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THE PULPIT CASUAL.

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“THE Church at Waynetown,” as complacently remarked by Deacon Saxe, “was not numerous, but it was rich.”

The deacon did not mean rich in spiritual experiences, but in hard cash. It was an aristocratic little Church, made up mostly of old families—the Burdetts first and then the Saxes. It was a decent, complacent little Church, rejoicing greatly in the proprieties—its members never failed to put in an appearance on Sabbath mornings, and sat in their pews in unwinking solemnity. The dead in the grave-yard, just under the church windows, were equally solemn and unwinking, and often quite as much benefited by the ministrations from the pulpit, and this not from any fault in the ministrations.

The fact was that this Church had fallen into a rut; they had been running in the groove of their own respectability. If the Lord had had as high an opinion of Waynetown, as Waynetown had of itself, that Church would have been speedily translated. This congregation steadily looked

down all excitements; they sat comfortably through hymn, prayer, and preaching, and stood, respectfully, for the benediction; and they never permitted any thing outside of the usual routine to take place.

Each Sabbath the minister could feel sure of within five or six of the exact number who would be out to listen to his disquisitions: one could forecast the collections, and not be a dollar wrong; for everybody had their settled rates of giving, and the Church preferred, as the recipients of their liberality, old, dignified, and well-established societies.

The Church was perfectly orthodox, and the Deacons Saxe were the exponents of that orthodoxy. As soon as one Deacon Saxe was gathered to the deacons gone before, another Saxe was ordained to fill his vacant place, the diaconate being apparently one of the hereditaments of the Saxe family.

The profound calm of this Church was not particularly ruffled by the announcement that their pastor was about to resign his charge. The event was

not unprecedented, and it was only decorous that the Church should waive their claims on their minister when he believed that he could be benefited by a change. The present incumbent of the ministerial office in Waynetown had held his position for ten years, and had delivered sound, dignified, well-seasoned discourses to the Saxes in the great square pews on either side of the pulpit, to the Colvilles in the long narrow pews ranging behind the square ones, to the Burdetts magnificently displayed in the main aisle slips, to the Daltons who formed the Burdetts' rear guard, and to the inferior people, such as must belong to every church, and who held their stations near the doors—a position which, if I rightly remember, a certain Psalmist and king did not consider beneath his acceptance.

It may be that the unmoved proprieties of his "small but wealthy church" had chilled the pastoral soul; at all events the minister resigned and departed; the congregation was resigned, and heard candidates.

As often happens, the candidates failed to please. The more new men Waynetown heard, the more fastidious Waynetown became; and the more young ministers in general tried to please them, the farther were this people from being pleased. Become spiritual epicures, they found all ordinary food palling on their pampered palates, and something must be very piquant to suit at all. On a certain glorious September morning, when the senior Deacon Saxe was deeply engaged in calculations concerning the market value of thousands of luscious globes now hanging from his ancestral peach-orchard, he was waited upon by a gentleman of elegant person and unexceptional dry goods, who introduced himself as the Rev. Wilberforce Cowper Randall, bearing to Deacon Saxe, as the exponent of Waynetown piety, clerical greetings from the Rev. —, D. D., of Boston. It would have been beyond human nature for Deacon Saxe not to feel flattered by the knowl-

edge that the fame of his proprieties and his office had drifted to Boston, and to the ears of the D. D. whose praise was in all the churches. The purport of the letter was that the welfare of the Waynetown church was dear to the soul of the distant divine; that the bearer of the epistle, his beloved young brother in the ministry, was a man by grace and nature greatly gifted for his office; that in eloquence, zeal, and discretion, he had few superiors, and he was commended to Deacon Saxe and the rest of the brethren at Waynetown, as one eminently calculated to set at rest the vexed question of "who should be their minister."

To the wise charming of this letter the deacon's ear gave heed; he received the wandering minister to his house; he introduced him to the church members; invited him to preach; was pleased with his preaching, and gravely spoke his praises to the congregation. The Burdetts were as well pleased as the Saxes; and when the Burdetts and Saxes, who made up half the congregation, were pleased, every one else was sure quietly to follow.

After the second Sabbath's preaching, the Rev. W. C. Randall was invited to be pastor of the Waynetown church, and, of course, accepted the invitation. During this period the new minister had not intruded himself upon the hospitality of Deacon Saxe. He had preferred a boarding-place, and had obtained one with Mrs. Job Colville, a cousin of the Burdetts. However, Mr. Randall had received many invitations to dinner and tea, and was, socially, quite popular.

"I must reply to Dr. —'s letter," said Deacon Saxe.

"It would be better to wait until my case is settled," said Mr. Randall, and the deacon waited.

Mr. W. C. Randall's case was settled on a Monday evening. On Tuesday he said quite easily to Deacon Saxe, "I suppose you have written to Doctor —?"

"I shall do so to-night," said the deacon.

Next morning Mr. Randall dropped into the deacon's before breakfast. "I have written to my old friend, the doctor, and brought you his address, I will post your letter with mine." Accordingly he went to the office with both letters.

The new minister was emphatically a new experience to Waynetown, and rippled the surface of their accustomed calm. He was young; their other pastors, and the pastors of adjacent churches—from which, however, they were in a manner shut off—Waynestown lying among sheltering hills upon a river calm as itself—were old or elderly. Besides, being on the hither side of forty, the Rev. Randall was unusually handsome. His black eyes, which we must confess were roving in their glances, and could never be fixed in an answering gaze, were black as a bandit's are supposed to be, and, on occasion, could become misty with tears. His forehead might have been deemed low for the author of such rich discourses as on Sabbaths delighted Waynetown; the charm of his voice, however, was undeniable; his features were of the style denominated "classic," and his tastes were dainty and refined. Besides these personal advantages, Mr. Randall had casually informed the people that he came of an old and wealthy family; he was not dependent on the stipend offered by Waynetown Christians. Again, the man was eloquent, and his literary attainments were evidently great; his style of preaching was fervid and devout; the Greek and Latin quotations which he made were a delicate tribute to the past academic or collegiate education of the heavy parents who occupied the pews of his church: in the delivery of his sermons the oratory equalled the rhetoric. He sometimes rose to the tragic, or branched off into the tremendous, and thus, possibly, catered to those theatrical improprieties that seem dormant in the most orthodox hearts. Finally, the worthy deacons, the Saxe brothers, averred that the new pastor prayed in-

comparably better than the old one. While the former pastor's petitions had been grave, slow, simple, and lengthy, the new pastor, in prayer, was rapid, passionate, elegantly descriptive, forgot nothing, said much in little, and got through ahead of time. To a people who were not accustomed to do their own emotion, it was a solace to have a pastor who, unchecked by his hearers' calm formality, got up for them warm feelings warmly uttered, and every first day of the week swept them all, apparently, toward heaven on the flood-tide of his own strong passion.

It was only to be expected that a young and handsome minister, unmarried, and evidently heart-free, should occasion some small excitements among the young ladies of his congregation. The talent of Mr. Randall, his good family, and his supposed property, made him seem an eligible match even to the most fastidious parents of his parish.

Conspicuous among the young ladies of the Waynetown church was Miss Adele Burdett. The Burdett families were numerous—their children numerous; Adele was the eldest unmarried daughter of the senior and richest of the Burdett brothers. Without any strictly beautiful features, bright eyes, splendid teeth, a healthful complexion, a mass of silken hair, and ready smile, made Adele charming, and a belle, par excellence, in Waynetown. Friends, and money, and kind nature had united to give Adele the first place among her young companions. Lovers had not been wanting, and our Adele had refused several suitors; she was supposed to be coquettish and hard to please.

In the presence of the new pastor Adele experienced a hitherto unknown emotion. Ministers are supposed to be generally attractive to young ladies, though why this should be so, in the face of the multitudinous embarrassments and drawbacks of the position of a pastor-ess, is more than a reasonable person can divine. We console

ourselves with the reflection that love is ever unreasonable. Whether it was the fact that all her young friends doated on Mr. Randall, or whether the witchery lay in the music of his voice, we can not tell, Adele, ever the followed and courted, became infatuated with the Rev. W. C. Randall. This infatuation she had sense enough to keep to herself; but Adele had never been thwarted in any thing, and she certainly did not mean to be thwarted in a love affair. Like a princess, Adele could do her own wooing, but she was too much of a woman to do it openly.

As for the Reverend Randall, his conduct to the ladies of his charge was unexceptionable. Courteous and affable to the last degree, he treated all alike; and if he made a difference, it was in gentle devotion and deference to the married and the elderly of the sisters of the church.

In visiting the sick, the new minister was kind and punctual; he left the management of church affairs entirely to his deacons, consulting everybody on every thing, praised all, and condemned none. People called him a saint; that is, the mature people called him so; the girls said he was "an angel." Our reverend friend had not long been in his Waynetown charge when Deacon Saxe suggested proceeding to those little inaugural ceremonies which mark the advent of a new shepherd of the flock.

Mr. Randall demurred. "I am just as much your pastor; you equally my people; the bond can not be made stronger between us; let us go on as we are."

Deacon Saxe opened wide his eyes. "We must follow church regulations and precedents," he cried.

"O, certainly, certainly. I do not object. I believe in the value of these ceremonies. But why be in haste? In a year from now, if our mutual friendship is undisturbed, we can proceed to carry out the ordained forms, and our ecclesiastical union will then have the basis of thorough acquaintance and established affection."

"I don't know what the Church would say, and the other ministers of our denomination. We have always conformed to—" began Deacon Saxe uneasily.

"The truth is," said Mr. Randall frankly, "that while I have made it my rule never to burden other people with my private sorrows, I must now take you, my dear friend, into my confidence. My honored father is the victim of a disease that will inevitably terminate fatally before very long. I have watched at his bedside for the last six months, and only left him because I saw it added to his distress to see me detained from my legitimate calling. Each day I look for a dispatch summoning me to close his eyes. If we should set a time for these ceremonies you refer to, and our brethren came, it might only be to find me absent. Let us wait until this burden has been lifted from my heart, and this dear saint has been taken to his rest. I trust I shall have resignation to meet that loss becomingly."

The deacon agreed to his pastor's views. Of course his next step was to betray the pastoral confidence to his wife, and, of course, his wife betrayed it to all her acquaintances. This served to make the Rev. W. C. R. more interesting; it accounted for the shade of gentle melancholy that hung about him; and, having been regarded as a model pastor, he was now looked upon as a model son. Not a day passed when sympathizing voices did not inquire, "how his father was;" and sometimes the father was better and sometimes worse; always, however, patient and faithful, and his sufferings were a dagger in the soul of his son.

The wife of one of the Deacons Saxe was a confirmed invalid; for two years she had not left her chamber. She was a gentle woman, with hair turning silvery, and in her, tribulation had worked its legitimate fruits, and she had become one of the goodly of the earth, her feet still treading a shining upward path, and never turn-

ing back. This dear lady hailed the visits of her pastor as a great blessing in her restricted life. The first visit naturally passed in general conversation, and in getting acquainted; but at the second interview Mrs. Saxe, in her gentle decision, led their speech out of the world, of which she hardly formed a part, and lifted it into the nobler region of spiritual things. First silent and constrained, Mr. Randall suddenly broke forth into a eulogy of "grace," and rose almost to an ecstasy of devout longings and anticipations. After this his guardian angel probably observed that the Rev. Wilberforce Cowper R. primed himself, if we may be allowed the expression, for these interviews with his parishoner, by an hour or two of close study, and that he also purchased some devotional books, which he read to Mrs. Saxe in his best voice. He was also very fluent in quoting hymns to her, and on one occasion recited a large part of De Clugni's "Heavenly Country," greatly to her edification. However, our story is not of Mr. Randall's various ministrations to his people, but of the progress of Adele Burdett's love.

As we have seen, Mr. Randall found a boarding-place in the home of Mrs. Colville, a relative of the Burdetts. She was a reserved elderly woman, somewhat hardened by various troubles; for her husband, injured in a steam-boat explosion, had for years been a helpless cripple in a chair. The two lived alone, Mrs. Colville sent out her washing, and for the rest did her own work; her house was small, retired, neat as wax, and tastefully furnished with old-fashioned articles which were never allowed to grow shabby. Mrs. Colville set a good table, talked little, and when her work was done kept for the most part in her husband's sick-room. Mr. Randall could not have found a better home—his sole duty in the house was to ask a blessing at the table. Mrs. Colville had suggested his having family prayers, but he had assured her that he did not feel at liberty to intrude upon the private devotions

of herself and husband. He always went into Mr. Colville's room after breakfast, asked him how he felt, and quoted a little Scripture at him, or recommended a particular hymn.

As might be imagined, Mrs. Colville's dwelling had never been greatly attractive to the lively Adele. She now took unwonted interest in her afflicted cousins. The bouquets brought by Adele to Mr. Colville were very beautiful; she nearly always had one for Mr. Randall, which, having ascertained that he was not in his room, she would run and place on his table, and in the most enchanting manner make Mrs. Colville promise "not to tell." Adele also brought fruit, books, cake of her own make, and bottles of her father's best wine, to Mr. Colville. It was not in human nature to resist these attentions; Mrs. Colville was not hard-hearted; she liked Adele, as every one else did, she smiled at the 'fancy' all the girls had for Mr. Randall, but she made Adele welcome, and praised her when she had gone. Besides the flowers for Mr. Randall's study, Adele had always a bouquet for the pulpit, and if Mr. Randall was in the church she would smile and blush as she placed it in position. No one had a thought against it, for whatever Adele did was right. Mr. Randall spoke of the bouquet once in his sermon, called it a "beautiful form of worship," and a "token of devotion eminently suited to the young and happy." He said this in a far-away tone as if he were himself those two noted patriarchs Methusaleh and Job.

Adele's new interest in invalids was not confined to her Cousin Colville; she became very attentive to Mrs. Saxe. Her presence lit up that sufferer's chamber, as roses brighten December; the dear lady received her warmly, loved her tenderly, and all unwittingly, speaking from the fullness of her heart, praised "the dear child," to Mr. Randall.

It was Adele who first proposed purchasing new books for the pulpit. She it was that headed the subscription

among the young people for a luxurious study chair for the pastor; Adele presented over the young ladies who made that elegant wrapper for Mr. Randall; Adele discovered his birthday and sent him a pair of slippers. In fact, Mr. Randall got plenty of presents, the young ladies kept him in cambric handkerchiefs, and he had no less than six hair watch-guards.

Oddly enough the first person who divined Adele's attachment, and earnestly seconded it, was her father. We say oddly, because Mr. Burdett had never been in a hurry to marry his daughters, had scrutinized their suitors, their histories and prospects with severity; and he had seemed even grudgingly to give the paternal "yes," which was needful to make young couples completely happy. In the present instance Mr. Burdett appeared quite as much fascinated as his daughter. The stately gray-haired old gentleman was bewildered by the eloquence, the pathos, the tragedy even in private life, of the Rev. W. C. R.—not one of his sons-in-law equalled the pastor—Mr. Burdett was ready to welcome him as Adele's suitor.

For a long time Mr. Randall did not seem eager to be so welcomed. He rather shunned the society of the lovely girl; was silent in her presence, avoided seeing her alone, and at last took with her a cold, grave air, very different from his general manner.

These things seemed only to make Adele more quietly persistent. She appealed sweetly to Mr. Randall's opinion with her lips or eyes, dropped her voice almost to a whisper when she spoke to him; and on Sabbath's listened to his sermons with an absorbed, devoted attention that would have roused a heart of stone. Resolute, and unused to neglect or denial as was Miss. Burdett, she began almost to despair of winning the heart she had elected to possess, when suddenly the whole face of affairs changed.

Having visited Mrs. Colville one day, bringing some bouquets of late and hot house flowers, and having learned

that Mr. Randall was not in the house, she, as often before, carried his bouquet to his room. Having bestowed it in the vase she lingered for a while looking at books, touching papers, wondering perchance what charm she lacked which was needful to win the man she fancied, we will not dare say loved. While thus delaying, Mr. Randall came home, and she heard him on the landing, the door was open, she pushed back the vase of flowers and turned to run from the room. He met her at the door. Adele looked up, all smiles and blushes.

"It is to you, then," said Mr. Randall, "that I am indebted for the lovely flowers that so often cheer my solitude?"

Adele laughed. "I put them there, but you do not know but I am the messenger of the other young people."

"They have," said Mr. Randall, "then chosen a very charming messenger."

Adele looked up roguishly. "Everybody thinks so."

"I think so," said Mr. Randall, in his lowest and most entrancing tones.

Adele stood near him, her cheek flushed. She was in her most becoming attire; the beautiful child of wealth, instinct with youthful life, and full of a thousand unchained impulses. If this man had any reason for avoiding her, her presence was dangerous. Whatever resolutions he may have made, whatever barriers he had placed between them, were gone in an instant. She merrily touched his arm for him to step out of the door and let her pass. That touch electrified him; he stepped aside, but his face flashed with a sudden determination. He stood by the banister and watched her gliding down stairs, and, contrary to his wont, soon followed her to Mrs. Colville's sitting-room.

Adele went home triumphant; she believed the battle was won, and she had conquered the only heart she had ever craved. Adele, though she had never studied the art of war, knew

well that a victory should not be followed by inactivity; the present success must be only the earnest of future achievements. She pressed her conquest now, but not by overt act, but by the subtle charm of her presence. She felt sure that Mr Randall would be all that she could desire in lover or husband, and she was equally sure that Adele Burdett must necessarily fill the sum of happiness to him.

From the moment that sudden resolution flashed into the Rev. W. C. R.'s face, and he followed Adele to the head of the stairs, he abandoned himself to the pursuit of the lovely heiress with a devotion and persistency that left nothing to be desired. The most delicate compliments, the tenderest anxieties, the most subtle flatteries were his tribute to Adele. One while he told her how his grieved and lonely heart needed an exalted companionship, nearer akin to heaven than earth, to draw him upward, and that divine attraction he had found in her only of all the women who had crossed his way. Again, dwelling in a region of exalted thought, undiscerned or unappreciated by his fellow-men, he needed a kindred soul to sympathize with, to comprehend, that in whatever lofty circles his mind might creep, one twin-born intellectuality might keep pace with his. He did not utter these ideas in the poor baldness of this present speech, but to this it amounted. People like best to be flattered with the possession of virtues that never graced them. Adele, of a surface nature, a bright shallow spirit, loved well to be designated as sympathetic and intellectual. To Mr. Randall's persuasive whispers she lent a ready ear, and seeming nearly won, like a will o' wisp, almost grasped, the next moment she had lightly gained some new distance, and her suitor followed still. Adele certainly meant

To know "the deep, secure content
Of wives who have been hardly won,
And long petitioned, gave assent,
Jealous of none."

Her advances had been covertly

made at first. The fascination of her presence once felt should show its power, and now the pursuit was for her lover. Had Adele been more astute, she might have seen that Mr. Randall made love, as in the practice of a fine art, wishing to see how well he could do it. He played the lover as a skilled actor plays his role, not because he believes himself the character he acts, but because he would see how perfect he can make the illusion. Had Adele possessed that acute sensibility which Mr. Randall verbally attributed to her, she might have learned that his love-making was the carrying out of a plan and a theory.

This was for a time; at last, in an auspicious hour, Mr. Randall proposed, and was accepted. Adele was happy, and innocently showed her happiness. She was affectionate, and did not conceal her affection. Some new depth in this man's nature was touched; the angel that slumbers somewhere in us all, stirred in its dreams, responsive to this girl's frank, first love. Adele's confidence, perchance, evoked a transient worth.

During the next day or two a new phase of Mr. Randall's character was developed. Until now he had carried out a determination; now he loved, and his determination faltered. Pursuing some set purpose, he had sought Adele's society persistently; now, when he felt love for her, his eye avoided hers; he trembled at her voice, at her touch, and suddenly withdrew himself from her presence.

When Mr. Randall offered himself to Adele her parents were absent, spending a few days in the city. She accepted him, understanding, of course, that he would go through the form of laying the matter before her father on his return.

When Mr. Randall's constant calls ceased, Adele grieved; but supposed that the extreme tenderness that had characterized her lover's feelings for his invalid father had influenced this his new relation, and made him feel that he ought not to seek her compan-

ionship until he received her parents' sanction.

Mr. Burdett returned home, and still the clerical lover did not make his appearance. Adele, to her astonishment, found that notice of the engagement first reached her parents from herself. Absence still continued, and Adele's pain and mortification were becoming boundless, when Mr. Randall reappeared. In the delight of seeing him the girl at first greeted him warmly, then, remembering his apparent defection, she reproached him for his absence. Mr. Randall flushed, paled, hesitated, remained silent. Adele in vain waited for a reply. "I do not believe you love me!" she cried, and overcome by her first real trouble, bowed her head upon the arm of the sofa and burst into a passion of tears.

Mr. Randall blanched even to his lips; a certain weakness of his character, usually hidden, revealed itself in the changes of his countenance, but there was no one to see it—Adele's face was hidden. Presently, as he bent gently over her and took her hand, the former resolution blazed up and absorbed all weaker or softer impulses, call them what you will; he kissed her flushed cheek. The kiss aroused the dreaming inner angel, and, his voice trembling, Mr. Randall said hastily, "Adele, Adele, it seems cruel to link your lot with mine."

"And why?" cried Miss Burdett.

He did not answer, and she lifted her head and pressed her question. "Why? Tell me why? What is there about you? What have you done?"

Resolution shut down over his face like an iron mask. "Done, Adele! nothing; but I am moody; I am oversensitive; I have not the wealth, nor the position, nor the advantages that are worthy of you. You were born for a queen."

Adele was flattered, she was also satisfied. This was only the tender conscientiousness of this pink and jewel of lovers shining forth. "I am satisfied," said Adele, "to take you as are."

"To take me as I am; so be it." What was it that flashed across his face as he spoke—a revelation that came and was gone which no one caught. "Adele, I am going to your father." He left her; but as his hand touched the door of Mr. Burdett's library, for a second he looked like a man on trial for his life, facing overwhelming evidence.

"Adele," said Burdett *per se*, that evening, "your Mr. Randall is the most sensitive, scrupulously upright and conscientious person I ever met."

Adele's heart was content.

Though, as yet, no day had been set for the marriage, everybody understood that it was about to take place, and everybody was well pleased. If a prize in the shape of a marriageable man came into the community, it was only right that he should fall to Adele Burdett's share. Mr. Randall was so popular that everybody said Adele "had done *very well*." Adele's solid attractions were such that everybody said Mr. Randall had done equally as well.

The rubicon of obtaining parental favor having been safely passed, Mr. Randall became more than ever devoted to his *fiancee*; he visited her constantly, and between whiles, of his almost daily calls, he sent to her ardent sonnets, translated from Horace and Anacreon, it may be, which Adele laid up carefully as tokens of her suitor's literary ability, and souvenirs of happy hours.

At one time Mr. Randall urged immediate marriage; but overhaste would not suit the style of preparation that was due to an heiress of the house of Burdett. As these preparations advanced, Mr. Randall's haste grew cooler, and hints of his "dear father's precarious condition" began to be renewed.

Adele had set the month of the marriage, but, as yet, not the day. The wedding festivities were yet also undecided. Mr. Randall, referring pathetically to his father's illness, had rather the wedding should be quiet,

and almost private; Adele had a girl's love of display.

As the eventful month opened, and advanced with the spring-time advance of nature, a new unrest possessed Mr. Randall—controlled at first, it by degrees became manifest, and when it was alluded to by Adele, he explained it as fearing he would "never make her as happy as he ought," or, "he feared his honored father would not live to see his dear son's bride."

Even Mr. Burdett was constrained to say to his child, "If this man does not conquer his morbid sensitiveness, he will never make you happy—he is too conscientious."

All was now ready but the bridal dress, the fashion of which would depend upon the style of the wedding. Mrs. Burdett's store-room, always filled with luxuries, now boasted immense loaves of wedding cake, "getting good by keeping."

Mr. Randall's recent attention to his duties in his congregation had been spasmodic. People said gayly they "wished he would hurry and get married, and settle down."

On a Wednesday he went to see his invalid parishoner, Mrs. Saxe. He looked worn and worried; his eyes wandered restlessly as apprehensive of some sudden blow; his conversation was broken and desultory.

"Such happy prospects as yours, my friend, should make you more cheerful," said Mrs. Saxe, smiling.

He started, avoided her eye, clenched his hands, turned away on his chair, and suddenly groaned, "What shall I do?" He at once collected himself; but Mrs. Saxe was alarmed, and asked:

"What is wrong? Do tell me what distresses you?"

"I must go away. I am called away. Yes, I must go," he said hurriedly.

"My poor friend, is your father worse?" said Mrs. Saxe.

"Yes, yes; he is worse. I must go to him. It is very hard. I will go next week."

"But why not go now? If you are needed, go at once."

"Next Sunday is sacrament; I must stay for that; then I will go at once. Yes, I will go." Reiterating this, he seemed relieved.

"Why stay for that? If you are needed, go to-day. The deacons will willingly defer sacrament until you return. Do not torture your tender heart for our sakes. If your father needs you, go."

"Thank you;" he said, recovering himself, "you are kind, ever too kind. I will wait until after Sabbath, and go then; but," he added hurriedly, "I don't care to have it talked about; I will bear my burdens alone."

"At least we can sympathize with your joy," said Mrs. Saxe, striving to cheer him. "You will have a very sweet wife. God bless you. Do not look so sad; you have often comforted others, take comfort yourself."

"I have comforted! Tell me, have I comforted *you*?" he looked at her strangely.

"Very greatly. Shall I see you before you go?"

He had risen to leave her, and replied: "No, I think not. I can not come again." He half held out his hand, and then, as if ashamed, withdrew it.

Mrs. Saxe from her chair, extended her hand warmly. "Good-bye until you come again—soon I hope—for all our sakes!"

"Until I come—who can tell—perhaps never!"

"Even then," she said, "I shall ever remember you with friendship and with prayer!"

He bent forward, for once the black eyes fixed their gaze on hers and grew wistful, a look welled into them as of reverence and yearning for an unattainable virtue.

Sunday, as Mr. Randall had said, was the time set for sacrament, but the day was wildly stormy, and few were out. Mr. Burdett was the sole representative of his family at the church. The marriage had, during the previous two days, been vaguely set for sometime the ensuing week. Before service Mr.



Randall went to his prospective father-in-law, and, drawing him aside said, excitedly: "I am sent for; I must go—go to-morrow!"

"But this week you are to be married; what will Adele say to your going?"

"My father—my poor father;" faltered Mr. Randall, an agony worked in his face, yet unaccountably Mr. Burdett felt angry with him.

During the service that anger softened away, Mr. Burdett felt attracted as he never had to any man; why, he could not tell, unless it was that in the exercises of the day, the pastor was surpassing himself. In all those graces which had pleased his congregation he abounded. There was about him the magnetism of a stifled excitement, which drew all hearts with his. As he spoke he grew more and more fervid, he even wept, and the staid, impassive, congregation yielded to unprecedented emotion, and brushed away their tears.

Service over, Mr. Burdett rushed to the pulpit, and clasped his pastor's hands. "Come home with me! You need sympathy, and we will give it—come home, my friend, my son, and we will cheer you. Let this strife end, go to your father; stay as long as you need—I myself will pay for supplies to fill your place. But you need not go alone; Adele will go with you. Let your father see your wife. To-morrow you can be married; in the morning, in the evening; when you like. You are in no mood for any thing but a quiet wedding."

"Thank you; kind, ever too kind," murmured Mr. Randall; "but I ought to go—to-day."

"To-day! in this storm, impossible; and there are neither trains nor boats leaving; you are not fit to go off alone; you need a friend; a consoler. Come, the carriage waits." Mr. Burdett took the arm of his hesitating pastor, and drew him to the waiting carriage.

Who shall explain the secret of this warmth, this pressing, this infatuation, of the quiet and stately Mr. Burdett?

It would seem that a thousand unseen forces were drawing these people on.

Mr. Randall spent the day at Mr. Burdett's, and became more and more himself, as hours passed by. The wedding was fixed for the ensuing evening, and the newly married pair were to set out on Tuesday morning to see Mr. Randall's *father*.

Pressed by his hosts, Mr. Randall remained their guest for the night; and next morning, fearing lest he should relapse into gloom, Mr. Burdett accompanied him to Mr. Colvilles, chatted with him as he went; sat with Mr. Colville while Mr. Randall occupied two hours with his packing, and, indeed, only finally left him toward evening, a short time before he was to come and be married. At the house preparations had hastened, some twenty intimate friends had been invited, trunks were packed and the bride was ready. Mr. Randall came in happy. He had received another dispatch, his father was much better, and out of danger for some months to come. Not to take Adele at once from her bridal to a sick-room, they would make a little excursion, go then to her cousins in B—, and after that visit, either see his father or return to Waynctown.

Meantime, in the evening of Mr. Randall's last visit to Mrs. Saxe, Deacon Saxe had been moved to write to Doctor —, in Boston, to thank him for sending them "such a pastor" who was also now to marry one of their "most esteemed young ladies."

Four days after the marriage Mr. Randall and his wife were at her cousins in B—. Mr. Randall had gone out after breakfast, and the cousin came into Adele's room. They chanced to speak of Mr. Randall's great trunk, which he always kept locked. This proceeding the cousin declared unfair. He had no right to debar Adele the privileges of that trunk. She laid a merry wager as to how many ragged hose and young ladies' photographs were hidden in its recesses. In a spirit of mischief, the two got a bunch of keys and proceeded to unlock and ran-

sack Mr. Randall's private possessions. Begun in merriment, mirth speedily froze to horror; and the gay bride and her heedless relative stopped aghast at the revelation they had opened to themselves. This minister was no minister—this name was a false name—this lover of the months that were just passed was the husband of a faded girl, whose sad eyes appealed to Adele from her pictured face—father of two children, whose holy semblances lay now on card in Adele's hand—and Heaven help her, the vows she had lately uttered were unregistered on high, the marriage was no marriage—horrible awakening from the easy, merry life, where, until now, Adele had drifted as in a summer dream.

But already to Deacon Saxe had come through Doctor ——'s answer, an equal revelation. The letter supposed to have been his was a forgery—he knew no Mr. Wilberforce Cowper Randall—he had never heard of Waynetown and its respected deacon—the invalid father was a heartless myth—if a marriage was impending let it be delayed while some one searched out this impostor's history. This letter brought the excited paternal Burdett, his brother, and two Deacons Saxe, at once to B—— where they arrived, when the first weight of this fearful blow, had fallen upon poor Adele. Officers of justice being set on Randall's track, apprehended him at a second-hand book dealer's, purchasing a new lot of very old sermons, while he was waiting for the train, which was to carry him to some other remote apathetic, unsuspecting town, where he could rehash the goodly deliverances of true men who have passed away, and by the help of his own early theatrical education, play the eloquent divine, and be supposed a saint.

There was no concealment possible; the miserable man was put on trial. His neglected wife came to claim him, bringing her children.

There were those who could pity him, remembering some of the past, and that in preparing to fly he had

not taken advantage of his opportunities of robbing the trustful Adele of jewels that, to an unmitigated scoundrel, would have been a strong temptation. Toward the close of the trial Randall was permitted to speak for himself. All his natural eloquence awoke, as, in extenuation of his conduct to Adele, he portrayed how she had pursued him, and how, even at the last, he had striven to draw back and escape. There was truth in what he said, even if it was truth strongly colored. There was a stir at the witness stand as he proceeded, a smothered cry, and a stately old man with gray hair, a man who stood, like Saul, head and shoulders above his fellows, fell heavily to the floor. It was Mr. Burdett's death blow, though death delayed.

But who shall speak the shame and consternation of the Waynetown church, that there had not been enough of true spirituality among them to detect this base counterfeit? Hitherto well satisfied, they now were distrustful of themselves. How easily they had affiliated with the child of darkness!

"I know," said Deacon Saxe to his sister-in-law, "that, as a Church, we have fallen into a wicked coldness and formality. It is no wonder *we* were deceived; but you are different from the rest of us, and you were benefited by him."

"Treasure in an earthen vessel," she replied. "Whatever he was, there is a sacred truth that nothing can defile."

"It is enough," said the deacon, flaring up a little, "to make one suspicious of the ministry."

"Not at all," said Mrs. Saxe, "for it is only good available money which is counterfeited; no one thinks of imitating uncurrent coin. There would have been no bogus men of piety and fervor, if the absolute men of such type had not some where been a blessed reality."

"I don't see," said the deacon peevishly, "why such a disaster should

have overtaken our Church, our *irreproachable* Church at Waynetown!"

"My dear friend, I see it very clearly," said Mrs. Saxe. "Our Church here is a Church of good morals, rather than of earnest Christianity. We have gloried in our impassivity; we have fallen into a rut, and rejoiced in it; we did not treat our last minister—a good faithful man—with proper love and respect; we did not grieve at parting with him; we did not ask the Lord to guide our choice of a successor; and, finally, we were too self-conceited to ask the advice, regard the opinion, or adhere to the rules of the ministerial body with which we were connected."

The deacon's head drooped low—for the first time since he had offered himself to the wife who now for thirty years had been his helper, the deacon blushed; he not only blushed, but he jerked and twisted nervously. Mrs. Saxe believed she saw the time to speak, and, consequently, she spoke.

"Brother Saxe, would you not have frowned upon what is called a revival, and considered it as an undue excitement? Did you not prefer that your pastor should do your *feeling* for you? Had you not so long checked your emotional nature, and made your piety a cast-iron style of piety, that you did not know genuine godliness from its travesty? I felt so myself, it was so long since I had seen a warmly devoted man of the Payson, or Edwards, or Brainard type, that I mistook an impostor for a saint."

"Well, I admit the justice of your rebukes and remarks, and I hope I'll—yes, we as a Church, will profit by this trouble; but what can you say for poor Adele Burdett? Does it seem *fair* to you that the heaviest part of this blow should fall on her?"

"It is not *Christian* to question *fairness* thus. Why any less on Adele than on others? But, you know, my heart aches for her. If I can in any way lighten your doubts or clear up a mystery by these suggestions, listen. Did Adele act the true woman's part? Did she give a love that was faithfully sought, or did she persistently follow up a whim? Was not Adele's always a trifling surface nature, all whose better part slept in unstirred depths? It may be that from these bitter hours shall begin a nobler life, a higher womanhood, that is worth purchasing at any price."

Mrs. Saxe was right. If Adele had been a Romanist, she would have taken shelter in a nunnery. Debarred this questionable refuge, she roused from her dream of love and her reality of sorrow, to be such a daughter, such a friend, and such a benefactress as only a woman with every power purified and consecrated can be. The Adele who had spent large sums on velvets, laces, ostrich plumes, and new styles of jewelry, had vanished; but twice a year that new Adele, who lived to do good, went to a poor and lonely home where dwelt the faded girl and the children, whose pictured faces she had found in the trunk that fatal morning, and going there gave earnest sympathy and heavenly pity, and did not forget the more substantial aid, without which the children and their mother had been destitute indeed.

When, between two of these visits, news came that the man who had marred both their lives had died in prison, these two women may have had sad and bitter thoughts, the name of the living convict had never passed between them, and the name of the dead was likewise unspoken.