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THE KINGDOM OF ARARAT.

BY DUNCAN M'GREGOR.

AT the foot of a lofty range of snowy hills in Armenia, lies the village of Etschmiadzin, with its convent. At a little distance the convent looks like the whole place, for its low but massive walls and rambling rooms throw the poorer huts of the villagers quite into the shade. This small town is situated in the very heart of a land full of venerable romance—the kingdom of Ararat, the second cradle of the race. In whatever glorious and blooming garden spot our first parents lived their days of un sullied purity, and afterwards wept their repenting tears, the chill regions of Armenia, where winter has a half-yearly domination, received the children of Noah when the ark rested.

In Etschmiadzin was living in 185—, a certain cosmopolite trader, who might have belonged to any nationality, so familiar was he with the tongue and custom of each. This man had built for himself a house near the convent, making it something more comfortable than the ordinary Armenian dwellings; he had also taken to himself an Armenian beauty for a wife. In his home were we seated on a September night. At this part of the year it freezes keenly in Etschmiadzin, and we were all gathered around the fire—a motley group. The trader, a

small, sharp, merry, sociable man; two bald-pated monks from the neighboring convent; the lady of the house and her sister, lazily seated on a divan apart, and dressed in the full-flowing robes, the jewelry and trinkets prized by the Armenian belle. Their dark dresses were relieved by the brilliant embroidery of the cushions against which they leaned; the floating black tresses of each were bound with a silken circlet, decorated with coins, and by each fair lady's side stood—a long-stemmed pipe!

Our talk was of Ararat.

“Was it by any means certain,” questioned one of our travelling companions, “that ‘the mountains of Ararat,’ where the ark rested, as saith the Scripture, are the same as these tremendous peaks overlooking Araxes? In olden time Ararat meant a territory; it may have had many hills far lower than this hoary king of mountains, who frowns upon us from the distance, looking so near, and yet being in truth so far away.”

One of our monks here shook his head, in melancholy reproof of such profane doubts. “Peace, my son,” he said, “this mountain, once called Taneez, is the very spot where the ship which carried Noah rested. It cannot be otherwise, for we have in our own convent a

solid rock big enough for an elephant to go through, with hot vinegar? Why, I'd as soon believe in St. Ursula's three heads."

"My son, my son!" remonstrated Father Paul. "Surely the multiplication of the holy relics is but one more miracle to show that our Holy Church is indeed built upon the rock."

The Curé tossed his head like a warrior.

"Yes, Father Paul, but men can build upon that foundation with wood, hay and stubble; and a pretty parcel of combustibles you monks have heaped up in one place and another."

"Holy Virgin!" said Father Paul, alarmed. "My son, think I beseech you what you say; but as to Hannibal, except that the story was written in Titus Livius—his book, I confess I do not understand where he got so much vinegar."

"Vinegar! vinegar! nonsense. But I was too warm, Father Paul; you know me of old. I beg your pardon. Take warning by me, Monsieur Leidet, and never let the heat of discussion make you forget due respect; but hot vinegar, and elephants over the Haute Luce! It is too much for human nature to endure."

"But how do you think he did come, then?" asked Father Paul. "Laurent, my son, this gentleman is Monsieur de Silvenoir, Curé of Bonneval, of whom you have heard our Reverend Father speak."

"I have heard of you, Monsieur Leidet," said the Curé, with a salute; "but

I had some way the idea that you were but a child, and behold, a young man."

"Ah, Laurent was but up to my shoulder when I saw him first, and now I have to look up to him," said Father Paul, with a fond glance at his pupil.

"And I suppose it is you who has kept the boy alive," said the Curé, lowering his voice, however. "Is it not so, Monsieur?"

"It is, indeed," said Laurent, with emotion. "Father Paul has been a father to me, in truth."

"Ah, he has more than repaid me," said the kind old man. "But, my son, you must be weary with your walk. Go and rest."

"Yes, go, Monsieur Leidet," said the Curé, with a swift sudden glance of warning; and he added, as Laurent passed him, "You will not do ill to keep yourself quiet, while there are so many guests here."

Laurent was not sorry to be dismissed, that he might have time to think over what had passed. He felt no resentment toward his unhappy kinsman. His repentance had been too deep, his suffering too bitter, and his kindness toward Laurent too great to allow such a feeling to find place in the boy's heart. But while he loved Father Francis, and pitied him with all his heart, that very love and pity helped to increase his horror of the system which had perverted and enslaved a nature so noble, and used such talents and such a character for purposes of cruelty and persecution.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

ROCK TOP LIGHTS.

BY MRS. JULIA M'NAIR WRIGHT.

ROCK TOP, the pastoral charge of a young man named Peter, having survived the first commotions of his settlement, subsided into a profound calm. During this interval of quiet, Peter and his coadjutor, Cousin Dick, established themselves in the parsonage, keeping a kind of bachelor's hall. Peter

gave himself to sermonizing and Hebrew. Dick had ample opportunity to carry on his investigations in mental philosophy, and study the human race, as developed in Rock Top. A calm which had at first been welcome became monotonous, and finally alarming. In vain did Peter, in his best style, thun-

der the terrors of the law, and the eternal consequences of evil doing. The Rock Toppians had not the slightest idea that he meant them, and placidly wished some of the sinners had been there to catch it so royally.

The anxious pastor then devoted himself to a personal work among his people. He went from house to house, conversed and prayed with the different members of families. This was received in the same easy spirit, as everything else. Dignitary Pottinger said that he *liked to see* a man earning his money, as if he knew he ought to. In the Dignitary's opinion, two sermons a Sabbath were by no means an equivalent for seven hundred a year.

"I get *my* money," said the Dignitary, "by taking off my coat, and going in and digging for it; and I can't see as the parson has any right to earn his easier, if he has been to the seminary. In my view, the seminary was a mighty good resting spell. I never had such a three years' holiday in my life."

Calm still, unbroken calm.

"Dick," said Peter, "I don't like this; my people are stagnating; they do no religious work; seem to have no religious feelings; they are dead asleep."

"Well," said Dick, puffing out a great cloud of smoke, "in that sleep they are having very lively dreams of butter and quinces."

"More's the pity," said Peter, pacing up and down the room; "parents seem to have no anxiety about their unconverted children; wives are not distressed by the danger of careless husbands. The calm is like that of those seas where vessels lie unanchored but motionless, until the sails drop from the masts, and the ship falls apart upon the water."

"The calm," said Dick, "is tropic; take my word for it, there will be a tempest of some sort before long. Clouds gather after such dead, lazy noons. I wouldn't wonder if there came up such a blow here as will send you and me clean out of Rock Top. I wish there would," he added, softly.

"Yes," said Peter, with a sigh, "if the people were any better for it, and

the Lord would send them a more worthy pastor."

The prophesied storm came—came to Rock Top, as in nature, at the time of the autumnal equinox. The sun crossing the line occasioned terrific winds and pouring rains. The windows of heaven seemed opened, and the fountains of the great deep appeared to be again broken up.

At this inopportune moment the roof of Rock Top church proved false, and the ceiling presently showed great stains, the carpet in the aisles was wet, hymn-books and Bibles lying in the pews were warped and defaced, and a mouldy, unhealthy smell greeted the Sabbath worshippers.

"The roof has given out," said the people.

"We must have a new one right away," said Peter and Dick.

"The old church is not worth a roof," said Mr. Province; "it is a miserable wreck every way."

No man in the congregation had so much influence in a money way as Dignitary Pottinger. Not that he was rich or liberal, but he was loud-mouthed and obstinate. He flew in a passion at once at mention of a new roof.

"The church has been roofed since my house has!" he cried, "and if I can stay in my house all the time, I guess we can stand the church once a week. Times are too tight; we can't afford to lay out money for a roof now; we have just paid the taxes; and quinces are not half a crop."

"It does not seem possible to delay roofing," said Peter, "the leak is very serious. I was talking to Mr. Province this morning, and he said—"

"O! yes, I know what *he* said; he cried out for a new roof, *of course*," interrupted Mr. Pottinger. "I know why. It leaked in the gallery, where all his folks sit to do the singing. Well, it hasn't leaked in *my* pew yet, and I mean to stand out against roofing till it does, any how."

"But consider what other congregations will think of us if we leave our church in such a miserable state," expostulated Peter.

"It is none of their business," retorted the dignitary.

"And our congregation will lessen if we do not make the building comfortable. People will not want to risk rheumatism and consumption sitting in a damp church."

"Folks should show more faith than to be afraid of such things; I'm not," replied the Dignitary. "However, I don't want you to think I'm opposed to a new roof; it is only to paying money for it. If some of these people" (and he looked sharply at Dick) "who have no families, and more money than they know what to do with, would only take the church roof in hand, I would think it just doing their Christian duty, and I'd be much obliged to them besides."

Dick whistled. Then he spoke.

"Mr. Pottinger, I think you mentioned hard times. You often mention them. They seem chronic with you. May I ask if you ever saw any other sort of times?"

"I don't know as I ever did," said the dignitary, gruffly. "I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth, like some of you fellows."

"There's a recipe for getting rid of them—an antidote which is not a question of spoons. My Cousin Peter will tell you it is lending to the Lord; there you'll get the very highest rate of interest on a safe investment. My own experience is small, but I have seen very wonderful prosperity follow liberal giving. It is my opinion, sir, that if you take hold heartily, and help get a new roof on the church, you will at once find yourself able to do the same for your house."

"I don't want to roof my house," said Mr. Pottinger; "new roofs are all folly and ambition."

So the Dignitary rode away in a pet.

The great storm was followed by a succession of rains, which frequently occurred on Sundays. The people of Rock Top began to forget that there had ever been clear Sabbaths, and the leaky church became a very serious matter. Old people, semi-invalids, and children stayed at home; the sexton vowed he

would resign; the choir had to leave the gallery, and all the Provinces were incensed thereat; but still Dignitary Pottinger cried out loudly against any expenditure; got up a strong party on his side, and each Lord's-day serenely mustered his family in the pew where it did not leak. Dick occupied the adjacent slip, and on the third stormy Sabbath, a stream of cold water trickled over his uplifted nose, as he sat with his eyes fixed on Peter's lofty station. Dick retreated behind the stove, but the opposition dignitary looked as if he regarded it a pure matter of preference on the young man's part.

The fourth Sabbath the red velvet pulpit-cushion was soaking wet. Peter, not perceiving it, laid his sermon and handkerchief thereon, during the preliminary services; when they both caught an ominous gory hue, and the kerchief was unfit for use. This place being too wet to occupy, Peter went down beside the communion table.

Mr. Pottinger frowned; he never liked to see a pastor descend from his position. But drip, drip, drip came the rain on the table; and sometimes on Peter's back, and anon on the top on his head. He took the sermon in his hand, and went to stand on the pulpit stairs. Having tried two or three steps, he secured one as dry as his Dignitary's family pew, and finished his sermon in peace.

"It is a shame, we must do something," cried the Provinces, the Churches, and many more. But the Pottingers and their friends said cheerfully, "It won't rain all the time."

The fifth rainy Sabbath ended Dignitary Pottinger's immunity. The rain came into his pew, and deluged his daughter's new bonnet. Mrs. Pottinger found her feet wet; and began to sneeze, because she had sat on a damp cushion. When Mr. Pottinger opened his hymn book, two leaves stuck together, and tore frightfully. All the Pottingers then went and sat with Dick behind the stove. Miss Pottinger almost forgot her chagrin about her bonnet, when she looked over the same book with our dear Dick, and he softly whispered that he hoped she suf-

ferred no inconvenience from her change of place. Miss Pottinger forgave the roof, and did not want a new one; but then Dick would not always sit behind the stove!

The new bonnet was entirely ruined, and Miss Pottinger stayed at home next Sabbath and sulked. Her mother also remained at home; she was in bed with influenza. Influenza prevailed in the congregation; more than half the pews were empty. Dr. Jehu and the Provincies, the Litkips and the Churches, swarmed about Mr. Pottinger, vowing that a meeting of the trustees and officers must be held, to consider the question of roofing. Therefore, a notice was hastily written, and sent up to the pulpit. Peter gave a sigh of relief; a meeting to consider of repairs! his troubles then were over!

On the contrary, they had but just begun.

The next Saturday afternoon various vehicles wended their way toward the church. Even Drs. Cor and Jehu were there. A money matter was to be discussed, and it behooved every man to have his say. It was quite a large meeting; all the influential people were on the spot. Peter took his seat by the communion table, and resting his head on his hand, hoped and prayed that his people might be endowed with a spirit of love and harmony.

Richard meanwhile mingled with the groups in the church-yard, and became convinced that there were two very strong, resolute, and nearly equally balanced parties in the congregation.

One party went for repairing the present church, or that "it would do for a while longer." The other party was for building at once a new church in Rock Top village. No less than four village men were ready to donate a lot for the new church, so a choice of sites was presented. This idea of a new house would be fiercely battled. Dick went in and whispered the state of affairs to the pastor.

"Richard," said Peter, "you and I must not commit ourselves on that question. Let them settle it in their own

way; it is a point on which the people will feel keenly. You and I must keep quiet."

"I'm for the village party," said Dick.

"Keep still about it, until it is decided."

"Yes, we'll let 'em quarrel it out alone, and they'll go it cat and dog, tooth and nail," said Dick, with relish. "What an opportunity I will have to study human nature!"

Peter shuddered. The people trooped into the church; the meeting was called to order; Peter was moderator, and Richard was secretary.

All the people who lived in and near the village were opposed to maintaining the old church edifice; all the outskirts of the congregation were furiously against building a village church. The Pottingers and the Churches, who had always been enemies, were of one mind on this subject; both of these powerful families were jealous of village influence; and they were inclined to make the most of their new coalition.

Doctor Jehu began by declaring "that to repair the present church would be nearly as expensive as building a new one. He thought no one questioned that the church was in the wrong place; there was only one house near it; it was inconvenient for every body. All the people had to ride to service. The village was the place for the house of worship; then fully half the people could walk to church. He hoped all Rock Top knew the fourth commandment. He was willing to give a building lot and five hundred dollars to a church in the village. Laying out money on the present building was like pouring water in a sieve. He would not be guilty of such folly."

Mr. Litkip bounced upon the floor. He wanted to remind Doctor Jehu that "when everything had been arranged to suit the village people, and give them a chance to walk to church, other people, as the Litkips, would have to ride twice as far as before. That was not fair."

Doctor Cor rose. "Twice as far made no difference when once people had geared up. If people had to drive two

miles, it would not be much trouble to drive three. Churches now-a-days gravitate to the villages. Evening services and Sabbath-school could then be in the church building; and it would be much easier for the pastor. *He* would give a lot and five hundred, if the congregation would agree to build a church in the village."

Mr. Dickons, a red-faced man, not a member, flounced into the aisle; he said, loudly, "that village people held themselves too high; he, for his part, had to go to the village to buy his sugar, get his shoes mended, and sell his butter; he had also to go there for his mail—but he'd be hanged if he went there to church; indeed he would, sirs!"

Here Peter rapped on the table and said, "Order!" and Mr. Dickons fell into his seat.

Mr. Province next had the floor. He would give a lot and five hundred to a village church—

"And expect us to buy all our putty, and nails, and items at your store," cried Mr. Dickons, tauntingly.

"Order!" rapped Peter.

Mr. Province scorned such imputations. He would not reply to them. "The present church," he said, "cannot be made comfortable or beautiful by an outlay of ten thousand dollars. Its position inconveniences every body. If you cannot accommodate the whole of such a large congregation, accommodate half. The other half will be no worse off than now, and village people will know how to appreciate the concession."

Mr. Province must also speak a word for the young men; the young men were dear to his heart, and they were in danger. "Why, sirs, a tavern lies like a monster at the church door, to beguile unwary young men. Yearly we sacrifice our sons; I feel more on this subject than I can say, but I will say, yes, I will—"

But here he was prevented saying by Mr. Pottinger, who towered up in anger. "What does Mr. Province mean by his offensive remarks? Is he slandering church members? Must he call in question the character of that house across the way, kept, if I must remind you, by

my brother-in-law, whose wife is a church member?"

"But they sell liquor," interpolated Doctor Jehu.

"But they *have a license*, and people must live. Perhaps they have as much right as Mr. Province to sell eggs, or Doctor Jehu pills," shouted Mr. Pottinger.

"Order, order!" said Peter.

And now Mr. Church arose. He was a fine looking man, polished and urbane in manner and inclined toward public speaking. He dealt in pathos. He wanted "to remind his brethren that the present spot was sacred. The building was more than a century old. Doctor Stamford had come there a young man; had worked there until his revered head was white—"

"And openly urged us to build a village church," said Doctor Cor, loudly.

Mr. Church proceeded. "The people of the present meeting had been brought up in that old church, their holiest memories clustered about it, and what one of them could endure to have it deserted, desecrated, demolished! But more than this, had they forgotten the graveyard lying near? The graves of their fathers in sound of the preacher's word of the Resurrection and Life. O, who would remove the church from that holy city of the dead—who would take the house where their fathers worshipped, away from their father's graves!"

Here Mr. Province pertly remarked that "the church and the sermons were no manner of use to the dead; they had had their chance, and now the living ought to have theirs, and their conveniences should be considered."

"Sir," pursued Mr. Church—"Mr. Moderator, every grain of that dust is sacred in my eyes; every niche of this house is sacred as my mother's Bible; I could not worship in any other spot than this. In my view it would be profanation to remove the church. I protest against it; I will never consent to it. Here I have sat for the Sabbaths of fifty years, and from this house I must be buried. No; I will never agree to close this house. I call those graves, those sacred ancestral

graves to witness"—Mr. Church stopped to look for his handkerchief, and Dick suddenly remarked that he had been lately promenading amid said graves and had found them covered with thistles, lost in nettles, turned into a blackberry ground for squads of boys, given over to rubbish to such an extent that he supposed nobody cared for them. He thought Mr. Church ought to head a subscription to put the yard in order.

"I will," cried Mr. Church, red in the face from losing the last of his oration—"I will subscribe ten dollars at once, and hope the other brethren will do the same."

Mr. Pottinger sprang up. "It is all nonsense subscribing money for what can be done without money. Suppose the yard is overgrown somewhat. A flock of sheep would eat *that* down in a few days;" and Mr. Pottinger was ready to turn them in, if the meeting gave the word.

Sheep nibbling the ancestral graves! All Mr. Church's finer feelings were outraged. The new *entente cordiale* which had sprung up between himself and his brother Pottinger was destroyed. He attacked said brother furiously; he held his suggestion up to scorn, he showed that it arose in the fact that no Pottingers lay in this graveyard; he scorched and scathed Mr. Pottinger, utterly regardless of his sufferings. The main object of the meeting was forgotten; every body took sides; they disputed until so nearly tea time that they all felt hungry, and Doctor Cor moved an adjournment.

Mr. Church had succeeded in getting forty dollars voted to set the graveyard in order, and the sexton was commissioned to see to it.

The Pottingers and Churches eyed each other in hostile silence, as the meeting broke up in some disorder.

"We are not defeated," said the village party.

"Neither are we," retorted the old church party.

"We will never give in, and repair here," said the village party.

"We will never help to build down there," said the other.

"There is a meeting called for next Saturday afternoon, at three o'clock," said Peter.

"The storm has begun," remarked Richard.

During all the week there was no topic of conversation but the question, "Shall we build, or repair?" People discussed it on the church steps, and in the pews; they considered it while they should have listened to the sermon; they gossiped of it in store, post-office, and depot. When they arrived at the meeting the succeeding Saturday, every man was more set in his former opinion than he had been the week before. Dignitary Church had got his way about the graveyard; he was, moreover, a Christian man, and regretted that he had been betrayed into anger against his brother Pottinger; he said as much while they were tying their horses, and the two entered the church together peaceably. It was a poor time for them to quarrel when all the village people were a unit for a church in their midst.

To this convocation came Peter with a sinking heart. He and Richard, while careful not to add fuel to the already hot fires of discussion, had in private weighed all arguments, and had coincided with the village party.

Very stormy Sabbaths now saw the old church deserted, for those who dared brave the weather on their own behalf, would not leave their teams and vehicles exposed to the storm, and no sheds had ever been built near the church. In the village a very respectable congregation could be relied on in the worst weather. Much of the pastor's Sabbath must now be consumed in riding to and fro, a difficulty a village church would bring to an end. Peter agreed with Mr. Province that a tavern was not a good neighbor for a house of worship. He thought with others that it was not worth while to inconvenience the living for the sake of preaching in sight of the graveyard. Still, if Peter expressed these convictions it would not be adding strength to the resolves of the village party, for they were now like adamant, and it would infuriate the opposition. He yet hoped

that Christian common sense would prevail.

At the next meeting every village man clinched his remarks by offering his quota for a new church, and cheerfully setting it beside the "*not one penny*" which he meant to give the present building. The country members did not venture to offer fixed sums, but they spoke vaguely of what they would do in repairing,

"All I can say is," said Doctor Jehu, "that if you folks want to repair the old church, go on and do it. We won't help."

"Go on and do it!" cried Dignitary Pottinger, "and let all you fellows worship in it free of cost! We don't see it."

"You won't see it," said Doctor Cor, "for we won't come."

Mr. Church now thought it best to wheedle, he rose and spoke eloquently of the evils of schism, the excellence of amity, the beauty of concession. "Let us unite in repairing the house of our Lord," he said. "Let us get it in good order; we elder men will lay down our prejudices. Brother Province, we will even have an organ."

"Yes," replied brother Province, not to be bribed, "we mean to have an organ—down in the village."

"Brethren," said Mr. Litkip, "can it be possible that you would extinguish a candle which has burned more than a century; that you would put out the old light?"

"We are going to kindle a new one," said a village man; "that candle you mentioned is about burned out."

"Put it to vote, to vote!" cried Mr. Pottinger; "let us see if there is not as much power in the old light as in the new."

From this the rival parties were called Old Lights, and New Lights.

When it was put to vote the parties were so nearly equal that Peter for a moment trembled, lest he must give the casting vote.

When each man had thus declared himself, the asides, and the bickering through the pews became so sharp, that by a motion of Mr. Province the parties

divided themselves, and went to the north and south sides of the church. Thus separated they scowled grim defiance at each other across the centre aisle. From this the belligerents got another name—North Lights and South Lights.

Mr. Church arose, and rhetorically stated how he and his friends would repair the present building, the venerable guardian of his fathers' graves. Dignitary Pottinger shrugged his shoulders at this mention of graves, but refrained from speaking. The village men floridly told what they would do, and showed a lot and three thousand dollars already promised.

"The church *must* be moved," said Doctor Jehu.

"Never, while I am above ground," said Mr. Pottinger; "it would ruin my brother-in-law, who has re-leased the tavern for eight years."

"But," cried Mr. Province, "I never before understood that it was the business of a church to support a tavern."

"You always seemed to be my enemy; I hope you do not speak from private spite," cried Mr. Pottinger.

"Order!" said Peter.

"Let expression of opinion be free," said Mr. Pottinger.

"Friends" said the pastor, rising, "I entreat you to be cordial and brotherly. I think you are all Christian men; don't in excitement say things to be repented of. Be harmonious. Cannot some course of conduct be suggested in which you all may agree?"

"It seems," remarked Richard, "that you are totally opposed to each other."

"As opposite as black and white," said Dignitary Church; "we cannot agree."

"But black and white make a very nice gray," suggested Dick, amiably.

"One or the other party must give in," said Mr. Litkip, "we'll have no gray here."

"We won't give in," asserted the village men.

"Nor will *we*," said the country members, just as vehemently.

"Then we must split," said Mr. Dicksons, who was not a member, and regretted but little this great breach among brethren.

"If there is a split," said Mr. Pottinger, in conscious innocence, "it is the New Lights which will go off from us. They may do as they like; one thing is sure, the church property belongs to us."

"We make no claim on the old church building," said one village man, scornfully.

"And the parsonage is ours too," said Mr. Church.

"And there's a hundred dollars in the bank, the beginning of an organ fund, that is ours"—said somebody else; and this was as bad as the graveyard question, for every one began a hot dispute about that hundred dollars. It was the result of a May-day fair, and the people said the fair originated among themselves; that the work was done by the village young folks; that the country people had opposed the organ, the fair and every thing connected with it, and they claimed the money as absolutely theirs.

Some one appealed to Richard. He arose. "The fair, so far as he knew, was undertaken by the village people"—the village people nodded approval—"but he saw other people buying freely;" here the Old Lights nodded encouragement. "Suppose each party agree to give it to the other." Everybody shook their heads. "Suppose they divide it equally, if worst come to worst, which I hope will not be." Every one scowled at this; like the woman before Solomon, they wanted the whole child or none. "Suppose they choose an umpire."

Mr. Pottinger said, uneasily, that umpires always decided wrong.

"Suppose you draw lots," said Dick. "I am willing to hold the lots for you."

But here Peter interfered. "Brethren, order! You are not divided, heaven forbid; you are one church yet. You can no more divide this money than I can divide my money with myself. If you must separate, the church court must provide the terms, and divorce you with ecclesiastical justice. They will adjudicate your differences. But think again before you take an irrevocable step."

"I'll never help repair," said Mr. Province.

"I'll never help build down yonder," said Mr. Pottinger, resolute'y; while

Mr. Dickons said, "Well, divorces are fashionable now-a-days, and I go in for one in this case on the ground of incompatibility."

The money wrangle had taken up all the time until evening, so the meeting adjourned with their affair still unsettled.

"I wish," said Peter to a belligerent on the door-step, "that you could settle this difference amicably."

"Tell the village party to give up then."

"I do not know that I ought to take that course; I might not, in conscience, be able to give that advice, even if there were the least possibility of its being followed."

"Domine," said the parishioner, hotly, "once Doctor Stamford meddled in this building matter, and he meddled on the wrong side. He learned that it was well for him to hold his tongue, and you'd better take the same lesson."

"Mr. Pottinger," said Peter, "can you not concede something for peace's sake?"

"Submission is not my part. I'm a ruling elder," said Mr. Pottinger, loftily.

"And I am a teaching elder," said Peter, mildly.

"You needn't teach me," said Mr. Pottinger.

And now were Peter and his Cousin Richard in hot water, truly. Despite their discretion, they were attacked on all sides. Each party by times claimed them, and anon denounced them as helping the other party. Mr. Province upbraided Peter for declaring that the opinions and preferences of such men as Mr. Pottinger and Mr. Church should not be lightly dismissed; while both these latter gentlemen were highly indignant because Peter said that Dr. Stamford had always favored a village church.

"There is no use of my staying here amid this confusion," said Peter to Dick. "The church will divide, and where will I belong? I cannot stay with the old church party for many reasons; nor with the new, for just as many. New men, unversed in these quarrels, would do better here than I; besides, the village church will not be ready for a pastor this somewhere."

"I'll advise you," said Dick. "Get out of the building before the roof falls in. You resign before they split. Be ahead of them."

"But these people are my first love," said Peter, dolefully.

"Humbug!" said Dick. "Men never marry their first loves, nor the second, nor the third, usually. I didn't. There are plenty more loves just as good as this of Rock Top."

"And the church seems to me like Doctor Stamford's legacy," continued the unhappy parson.

"And like many another heir, you've got through with the legacy. Come, I say, go!"

"But I shall go with hard feelings. I have been roughly handled by the whole of them—almost—and I'll remember it, I fear."

"That 'almost' is a saving clause," said Dick. "Do you know, Cousin Peter, the 'almost' will grow so large that it will overshadow all the rest? Departing, you may feel a little bitter over opposition which you have met, and hinderances cast in your way; but time heals all. The distance of years shall lend enchantment, even to Rock Top. You and I, Peter, will one day look back to Rock Top lying in the soft effulgence which lights the past, and from among its quince trees we shall see Doctor Stamford's dear face, the goodly figure of Dignitary Church, the jolly doctors, Mr. Pottinger grown venerable, Mr. Litkip mellowed like a ripe apple, and Mr. Dickons a good fellow, Province forever kind, and even the falsest true. Thus, with all rough edges smoothed, and crooked ways made straight, Rock Top shall appear to us Arcadia!"

"And I must really go?" said Peter.

"I say so," said Richard. "Your own manliness and common sense say so, too. Your pride shrinks from the thought that either half of Rock Top can get on without you; but no man was ever indispensable to a church. The Lord will manage here without you, Peter, and even without me."

And so on a dismal, raw February afternoon, the ecclesiastical court having had its say, Peter and his Cousin Dick may be seen flying from Rock Top. The train has reached the depot, and the travellers shake hands with the group who come to see them off. The distant village, where blue smoke curls above the white roofs; the quince orchards lifting like shrubs above the snow; the low-lying hills, with dark woodland crests, which break the monotony of the gray horizon; the dreary, unpainted depot, where friendly figures cluster in the doorway—these last sights of Rock Top are slowly left behind as the engine ploughs through the drifts, and Peter's first charge is lost to him forever.

But time passes; and off on a holiday tour, Peter and Dick agree to drive through Rock Top. Years have wrought the change foretold by Dick, the seer. Peter, happy in the glamour of better days, looks genially at Rock Top. The Old Lights and the New Lights burn each in its own candlestick. The village rejoices in its stone church. The old building still keeps ward over the graves, but its front door is in front; the house is painted white, and has a steeple; and as each Sabbath the people gather under their respective fanes, they have forgotten the bitterness which parted the Old Lights from the New, and drove Peter and his Cousin Dick out of Rock Top.