

Butler Ellis Parker

Dominie Dean: A Novel



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My Dear Mr. Dare:

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

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

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

*Most sincerely,
Ellis Parker Butler
Flushing, N. Y.*

I. 'THUSIA

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

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

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

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

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

This was not the first time 'Thusia had flirted with the male passengers of the packets. Few boats arrived without one or more young dandies aboard, glad to vary the monotony of a long trip and ready to take part in a brief flirtation with any 'Thusia and to stretch their legs ashore while the sweating negroes loaded and unloaded the cargo. When the stop was long enough there was usually time for a brisk walk to the main street and for hurried ice cream treats. The warning whistle of the steamer gave ample time for these temporary beaux to reach the boat. The 'Thusias who could be found all up and down the river knew just the safe distance to carry their cavaliers in order to bring

them back to the departing steamer in the nick of time, sometimes running the last hundred yards at a dog trot, the girls stopping short with little cries of laughter and shrill farewells, but reaching the boat landing in time to wave parasols or handkerchiefs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

She turned and came.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What 'Thusia needed was a mother to see that her vivacity found a more conventional outlet. There was nothing really wrong with 'Thusia. She was young and fun-loving and possessed of more

spirit than most of the young women of the town. She was amazingly efficient. Had she been a slower girl the housework of her father's home would have kept her close, but she had the knack of speed. She sped through her housework like a well-oiled machine and, once through with it, she fled from the gloomy, motherless place to find what lively companionship she could. It would have been better for her reputation had she been a sloven, dawdling over her work and then moping away the short leisure at home.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Wiggett's face was red.

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

"Father!" exclaimed his daughter.

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

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

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

II. MARY WIGGETT

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Thusia, for her part, pursued David unremittingly. She stopped running the streets, and tried to force her way into the activities of the church until she was so cruelly snubbed and cold-shouldered that she wept for anger and gave up the attempt. Then she lay in wait for David. She sailed down upon him whenever he went upon the streets, seemingly coming upon him unexpectedly, and falling into step with him. She ambuscaded him on the main street when he went to the post office for his mail. She was quite open in her forced attentions, and, of course, she was talked about. 'Thusia did

not care. She had no way of courting him but by being bold. She fluttered her wings before his eyes whenever she could. She was a butterfly teasing to be caught.

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

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

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

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

The stern-faced Wiggett listened to her grimly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

David turned.

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

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

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

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

David sat with his long legs crossed, his chin resting in his hand and his eyes on the spatter-work motto – "Keep an even mind under all circumstances" – above his desk. He thought of Thusia Fragg and her attraction and of his duty to himself and to his church, considering everything calmly.

He had felt a growing antagonism without understanding it. As he thought he forgot Benedict. His hand slid upward, and his fingers entangled themselves in his curly hair. He sat so for many minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am not right every time, Benedict," said David, arising and walking slowly up and down the floor, his hands clasped behind him, "but I am right in this. You are wrong when you allow yourself, even for a day, to fall into a state in which you cannot be of use to your sick when they call for you, and I would be wrong if I let anything turn my people from me, for they need me continually. My ministry is more important than I am. If my right hand offended my people I would cut it off. I have been careless, I have been thoughtless. I have not paused to consider how my harmless chance meetings with Miss Fragg might affect my work. Benedict, a young minister's work is hard enough – with his youthfulness as a handicap – without –"

"Without 'Thusy," said Benedict.

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

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

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

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

She was skating arm in arm with some young fellow, and as she saw David she pulled away from her companion. "Catch me!" she cried and darted away with her companion darting after her. She was the most graceful skater Riverbank boasted, and perhaps her first idea was merely to show David how well she could skate. Suddenly, however, as if she had just seen David, she waved her muff at him and skated toward him. The young fellow turned in pursuit, but almost instantly shouted a warning and dug the edges of his skates into the ice. 'Thusia skated on. Straight toward the thin, decayed ice she sped, one hand still waving her muff aloft in signal to David. He started down the bank almost before she reached the bad ice, for he saw what was going to happen. He heard the ice

give under her skates, saw her throw up her hands, heard her scream, and he plunged through the mud and into the water. Before anyone could reach them he had drawn her to the shore and 'Thusia was clinging to him, her arms dose around him. She was laughing hysterically, but her teeth were already beginning to chatter. Her skates raised her nearer David's face than ordinarily, and as the skaters gathered she put up her mouth and kissed him. Then she fell limp in his arms.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes," said David, "I feel that too."

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

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

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

III. THE COPPERHEAD

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

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

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

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

As the lists of dead grew and the war, at the end of ninety days, seemed hardly begun, loyalty and hatred and bitterness became almost synonymous. Riverbank, on the Mississippi, held not a few families of Southern sympathizers, and the position of any who ventured to doubt the right of the North to coerce the South became most unpleasant. Wise "Copperheads" kept low and said nothing, but they were generally known from their antebellum utterances, and they were looked upon with distrust and hatred. The title "Copperhead" was the worst one man could give another in those days. As the war lengthened one or two hot outspoken Democrats were ridden out of the town on rails and the rest, for the most part, found their sympathies change naturally into tacit agreement with those of their neighbors. It was early in the second year of the war that old Merlin Hinch came to Riverbank County. It was a time when public feeling against Copperheads was reaching the point of exasperation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was no great disgrace, in those days, to carry parcels, for many of the Riverbankers had come from St. Louis or Cincinnati, where the best housewives went to market with basket on arm, but David would have thought nothing of his paper parcel of buns in any event. The buns were at the baker’s and he liked them and wanted some at home, so he went to the baker’s and bought them and

carried them home. He was coming out of Keller's doorway when 'Thusia, as gayly dressed as ever, hurrying by, saw him and stopped. She was frightened and agitated and she grasped David's arm.

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

"Who is it!" he asked.

"That Copperhead farmer," said 'Thusia.

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

"Stop this! Stop this!" he cried.

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

Someone laughed. Old Hinch did not drive away.

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

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

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

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

IV. ROSE HINCH

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

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

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

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

"What ails him!" David asked.

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

David turned in his chair.

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

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

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

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

"I remember. I picked it up and gave it to him."

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

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

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

"He may well hate it," said David.

They found old Hinch as Benedict had left him, bent down in his chair with his eyes set in a hard glare. He was very weak – much weaker than when Dr. Benedict had left him – but his lips still moved in ceaseless blasphemy. The wife let David and the doctor in. No doubt she felt the loss of her son as deeply as old Hinch himself felt it, but Fate had taken vigor out of her soul before

this blow fell. Her nervous hands clasped and unclasped, and she looked at Benedict with the pitiful pleading of a dumb animal. When the two men went up to Hinch she seated herself at the far side of the room, still clasping and unclasping her hands. The tragedy that had occurred seemed lost in the tragedy that impended.

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

The room was poverty-stricken in the extreme. There was no carpet on the floor and no drapery at the windows. The table was of pine, and a squat lamp of glass stood on it, the lamp chimney broken and patched with scorched paper. The afternoon waned and old Hinch ceased his muttering, but David prayed on. He was fighting for the man's soul and life. Dusk fell, and with a sudden great sob old Hinch buried his face between his knees. Then David clasped his hand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gossip, once started in a small town, does not travel – it leaps, growing with each leap. It builds itself up like conglomerate, that mass of pebbles of every sort, shells and mud. In no two heads did the stories that were told about David during those days agree. The tales were a conglomerate of

unpleasant lies in which disloyalty, infatuation for the Copperhead's daughter, hypocrisy, unhallowed love and much else were illogically combined. Of all this David suspected nothing. What Mary Wiggett heard can only be guessed, but it set her burning with jealousy of Rose Hinch and weeping with hurt pride.

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

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

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

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

"But would she give you no reason?" asked David.

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

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

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

"Well, 'Thusia!" he queried.

She was greatly agitated. As she talked she began to cry, wringing her hands as she poured out what she had heard. David was in danger; in danger of disgrace and perhaps of bodily harm or even worse. From her father she had heard of the threats; Mr. Fragg had heard the word passed among the loafers who hung out among the saloons on the street facing the river. David was to be ridden out of town on a rail; perhaps tarred and feathered before the ride.

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

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

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

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

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

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

David met him at the door.

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

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

“Will I do! Can I go!” she asked.

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

“Of course! But Hinch – he came to town! Why?”

“He had to get the coffin, Davy.”

David hurried into his coat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You will not find a word regarding the murder in the *Riverbank Eagle* of that period. They hustled the murderer out of town until it was safe for him to return; indeed, he was never in any

danger. The matter was hushed up; but few knew old Hinch. It was an “incident of the war.” But David, breaking through the crowd one moment too late, dropped to his knees beside the old man’s dead body and raised his head while Benedict made the hurried examination. Some members of the crowd stole away, but other men came running, from all directions and, standing beside the dead man, David told them why old Hinch had damned the war and why he hated it – not because he was a Copperhead but because one son and then another had been taken from life by it – one son killed by a stray Confederate bullet and the other shot while serving in the Union army. He made no plea for himself; it was enough that he told them that old Hinch was not a Copperhead but a grief-maddened father. As he ended Benedict handed him the letter that had slipped from the old man’s hand as he fell. It bore the army frank and was from the colonel of a Kentucky regiment. There was only a few lines, but they told that old Hinch’s oldest son, the last of his three boys, had fallen bravely in battle. It was with this new grief in his mind that the old man had stepped out to confront his tormentors.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes,” David said.

‘Thusia looked down.

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

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

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

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

‘Thusia suddenly felt infinitely silly and childish.

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

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

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

“‘Thusia!” he called.

“Yes?” she replied, and turned back.

David walked to the gate and leaned upon it.

“What is it,” Thusia asked.

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

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

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

Her heart stood still.

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

“Don’t you care for met” he asked.

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

“What!” David asked.

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

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

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

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

V. CHURCH TROUBLES

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

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

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

During the first year of 'Thusia's married life

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

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

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

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

"Mary is lovely!" 'Thusia told David.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rose came out.

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

"We are all glad," said David.

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

'Thusia was up and about, singing as before, in due time. Rose Hinch remained for the better part of a month and departed absolutely refusing any compensation. The winter was as happy as any David ever knew. Davy Junior was a strong and fairly well-behaved baby; 'Thusia was in a state of ecstatic bliss, and in the town all the former opposition to David had been long since forgotten. With the calmness of an older man but with a young man's energy he went up and down the streets of the

town on his comforting errands. He was fitting into his niche in the world with no rough edges, all of them having been worn smooth, and it seemed that it was his lot to remain for the rest of his life dominie of the Presbyterian Church of Riverbank, each year better loved and more helpful.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But, father!" Mary insisted.

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

"Father – "

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

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

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

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

"In a measure I do; yes," said Ellen Hardcome.

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

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

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

Old Sam Wiggett chuckled.

“Who thought! Ellen never thought of that,” he said.

“I thought of it,” said Mary.

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

Mary did not ask him.

“Told me I wasn’t fit to clean her husband’s shoes!” said Wiggett.

“I hope – ” said Mary.

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

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

“Said that, did she!” chuckled Wiggett.

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

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

“And I suppose you know what she said about you, Mrs. Hallmeyer? That she simply got tired to death of seeing your eternal purple dresses!”

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

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

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