? Truly, you all look solemn enough, and you have held fast to Doctor Stamford for more than half a century. Do you need to be told to make your pastor happy? It must be you have made the doctor happy. Shall we say support your pastor liberally? You must be liberal, or how could the doctor have lived among you so long? Happy Rocktop, and happy Peter, called to serve Rocktop! Take your pastor, and do by him as seems to you to be suitable."

Then there was a sermon to Peter, running in that ancient rut that makes the pastor an ideal rather than a real person. When "Michael, the archangel," comes down to serve one of the churches, you may install him with such a sermon, but until that happy day, let us have an end of it. Men and brethren, no longer in your charges ordain impossibilities, nor fall prostrate upon your faces before some ideal exercise of the pastoral office. Peter is one of your *brethren*, the prophets, in flesh as in spirit, subject to like passions as you, and will doubtless conduct himself like other converted and not fully sanctified men. Talk common sense to him. While Peter was being lengthily charged in the old style, our dear Dick, lost in a corner of a high, cushionless pew, charged him mentally on this wise: "Brother Peter, having now spent some months in that most humiliating and degrading business demanded by the modern Church as part of your preparation for the sacred office, viz., *candidating*, a martyrdom, my friend, to which the ancient apostolic style of violent death was nothing—you have come to be under tutelage to the

Rocktop church. who, doubt not, will make you heir of the first, second, third, eighth, and ninth beatitudes. Taking your place here, you are called first, *to poverty*; you shall with careful economy spend five dollars, receive three, borrow one, and break your heart for the other one, while you are giving labor that should earn ten. When you marry, you shall see your wife getting less than you could give her in almost any other line of life. When you receive children as a heritage of the Lord, you shall be perplexed how to feed and clothe them. Rocktop will give you *presents* where you deserve *pay*, and who knows but sharing, like God's persecuted saints, the home missionaries, you may one day be liberally presented with cast-off clothes? The church demands your best efforts for the least compensation she dare offer. You must dress well, entertain company, be lively and busy, and never mind the consciousness that if you die suddenly you leave your family no inheritance but debts. Rocktop has kindly given you as coadjutors eight ruling dignitaries, who understand that they have been appointed to keep down your pride, criticise your sermons, give you your orders, pass the elements at communion, possibly, and for nothing else. If you live your allotted time on earth, Peter, persevere to the end, because to tell you truth, these tribulations are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed to you. If you fail to live out half your days, you share a lot common to many of whom the world is not worthy. The ancient Church slew the apostles; the modern Church builds their sepulchres."

By the time Richard's private charge— not ordered by presbytery—was finished, the benediction was to be pronounced, and the dignitaries and heads of families were invited to come forward and shake hands with the new pastor.

Hand-shaking among us Anglo-Saxons means very much less than salt-eating means among the Arabs. He who eats salt with a Bedouin may claim some sort of fealty; but a man may shake hands with you while he plots your destruction, and our civilization shall not be revolted.

The hand-shaking part of the ceremony of installation was doubtless originally intended to convey an idea of cordial welcome, and assurance of friendly support. Perchance on the present occasion it did mean this to the Rocktop dignitaries, as they clasped, one after another, the modern apostle's hand.

Old white-haired men many of them, who should soon follow the senior pastor into the "swellings of Jordan," were welcoming into his office the man who should lay their hoar heads beneath the sod, with prayer and psalm.

Leaving the church, how Peter's heart warmed to his paternal colleague, who was waiting for him with a blessing. He would make haste to him to receive advice, rich with his long experience. Dick shared this feeling, and made the best of his way to the parsonage. But others were there before them; ministers from adjacent churches, glad to meet again their elder brother in Christ; the elders to look reverently at their life-long friend and instructor. It was long before they all were gone. At last the two pastors of Rocktop were left alone. Mrs. Stamford had gone to take her after-dinner nap; Dick paced the damp back porch, and smoked a post-prandial cigar.

"Give me some advice," besought Peter; "teach me something, you who know."

"God shall teach you, my son, in his own time and way. I am tired." He leaned back in his chair; "read me a word;" he looked towards the Bible. Peter took the book and read from the last chapter of Revelation. Then opening the volume so kindred to the Scripture in its spirit, he read the closing scenes of Christian's famous pilgrimage.

The old man murmured something, with a rapt look on his face. "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth"—

No more. The last word was spoken. Peter bent over the man he had known so short a time, but loved so well. They were near together, yet wide asunder, for between them rolled that mighty stream that none may cross in the flesh. As in the ancient vision, there were two upon

the banks of the river; the one on this side was lonely and weeping, but on the further side went up that other one, with gladness and singing.

It was thus that Peter entered upon his first pastorate; the first public act after his installation was to bury his beloved friend and teacher in Christ. By Doctor Stamford's grave and coffin, Dick forgot to be a cynic.

Night and silence brood over Rocktop, with all its mingling of good and ill. Peter has no wise and gentle colleague now; his inexperience must wage the fight alone. The hill top parsonage looks lonely in the starlight, with the one lamp mildly beaming from the widow's sick-room, like the good life left lonely until the Lord shall call.

Up in the ancient burial ground the new brown hillock tells of long toil and trouble ended, and longer rest and joy begun.

O grave, new made! Full seldom does the earth cover one so blameless and so blest. Forever green and beautiful be thy memory among the churches, thou man of God, that men may rejoice to know the lofty heights of grace which the soul may reach here in its earthly pilgrimage. Blest be the memory of thy faithful life, thy patient toil, thy meekness, long suffering, and fervent charity!

"Full many a poor man's blessing went
With thee beneath that low green tent,
Whose curtain never outward swings."

THE VINE AND THE VIOLET.

BY K. M. SHERWOOD.

A VINE and a violet, side by side,
Grew up by the gardener's cottage wall;
The vine spread forth in her beauty and pride,
And her twining tendrils were over all.

While hardly daring to lift up her eyes,
Half hidden, the violet bloomed alone,
And wondered in innocent, mute surprise,
That her queenly neighbor so great had grown.

But the vine said, "Idler, to tarry there,
Where only the bug and the beetle drum,
Is folly; but climb to the sunlit air,
Where birds and bright butterflies dancing come.

"Ah! surely, my loitering little friend,
You will shrink when the Master comes this way;
While I from my glorious height will bend,
And my royal fruitage before Him lay."

But lo! when the Lord of the Manor came,
He, leaving the vine that had grown so tall,
The violet tenderly bore away,
To bloom in his beautiful castle hall.

O! truly, the Master judges aright,
When, passing us over who boast our worth,
He blesses the lowly ones hid from sight —
The silent doers—the meek of the earth.