

# DUNCAN POLITE



MARLAN KEITH

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# **DUNCAN POLITE**

**THE WATCHMAN OF GLENORO**

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**BY**

**MARIAN KEITH**

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# DUNCAN POLITE

## THE WATCHMAN OF GLENORO

### I

#### THE COVENANT

The morning sun was growing stronger as it rose higher. Collie, returning from driving his master's cow to the cool shade of the back pasture, felt its rays penetrate his shaggy coat. His tongue hung out as he padded swiftly up the garden path where already the dew was almost dried from the rows of marigolds and sweet William. He dropped with a sigh in the shadow of the old water-barrel that stood against the house. He felt too warm even to chase his enemy, the cat, into her accustomed shelter of the adjacent pine tree, though she was curled up with impudent complacency upon the top of the barrel. Instead, he lay in the shade, his eyes glancing furtively through the open door. He could see inside the old log shanty, where a figure was moving about the bare, spotless kitchen; his tail began to thump a welcome upon the ground, as the figure came slowly forward and stood in the doorway. It was an old man, tall and stooped, with a finely built frame which suggested a less rugged constitution than is the possession of the average pioneer. His face was handsome, with regular, clearly cut features and a pair of wonderful eyes, dark and deep set, with a wealth of kindness in their brown depths and a mysterious pathos which spoke of a poetic soul beneath.

Duncan Polite, the people of the neighbourhood called him, partly because the name was descriptive of his gentle, courteous nature, and partly because, among the many McDonalds of these Canadian Highlands, to which clan he belonged, names were so often repeated that the only appellation of any use to a man was the special and distinguishing one, complimentary or otherwise, bestowed upon him by his neighbours. Indeed, such was the dearth of original names that it is on record that old Ian McAllister, the first schoolmaster in the McDonald settlement, was often compelled as he flung his tawse across the room at some focussed point of mischief behind the stove, to pause even at the boiling-point of his wrath, to deliver himself of some such explanation of the case as:

"Fiddlin' Archie's Archie, an' Squintin' Archie's Duncan, an' you, Black Sandy More, come up here or Ah'll smash every curse o' a McDonald in the school!"

But among all the McDonalds there was only one whose character demanded such a title as belonged to Duncan Polite. He stood for a moment this morning, in his doorway, gazing over the sun-bathed fields, all green and gold in their early summer dress, then went back into the room, returning the next moment carrying an old leather-bound Bible. He spread his big red handkerchief upon the doorstep to protect his Sabbath clothes from possible contact with dust, and seated himself upon it, the open Book on his knee.

Everything in his little bachelor domain was in perfect order; the path to the gate, with its bright border of flowers, was swept as clean as the spotless floor within the log shanty; the old stove in the centre of the kitchen, the big, high cupboard with its rows of shining dishes, the old clock ticking in a solemn muffled tone from its place on the dresser, and the bare pine table were all in a condition of beautiful dazzling cleanliness. A condition befitting the day, Duncan felt, for it was Sabbath morning, and now he sat awaiting the coming of his old friend, with whom it had been his custom, for more than thirty years, to walk down the valley to church, rain or shine, snow storm or blazing heat.

Collie looked up with eyes of dumb devotion as the man seated himself. He wagged his tail expectantly, but, seeing the open Bible, dropped his nose between his paws again and dozed.

But Duncan Polite did not read. His eyes wandered away over the landscape. It was a scene worth

contemplating—an expansive tract of rich farm lands, stretching from the blue line of Lake Simcoe on the south, to another blue line on the northern horizon, where Lake Oro peeped through the sharp tops of the firs. But to Duncan Polite, the best of all was the little valley that sloped abruptly from his very doorstep to the sparkling river.

His eyes followed the white road that passed his farm and wound down into the shady depths. He could see it twisting in and out among the elms, and on through the village where the tall smoke-stack of the saw-mill, the church spire and the chimneys of the houses rose out of the green orchards. It crossed the blue line of the river where the old church stood, and then went winding up the opposite hill to disappear among the pines.

The beauty of it all went to Duncan Polite's poetic heart. The music of the river, mingling with the chorus of the orioles that flashed golden in the pines at his gate, found an echo in his soul, and he crooned to its accompaniment his favourite Gaelic psalm,

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,  
He leadeth me beside the still waters."

*His* glen, Duncan Polite had always called this place beneath him, though he owned not a foot of land within its green walls; but his glen it really was in a higher sense. More than fifty years before, old Donald McDonald, his father, had cut down the first tree on the Oro banks, and there, in that time of incredible hardships, he had knelt one day by an old mossy stone on the edge of the valley and, Jacob-like, made a covenant with the Lord, that if He would be with him and give him a home for his children in the wilderness, they would pledge themselves to make it a place of righteousness, as pure and lovely as they had received it from Nature's hand.

Duncan had been a mere child then, but he had realised something of the solemnity of the pledge. As he grew older the feeling became stronger, until it developed into the conviction that he had been chosen for this special work, namely, that of keeping the little glen at his feet a centre of all good influences. He had set himself as a sort of spiritual watchman to the place; everything that brought discredit upon it gave him deepest pain; everything that tended to raise its moral tone was, to him, a personal favour and joy.

Sometimes his task had seemed impossible; sometimes he doubted his ability to be of any use; but on this bright Sabbath morning a new accession of hope had made him unusually happy. His eyes rested upon the sun-bathed hilltops with a deep peace. Those enduring hills had always been of great comfort to the watchman. As he saw the dense forests change into fields of grain, they seemed the one immutable feature in his surroundings and served as a familiar landmark to a puzzled traveller.

"I will lift up mine eyes into the hills, from whence cometh mine aid," he quoted softly.

A brisk step sounded upon the stony road above; the old man did not hear, his lips were still moving, his eyes still fixed in a happy reverie upon the far-off horizon.

Collie arose slowly as a figure approached the gate. He was too well versed in canine etiquette to bark at his master's oldest friend, but he felt he should mark his approach in some way. He went forward with waving tail and respectfully lowered head, uttering a gruff ejaculation which could scarcely be called a bark and yet served as a form of greeting.

The newcomer paused at the gate. "Aye, Duncan, ye're waitin'," he said.

Duncan Polite's friend was as unlike him as a Lowland Scot can be unlike a Highlander, which is granting a very wide difference indeed. He was short and thick-set, with energy and force speaking from every limb of his well-knit frame. In spite of his near approach to three-score-and-ten, he was erect and brisk, and, although he always carried a stick, it was more for the purpose of emphasising his forcible arguments than as a support for advancing age.

A stern, upright man was Andrew Johnstone, a terror to evil-doers and so prone to carry out all the law and the prophets by physical force that he had earned, among the irreverent youth of the community, the name of "Splinterin' Andra."

The deep friendship between him and the gentle, poetic Duncan McDonald was as strange as it was lasting; for,



though they seemed not to possess one characteristic in common, not once in all their long years of comradeship had their allegiance waned.

At the sight of him, Duncan Polite started up in a bewildered fashion.

"Oh, and it will be you, Andra," he said, "Oh yes, yes, it will be time to be going, indeed."

Collie came sadly and limply to the gate and watched them depart. He was a wise dog, and knew that when his master wore a black suit and carried two books, dogs were not wanted. The thought never entered his sagacious canine head to attempt upsetting the established order of things, but he could not resist a longing whine as he stood looking through the bars of the gate, his eyes eager, his head on one side, his whole body a quivering protest against being left at home in the company of a mere cat.

Duncan turned and said a comforting word in Gaelic, and Collie, though a Canadian, understood the language of his Highland ancestors, and trotted meekly back to his despised companion on the water-barrel.

The two old men stepped out leisurely, one on either side of the road, as was their custom, Duncan with his head bent forward, his eyes fixed on the far-off horizon, and Andrew with his head thrown back and chest expanded, his hands clasped behind him, his big stick waving up and down beneath his coat-tails, except when he whirled it to the front, to bring it crashing upon the stones in emphasis of some truth.

These walks to the church were their greatest enjoyment. They started at least an hour earlier than was necessary and had plenty of time to move along at the gentle lingering pace conducive to friendly talk. They discussed everything of interest that was in keeping with the day. Generally their conversation was of the good old times and the great transformations they had witnessed; and sometimes Duncan Polite hinted at his ambition for the village, knowing he was sure of his friend's sympathy.

They passed the first turn in the winding road and came out from behind a fairy curtain of drooping elm boughs into full view of the river and the orchards, before either spoke.

Andrew Johnstone showed what his thoughts had been when he broke the silence.

"Yon Collie o' yours is jist like the young folk o' to-day, Duncan," he said. "They're aye wantin' away when they should bide at hame."

The old man's chief cross in life was the rising generation, of which he considered his own son the most exasperating type.

"Aye," he repeated ruminatingly, "he's jist like the young folk, but Ah misdoot he's got mair sense than some o' them."

But Duncan Polite had unbounded faith in Young Canada. "Oh, indeed they will be jist lads and lasses, Andra," he said indulgently. "And they will be good at heart. The Lord will guide them aright, never fear."

"Ah hope so, Duncan, Ah hope so, but there's oor Andra noo, he's got nae mair sense than when he was on his mither's knee. Him an' yon nephews o' yours are jist as prone to evil as the sparks to fly upwards. They spend half o' their time in the glen wi' yon' gigglin' licht-heided lasses o' John Hamilton's, and the ither half, fleein' ower the country. Ah see Sandy's gotten the bag-pipes noo, an' ma lad's jist gone fair daft wi' the goin's on up at Betsy's."

Duncan was somewhat abashed. He remembered with a pang of conscience that he had admired his nephew's bag-pipes, and had laughed with his sister, as the piper strode up and down the kitchen, playing McDonald's reel, to the stirring and uproarious accompaniment of the six flying feet of his brothers.

"Oh well, well," he said apologetically, "they would not be meaning any harm, and Donal' will be at home for his holidays, and the lads will be jist a wee bit noisy. And, indeed, Sandy would be playing a fine strathspey the other night." He checked himself hurriedly, feeling that such a subject was incongruous on the Sabbath.

Andrew Johnstone seemed to share his opinion, for he made no answer, but walked along whacking the

wayside weeds with vicious strokes of his big stick. This was always a bad sign, and Duncan was silent for a time. He had a great piece of good news regarding one of those same nephews, but the turn the conversation had taken rendered it rather difficult to tell his friend.

"I would be thinking this morning of the great power of prayer, Andra," he said, by way of introduction. "All the good that would be coming to Glenoro in these years the good Lord would be sending it in answer to prayer."

Andrew Johnstone put his stick behind him; his face cleared. "Aye, aye, Duncan, yon's a fact. Man, d'ye mind how your faither an' mine, an' old Donald Fraser would meet when we were lads an' pray for the means o' grace an' the ordinances o' God's hoose?"

"Yes, yes, Andra, yes indeed, and He would be sending Mr. McAlpine to awaken the people, and then the church came, and Mr. Cameron."

"Man, yon were wild days, before Mr. McAlpine cam'," replied his friend, giving himself up to the joys of retrospect. "Yer faither used to say the Glen was jist like the Garden o' Eden until the serpent cam', an' it wes the tavern. Ah mind when yon Eerish crew from the Flats cam' up here to Pete Nash's tavern, an' the lads from the Oa cam' doon, a' McDonalds to a man, an' ye could hear the fechtin' ower on the Tenth. Man, yon Murphys were a bad lot!"

Duncan's eyes shone. He was leading up skilfully to his happy disclosure. "Yes, the times would be bad, but Mr. McAlpine came, and the revival came. He would be the man of God indeed, and it would be jist prayer that brought him, and it would be prayer that brought the church and Mr. Cameron among us."

"Aye, aye, Duncan; when we remember all the way He has led us, we shouldna' lose faith."

There was a pause and Duncan began again with an effort. It was always difficult for him to open his heart, even to the comrade of his youth. "I would be praying all these years for something, Andra, and it would seem almost too great, but the Father would be answering me. Oh, yes, He would be kinder than we can ever know."

His friend turned and looked at him sharply, and noticed for the first time the unusual radiance of his face. "Aye?" he inquired. "It would be aboot Betsey's lads."

Duncan nodded, his face aglow. "Donal'."

"An' what aboot him?"

"He would be studying so hard when I sent him to the school that now I will be sending him to college next fall, an' I will be praying that——" He faltered, almost fearing to put his great hope into words.

Andrew Johnstone paused in his walk and stared. He knew Duncan had been long nursing a great ambition for his eldest nephew and had been educating him at his own expense towards that end, but he could not believe it was to be fulfilled.

"He'll no be thinkin' o' bein' a meenister?" he inquired, failing to keep his utter astonishment out of his tone.

Duncan nodded, his eyes shining. "He would not be jist promising me yet, for Donal' says he will not be worthy, and the lad is right, for it will be a high calling. But he would not be refusing me when I asked him, and he will be going to Toronto in the fall, and surely the Lord will touch the lad's heart——" He was off in a happy day-dream again, a dream wherein his nephew stood in Glenoro pulpit when their aged minister laid down the work.

Andrew Johnstone did not answer for some minutes. He hesitated to disturb his friend's airy castles, but in his estimation there was no material in any of the youth of Glenoro for the making of a minister, much less in Duncan's eldest nephew. For one thing, the young man was far too intimate with his own son.

"Ah houp it'll be so, Duncan," he said at last, as they turned in at the church gate. "Maister Cameron's an' auld man noo an' he'll soon be wantin' to retire, an' mebbly——" He paused as though the sequel were impossible, adding at last the rather ambiguous encouragement, "With God, all things are possible, ye ken."

## II

### A MEMORABLE SABBATH

The Glenoro Presbyterian Church, which the two old men were entering, was a bare, white structure, very grand in the eyes of the old folk who remembered the little log building where Mr. McAlpine, their first minister, used to preach. But to the rising generation it appeared much inferior to the neat brick church on the slope of the northern hill, where the Methodists worshipped.

It was certainly not a handsome edifice, but Nature had done much where man had been most neglectful. It stood right by the water's edge; and the Oro River, coming out from between its high wooded banks, made a pretty sweep round the quiet graveyard with its white stones. A fringe of willows hung over the water, mirrored in its green depths, and some woodbine from the neighbouring forest had found its way up the church walls and covered them with a drapery green and enduring. Verily, beautiful for situation was the Zion of the Glenoro Presbyterians.

But inside, where man's taste had full control, everything was very severe. The two rows of long, stiff, black pews, the high, box-like pulpit, the little cage for the precentor, a few oil lamps in brackets along the walls and the huge black stove with its weary length of pipes stretching from end to end of the building, constituted the furniture. As for decoration, there was absolutely none, unless the high arched panel behind the pulpit, painted a dull grey and looking like a gigantic tombstone, or the two shining tin pails hung at the elbows of the stove-pipes to prevent the rain from dripping upon the worshippers could be considered ornaments. But the floor and the walls were white and spotless, the stove and stove-pipes shone with all the brilliancy that polish could give them; and the big, rectangular, thirty-six paned windows glittered like the waters of the Oro, whose music was now being wafted through their open sashes.

And, indeed, to the two old men who were entering the church it mattered little that man's hand had no part in adorning their Zion, for to them the place was clothed in the beauty of holiness and filled with the presence of Him who is the brightness of His Father's glory.

They stepped in quietly and reverently, each passing at once to his own place, Andrew to his prominent pew at the side of the pulpit, Duncan to his modest seat behind the stove. They never addressed each other after entering the sanctuary, but sat with bowed heads in meditation and prayer until the commencement of the service. They generally had a long time to wait, too, for no matter at what unseasonable hour in the morning the other worshippers might start for church, it was well nigh impossible to get there before the elders.

Some time passed before anyone else arrived, but at last the big door swung slowly open and Peter McNabb, elder and precentor, who was always a good second in the stately and pious race for church, entered, and went silently forward to his place in front of the pulpit. The custom of having a precentor to "raise the tune" instead of a choir and organ was considered extremely old-fashioned by the more juvenile members of the congregation, but the old people held tenaciously to this time-honoured custom, in spite of much agitation for a change. And, indeed, had the young advocates of progress but paused to consider, they must have been forced to confess that Peter McNabb was a much better musical instrument than any that could ever be produced by man. He was the village blacksmith and he put the same energy into his singing on the Sabbath as he did into the mighty swing of his sledge on week days. He knew very little about musical technique; his voice may not have been very highly cultivated; but he had an appreciation of the psalms which only a godly man can have, and a pure, silvery voice which could pour out floods of melody, or soften itself to the most heart-breaking pathos as the words demanded. For, when he sang to the wail of *Martyrdom*,

"Lord, from the depths to Thee I cry,"

he melted many a heart to tears. And sometimes Duncan's musical soul was so stirred that he found himself clutching the seat in a very ecstasy, almost expecting the grey panel behind the minister's saintly head to burst into inconceivable glory of cherubim and seraphim as, with a rapturous shout, the precentor swept the congregation into the glory of the old psalm,

"Ye gates lift up your heads on high,

Ye doors that last for aye,  
Be lifted up that so the King  
Of glory enter may!"

To the aged minister behind him, Peter's singing was a pillar of faith. Mr. Cameron had travelled widely in his younger days and had heard grand music in the cathedrals of the old world, magnificent harmonies of trained voices with flute and violin and organ helping to interpret the divine meaning of the old masters. It had all been very grand and he often longed to hear such music again; but he sometimes wondered, as he sat in the shadow of his pulpit desk on a Sabbath morning, why there had been nothing in all its grandeur which tended to settle so unshakably the foundations of one's faith, as did listening to Peter McNabb lead his Glenoro congregation slowly and solemnly in

"Oh Lord the God of Hosts, who can  
To Thee compared be?  
The Mighty One, the Lord, Whose truth  
Doth round encompass Thee!"

There were three more elders: big John Hamilton, whose only sin was a family of over-dressed daughters; Donald Fraser, son of the Fraser famous for having Mr. McAlpine's first service at his place; and Peter Farquhar, a Highlander, one of the many McDonalds. Good men and true they all were, who feared God and eschewed evil, veritable fathers in Israel to the congregation.

The people soon followed. Duncan Polite's face lit up with pleasure as a group of five filed past him into his pew, his widowed sister and her four boys. The old man's gaze rested lovingly upon Donald, the lad of his hopes. He was a young man worthy a second glance, a straight, lithe fellow, the kind they breed in the Canadian Highlands. His thin, keen face showed a striking resemblance to his uncle's in its handsome regularity of feature, but there was nothing of Duncan Polite in the bold flash of the young man's eye, nor in the proud swing of his fine figure.

Duncan's attention was taken from him by a slight disturbance at his side. Archie, a small urchin of nine, was struggling quietly but persistently with Neil, his senior by two years, for the honour of sitting next his uncle. Mrs. Neil treated the affair, as she did all the boys' misdemeanours, with a sweet, unconscious placidity, but Donald, who exercised a sort of muscular authority over his brothers, put out his big foot with a quiet but emphatic kick which settled the dispute.

Sandy looked disappointed. "Why didn't you let the little beggars fight it out?" he whispered, "it would give Splinterin' Andra something to chew on."

Donald's face twitched with laughter, and from his point of vantage in the front pew, the ruling elder caught the smile on the face of Glenoro's future pastor and sighed to think how greatly his friend was being deceived.

The last straggler had slipped into the back seat, the church was filled, and every eye was turned expectantly towards the vestry door. It opened presently and the aged minister came forth. As he went up the steep pulpit stair, Duncan Polite's loving eye caught signs of added weakness in his gait, the motions of one too weary for further effort, and his heart was smitten with fear. He could never contemplate the removal of his pastor without the apprehension of coming disaster. There was a new class of people growing up in the church, whose broad views threatened to overturn the simple, pious ways of their fathers. As long as Mr. Cameron was over them Duncan felt assured they would never go far astray, but he often looked into the future with some misgivings.

The minister's text was characteristic, one that Duncan remembered all his life afterwards, as his greatest stay and comfort in times of distress: "And the Lord shall guide thee continually and satisfy thy soul in drought."

The sermon was not shortened because of the minister's apparent weakness; a Glenoro sermon was never less than an hour in length and very often reached the two-hour limit. There were two morning sermons, one in Gaelic immediately following the English service for the benefit of the Highlanders who flocked down from the Oa, the Highland settlement north of Glenoro. Many of the Gentiles, who did not know the chosen language, went home after the first service, and their places were taken by the new contingent.

Andrew Johnstone always remained for the Gaelic service. He understood very little of the language, but he felt the presence of the elders was necessary, and then he could walk home with Duncan and discuss the sermon, a pleasure for which it was worth waiting.

The breaking up of the Glenoro congregation followed an established order of procedure and varied not one Sabbath from another. Any departure from the order of their going would have been considered as irregular as though the minister were to pronounce the benediction before the sermon. First, the young men of the back row flung themselves through the door, noiselessly but hastily, inhaling great breaths of relief. Next came those who had to get their horses from the shed, and close upon them the village folk, passing with fine superiority their rural neighbours. These came out last, to linger and chat while the big double buggies were whirled into place with a scraping sound and the families were perched aboard. Duncan and Andrew, as was their custom, waited for a private word with the minister. The former watched Donald hand his mother into the smart single buggy and drive away through the gate. He did not even miss the glance of Donald's eyes towards John Hamilton's daughters, passing up the street like a gay posy of flowers. Duncan Polite's heart was ever young and he smiled sympathetically as he caught the answering glance from a pair of bright eyes beneath a big white hat.

The minister came slowly down the aisle, shaking hands with all. He had only time for his midday meal and then he was away again to his other charge, a church some nine miles distant on one of the township roads colloquially styled the Tenth. But Mr. Cameron never hurried away without a word with his two old friends.

"Ye're no lookin' well the day, sir," said Andrew Johnstone anxiously. "The work's ower hard on ye in the hot weather; ye're needin' a bit rest."

"Oh, I will be getting a rest, Andrew," he answered, smiling, "a good long rest, and it will be soon."

Duncan Polite looked up with a sudden flash of apprehension in his eyes, but his friend returned the glance with a reassuring smile.

"And so Donald is going to college," he said. "Ah, that's fine, Duncan, that's fine! We'll make a minister of him yet, and a fine one he'll be, I promise. You'll live to hear him preach here when I'm gone."

Duncan put up his hand in protest.

"Tut, tut, sir," said the elder sharply, as was his way when he was moved, "ye'll hear him yersel' some day if he comes till it, never fear."

The minister shook his head. "No, Andrew, I will not hear the lad, but it is a great comfort to me to see Donald McDonald's grandson taking up the work he prayed for, and I hope the Father will spare you both a long time. But as for me——" He paused. The church was empty but for the three old men; the subdued murmur of the people's voices came through the open windows; a smile illuminated the old minister's saintly face. "As for me, it will not be long; 'Tarry thou here, for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan.'"

He turned and, still smiling, walked up the aisle and into the vestry. The two went out into the sunlight.

"Surely he wouldna' mean——" suggested Andrew Johnstone, afraid to say more.

But Duncan Polite could not answer; in the midst of his happiness, when his hopes were at their height, he had been stricken with a great fear. He understood too well the significance of his pastor's words, the farewell of Elijah, and, like Elisha, the old man could have cried out from his very soul, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee!" But he knew that this was a Jordan that must be crossed alone.

The two friends walked up the hill in silence, one filled with a foreboding, the other with a dread certainty of impending trouble.

"If Maister Cameron's ever ta'en awa frae us, Duncan," said the elder gloomily, "mark ma word, there'll be trouble in the kirk. We ha'e a pack o' godless young folk growin' up that need the blue beech gad, every one o' them, an' if Maister Cameron was ta'en Ah'm no sayin' what they'd do!"

Duncan had turned and was looking down the hill at a rapidly approaching figure. His companion followed the direction of his gaze. "Man, is yon Peter McNabb?" he inquired in amazement.

The feeling was quite natural. To see an elder of the Presbyterian Church rushing along the public highway

without his coat, on the Sabbath day, was sufficient to raise consternation in the breast of any Glenorian. Duncan's heart contracted with fear. "Is it the minister?" he asked tremulously, as the blacksmith came up to them, breathless.

Peter's ruddy face was pale beneath the tan. His eyes fell before the question as though he were guilty. "Aye, it's jist that," he said with simple sorrow; "I came for ye both."

The two turned and retraced their steps at his side. Andrew Johnstone was the first to speak. "He's no gone, Peter?" he asked, with more than his usual sternness.

"Aye," said the other in a whisper, "that's jist it, Andra, he's gone."

### III

#### A WAR-MAKER AND A PEACE-MAKER

Duncan Polite's valley was slowly disappearing in the shadows of evening when he stepped from his gate and somewhat hesitatingly turned down into its purple depths. He was experiencing a strange, almost uncanny feeling, for, not only was he going to church alone, but he was actually on his way to worship with the Methodists! He had a vague fear that he must be doing wrong. But indeed, he was going merely in the hope that he might hear some comforting words from the Methodist minister; and Duncan was sadly in need of comfort.

In the long months since Mr. Cameron's death, his days had been filled with anxiety and fear for his covenant. When the first sharpness of grief at the loss of his old friend had passed, the Watchman slowly awakened to the knowledge that he was living among a strange people. Under Mr. Cameron's wise, loving rule all classes in the congregation had been unanimous; the elder folk believed him perfect and the younger respected him too deeply to disagree with him. But when the bond of union was severed, a new party with alarmingly progressive ideas, suddenly came to life. They were fain to introduce many improvements into the church service which the fathers of the sanctuary considered unsound and irreverent. They wanted a choir and an organ like the Methodists; they desired to sing hymns as did their sister congregation over on the Tenth; and, most of all, they considered it imperative that they should stand to sing and sit to pray, as did all respectable people.

Andrew Johnstone, who represented the old school and its traditions, stood at the head of the ancient party as immovable as the church foundations. Some of the elders might counsel yielding, or at least compromising, but not Splinterin' Andra. He regarded all these youthful aspirations as signs of the degeneracy of the times and a decay of spiritual life and, therefore, to be immediately quenched.

So the two parties stood arrayed against each other and the chief cause of their dissension was the choice of a new minister. The more youthful party wanted a young man, or at least one who was "lively," while old Glenoro held to its ideal—a man as much as possible like Hector Cameron, or, if it were not looking for too much on this earth, a second John McAlpine. But the young people of the congregation had never heard Mr. McAlpine preach, and, like the Egyptians, who did not know Joseph, they had not the proper respect for that great leader, and they also considered Gaelic sermons, two-hour discourses and half-hour prayers as belonging to a past generation.

All these trials, youthful frivolity, the lack of a Gaelic service and old Andrew Johnstone's storms, Duncan Polite had borne patiently; but to-day's sermon had been almost too much for even his optimism, for that morning a smart probationer had stood up in Mr. Cameron's sacred pulpit and delivered a twenty-minute address on the Beauties of Nature! Even the young people had been shocked, and Andrew Johnstone had, for once, voiced the sentiments of the whole congregation as he gave his opinion of the young man to Duncan Polite on their homeward walk. "It's a guid thing Maister Cameron's gone till his rest," he remarked sombrely. "If he'd a lived to see his pulpit filled by a bit buddie that couldna' hang on till his taxt for half an' 'oor, he'd never a held up his heid again!"

And so Duncan had been driven to the extremity of seeking comfort in the Methodist Church and was on his way thither, in some doubt as to the wisdom of such a strange proceeding, and in much fear that Andrew would disapprove.

The Methodist Church was a substantial brick building, set picturesquely on the slope of the northern hill. Duncan went hesitatingly in and took a seat near the door. He found it quite a roomy place and well filled. There was much more ornamentation here than in his own place of worship; the walls were papered, the pulpit platform was covered with a gay carpet, two shining brass chandeliers were suspended from the ceiling, the windows were frosted glass with a row of lurid blue and red panes around each, and behind the minister was the centre of attraction and cynosure of all eyes, the choir and the organ.

Duncan felt a return of his misgivings when he recognised many members of his own church in that institution; for, such was the chaos of these new times that the Methodist services were attended regularly by nearly all the young Presbyterians. And, indeed, matters had come to such a pitch that the choir was conducted by no less a person than young Andrew Johnstone himself, much to the wrath and shame of his pious father.

That choir was at once the delight and torment of its members. The hopes and fears, the triumphs and despairs that surged within the little railing, would have been sufficient to swamp the congregation, could they have broken loose. But the enjoyment outweighed the pain; there was choir practise once a week and sometimes they were invited to furnish the music at a neighbouring tea-meeting and both these were unmixed joys. Then, too, they were permitted to sing quite alone at the regular church services, while the collection was being taken up; and sometimes they even ventured to sing an anthem, though the evening they sang one with a tenor solo by Sylvanus Todd, they were considered to have gone a little too far, by even the most liberal minded, and the offence was not repeated until more enlightened times.

Mr. Ansdell, the Methodist minister, was a benign old gentleman with an angelic face and a heart to match. He noted the mingling of the different religious sects in Glenoro with humble joy, and regarded the fact that a Presbyterian elder's son should lead the singing in the Methodist church as a mark of the broad and kindly spirit of the age and one of the potent signs of the millennium.

He was just the sort of man to appeal to Duncan Polite's heart. His sermon was like himself, gentle, loving and overflowing with goodwill to all men. Duncan sat and drank it in with deepest joy; surely his covenant was in no great danger with such a man as Mr. Ansdell in his glen!

Thereafter, in spite of old Andrew's opposition, he could not resist the pleasure of an occasional Sabbath evening service. He did not always have the privilege of listening to his new friend, however. Mr. Ansdell had another field and preached only on alternate Sabbaths in his Glenoro pulpit. On the occasions of his absence the service was generally taken by a student or a lay preacher from some place in the vicinity. Sometimes the preacher was anything but a man of parts, and was too often a source of merriment to the frivolous row of young men in the back seats. The big college student with the long, fair hair, who raved and foamed and battered all the fringe off the pulpit cushion in a gallant attempt to prove that the Bible is true, a fact which, until then, no Glenorian would have dreamed of calling in question; the poor, halting farmer who tacked a nervous syllable to occasional words, making his text read: "All-um we like sheep-um have gone astray-um;" the giant from the Irish Flats who roared out a long prayer in a manner that terrified his hearers and set all the babies crying and then ended his bellowings with "Lord, hear our feeble breathings," all these were a joy to the back row and the cause of much irreverent giggling in the choir.

But whether the sermon was delivered by minister, layman or divinity student, Duncan Polite always found something spiritually uplifting in the service; and, indeed, so did many another, for if the preacher sometimes lacked in oratory, he made up for it in piety, and if he failed to shine in the pulpit, his life was nearly always a sermon strong and convincing.

Even on the rare occasions when old Silas Todd led the service, the time was not misspent, in the opinion of the Watchman. Silas Todd was one of the pillars of the church and when the local preacher failed to appear, which contingency sometimes arose in the season of bad roads, the duty of preaching a sermon generally devolved upon him. He was a pious little man, bent and thin, with a marked Cockney accent. He had mild pale blue eyes and a simple, almost seraphic smile which scarcely ever left his countenance and which was the index to his character. His wife was small and pious like himself, and had the same accent and the same benevolent expression. They always sat close together on the front seat like a pair of shy children, he in his rough, loose homespun, she in her grey wincey, a neatly folded Paisley shawl and a brown bonnet with a pink feather—this last ornament being the pride of Silas' heart and the one bit of finery his wife permitted herself. They shared one hymn book and Bible, no matter how many there might be scattered around them, and both sang in a high ecstatic key, a measure behind the choir. They swayed to and fro, quite carried away by the music, and as Silas stood with his head thrown back and his eyes shut, and his wife kept her eyes modestly upon her book, they very often collided, to the great detriment of the singing and the disturbing of the pink feather. But the only sign their frequent collisions called forth was a smile of perfect accord and redoubled energy in the singing and swaying.

Silas was modest and never shouldered the task of leading the service until all hope of the preacher's appearing had been given up. On such occasions the congregation would assemble and sit quietly expectant; even the back row, who waited at the church shed until they were in sufficient numbers to brave an entry into the church, having flopped noisily into their places. The choir would whisper and the organist nervously turn over the leaves of the hymn book. Then the fathers of the church would confer, look through the window or tip-toe to the door, confer again, and once more gaze anxiously in the direction from which the preacher was expected to appear.



At this point there would arise from the Todd pew such a fluttering and twittering as can be heard in the nest when the mother-bird is encouraging her little ones to fly. Mrs. Todd, acting as monitor, would give Silas many pushes and nudges which he modestly resisted, until her efforts were augmented by those of his brother officials, when, yielding at last to their importunities, he would slowly rise and go shyly and lingeringly up to the pulpit desk. And the congregation would settle back with a resigned air to listen to the simple, good old fellow give a long and tedious recital of his spiritual experiences, punctuated by many sighs and tearful "Amens" from beneath the sympathetic Paisley shawl.

But in spite of much comfort afforded by the Methodists, Duncan Polite's heart was often heavy with foreboding. He could not help seeing that Andrew Johnstone must soon come to open war with the new party in the church. In his well-meant and vigorous efforts to make everyone tread the old paths the ruling elder produced a great amount of friction; for, though he feared God, he did not regard man, and woe betide the reckless youth who made himself too conspicuous in the reform movement.

The Sabbath school was his stronghold, for there he was superintendent and monarch absolute, and there he seized every opportunity to publicly rebuke anyone who dared transgress his rigid laws.

But the rising generation was not to be wholly deterred from rising by even the terrors of Splinterin' Andra; and, as Duncan Polite feared, the inevitable conflict ensued.

The immediate cause of the rupture was a church organ, merely a myth as yet, but real enough to arouse the apostle of ancient customs to his best fighting mood. The very mention of an instrument made by man to be used in the worship of God, was to the ruling elder the extreme of sacrilege. But in spite of his disapproval, the young people went so far as to hold a meeting at which to discuss the possibility of their purchasing the coveted instrument.

Miss Cotton, the chief dress and mischiefmaker in the village, although no longer absolutely young, was the leader of the rising generation, and she counselled just going ahead without Splinterin' Andra's advice.

There were not many, however, who were possessed of either her courage or her indiscretion. They all agreed, though, that Andrew Johnstone was the one insurmountable barrier to their hopes. Most of the other elders had been approached in a tentative way. Peter McNabb was a broad-minded man with such a passion for music that, though he looked askance at any innovation, yet he would have welcomed anything that would help the singing. Old Donald Fraser considered an organ an unmixed evil and remarked, when asked for his opinion on the subject, that it would be "clean defyin' o' the Almighty" to introduce one into the church. But he had a very ambitious wife and daughter, and as the latter had been taking music lessons and cherishing rosy dreams of one day playing in church, the organ party felt that Mr. Fraser would not be quite immovable. Old John Hamilton, of course, scarcely counted. He said "aye, aye," in a dazed way when his daughters clamoured for his consent, adding that "he'd see what Andra said." Peter Farquhar, they knew, might be difficult, as he belonged to the Oa and was, therefore, very old-fashioned; but they all agreed that if Andrew Johnstone could be moved, all the others would follow; so some one must ask his permission.

Miss Cotton suggested that Wee Andra, the son of old Andra, would be the proper person to carry their request to the elder. "Wee Andra" the young man had been called in his babyhood, to distinguish him from his father, and he still bore the anomalous title though he stood six-feet-four in his moccasins and was disproportionately broad. But in spite of these physical securities, the young giant flatly refused the doubtful honour of approaching his father on the sore subject; so, after much discussion, the delicate task devolved upon Mr. Watson, the schoolmaster. The master had "tack" and education, Miss Cotton explained, and was just the man for the position. So, fortified by this flattery, the young man went up over the hills one morning on his dangerous quest.

The schoolmaster was a young man who was born for agitation; he loved to throw himself heart and soul into some new enterprise, and upon this occasion he had the satisfaction at least of getting up plenty of excitement. What transpired in that fatal interview between him and the ruling elder could never be accurately learned from the former. When questioned upon the subject, he confined his remarks to dark hints regarding antediluvian pig-headedness and backwoods ignorance, but Wee Andra, who in his heart was rather proud of his sire's fighting qualities, spread the account of the schoolmaster's defeat over the whole neighbourhood, with the result that for a season the agitators left their common enemy to turn upon and rend each other.

On the evening after the encounter, Duncan Polite sat expectantly on his door-step. He knew that Andrew would be sure to come down to tell him of the affair, and he was waiting in some trepidation, hoping that his fiery old friend had not said something which would wreck forever the peace of Glenoro church.

Duncan scarcely felt equal to shouldering any more burdens that day, for only the morning before Donald had left for college. The old man had sent him away with high hopes for his future; but he missed his boy more than he could tell. For Donald had been as his own son ever since the Neil boys had been left fatherless. "The Neil boys" they were always called, for their father, as well as their mother, had been a McDonald and, of necessity, his sons used his first name only. Neil McDonald had died when Archie was an infant, and had left Donald at the head of the family, a circumstance which might have proved disastrous to both Donald and the family had it not been for Duncan Polite. For in his boyhood Donald had bade fair to inherit his father's fame, and in the good old fighting days when men used their axes in argument, Neil More was the fiercest warrior between the two lakes. But as manhood approached, discretion had tempered young Donald's valour; he had grown up under the gentle but potent influence of his uncle and had developed a character of which Duncan Polite was justly proud.

But now Donald was gone; and Duncan was sitting thinking sadly of his loss and of this coming trouble, when a sturdy, square figure came down the darkening road.

"Come away in, Andra," said Duncan Polite rising, while Collie bowed his respectful welcome, "come away in, for you will be finding it cool on the step, whatever."

But Andrew preferred to sit out of doors.

Duncan divined at once from his manner that he was in a very bad frame of mind, and so attempted to lead the conversation into a safe channel. "I hear we will be having a fine young man next Sabbath," he commenced hopefully, "Mr. Murray. I would be hearing Mr. Cameron speak of him often."

Andrew Johnstone grunted.

"Aye, mebby," he remarked sourly. "Whatever he's like he'll suit the young folk anyway, for he'll be new, an' that's a' they want. Man, Duncan, the youth o' this day are jist fair daft! The Athenians were naething to them, for their one desire is to possess some new thing. They've got a new church, an' they're goin' to hae a new meenister, an' they're wantin' them new bit tinklin' hymns; aye, an' they're wantin' new elders, Ah'm sure o' that. When you an' me an' a few more o' the auld buddies slip awa, they'll jist be gettin' a new God an' then Ah houp they'll be setisfied!"

"Och, och, Andra," said Duncan Polite soothingly. "Lads and lassies will be young, an' we would be that way ourselves once, and they will be better than you know. There's your own lad now, an' Sandy——"

"Andra! Oor Andra!" cried that young man's father. "The maist upsettin' scamp in the hale pack, an' it's his ain faither has to say it in shame an' humiliation! Him an' Sandy are jist gone fair daft. It's fleein' here to this tea-meetin' an' stravagin' yonder to some bit choir practise, an' here awa, there awa, until Ah dinna ken what's to be the end o' it! Aye, an' the next thing they've gotten intill their bit heids is that they must get a bit o' an idolatrous music boax for the kirk! Yon bit thistle heid o' a schoolmaister cam' till me about the thing the day; what d'ye think o' yon?"

"Dear, dear, that would be a peety," said the champion of youth, somewhat disconcerted.

"Aye, they've come till it at last! Ah've kenned weel they've been hatchin' plans this while back an' that oor Andra was in it, aye, an' Donal' afore he gaed away, but Ah jist gave no heed to their bit noise, an' Andra kenned his faither better than to come till him wi' his norms till yon bit slippery, feather-headed crater cam' till me this mornin'."

"An' would he be asking you if they could get one?"

"Askin' me! He didna jist order me to hae the thing bought, but it was mighty near't. Sez he, 'We hae gotten the consent o' a' the ither elders, *Maister* Johnstone, an' we know ye jist can't refuse us; we'd like to hae it afore the new meenister comes,'—the danderin' bit eejit!"

"I hope you would not be too hard on him, Andra, Mr. Watson would be meaning no harm——"

"No harm! And are ye the man, Duncan McDonald, to ask an elder of the Kirk to countenance evil? Ah wes not half so hard on the buddy as he deserved, but Ah jist telled him pretty plain what Ah thought o' them a' turnin' the hoose o' God into a circus! 'Ye hae the consent o' a' the elders, hae ye?' Ah sez. 'An' noo it's ma consent ye want, is it? Weel, ye hae it!' Ah sez; 'for if ye're that set on gettin' yer bit screechin' boax ma advice'll no hold ye back, so ye may get yer piece o' idolatory,' Ah sez; 'but mark ma word!' Ah sez, 'mark ma word, the day yon thing raises its noise an' pollutes the holy place— Ah'll no resign. Oh! no, that's what ye're lookin' for,' Ah sez, for Ah'd heerd rumours—'Ah'll no resign,' Ah sez, 'but Ah'll jist wait till the Sabbath's ower an' Ah'll get ma ax,' Ah sez, 'an by the help o' the Almighty Ah'll smash the abomination into a thousand splinters!'"

His stick came down upon the doorstone with a crash that prophesied total destruction to the offending instrument.

"Hoots, toots, Andra!" cried Duncan Polite reprovingly, "it's jist violent you will be; and, indeed, I will be thinkin' it would not be right to drive the young folks."

"The Maister drove oot wi' a scourge them as misused the hoose o' God," responded the apostle of force severely.

"Aye, the Master," said Duncan, his fine face lighting up. "The Master!" he repeated the word tenderly. "Eh, but that would be a fine word, Andra, a fine word. Yes, He would be doing that once, but that would not be His spirit, ah, no indeed! For He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth! Eh, eh, and yet He would be the Master o' the whole Universe!" His voice died away, he sat motionless, his long slender hands hanging at his side, his eyes seeing wondrous sights on the purple slope of the opposite hillside.

Andrew Johnstone ceased his vicious whacking of Duncan's asters and conveyed his stick to its decorous Sabbath position behind him. His friend's sublime spirituality always cooled Splinterin' Andra's wrath.

There was a long silence, the sound of a bell tinkling away in the dark forest opposite and the distant murmur of the village alone broke the stillness. Andrew rose to go in a much better frame of mind. "You an' me, Duncan," he said with some sadness, "belong to a past generation. Maister Cameron's gone, an' the auld buddies are slippin' awa fast, an' whiles Ah hae little patience wi' the new fangled notions. Will the country be a God-fearin' one, Ah wonder, when we're a' awa?"

It was the question and also the tragedy of their lives, the question Duncan Polite's whole life was given up towards answering.

"We must jist be trusting that to the Lord, Andra," he said with his usual hopefulness. "Whatever changes come, He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever."

But Duncan Polite realised the affair was not ended. He knew it was not likely that the young people would defy Splinterin' Andra and drive him to violence, but the fire of gossip would be set going and he feared his friend's life would be embittered. He was thinking deeply and sadly over the problem the next morning as he dug up the potatoes from his garden. There was Coonie, now, if he set his sharp tongue going against the elder there would be no end to the trouble. He glanced up and saw the subject of his thoughts coming slowly down the road in his old buckboard.

Why the Glenoro mail-carrier was called Coonie instead of Henry Greene, which was his real name, was, like all that gentleman's personal affairs, shrouded in mystery. Some doubted that Coonie himself knew, though if he did it was not at all likely he would divulge the secret, for he guarded very carefully his own private business. Whatever concerned himself held a monopoly of his reticence, however, for in matters of current gossip he was second to none in the whole township of Oro. He beat even Miss Cotton and Mrs. Fraser, for, whereas they might arrive at a stage when they had nothing more to tell, not so Coonie. If he found himself without some startling news he manufactured it to suit the occasion.

His vehicle was an old buckboard with a wide seat, and a rickety old chariot it was. His custom was to sit slouching at one end of the seat, one foot upon the dashboard, the other dangling down in the dust, thus making the

other end of the seat stick away up in the air, as though to suggest to any chance pedestrian that he was almost crowded out already and could accommodate no one.

His horse was a poor, decrepit, old creature, whom he had named Bella, after the eldest of the pretty Hamilton girls, much to that young lady's disgust. In spite of old Bella's skeleton appearance and hobbling gait, Coonie took great pride in her and offered many times to trot her against Sandy Neil's racer. Her extreme lameness seemed quite appropriate, however, for in this respect she was the fitting complement to her master. For poor Coonie was a cripple, scarcely able to bear his long body on his weak ankles, and when the villagers saw him stumble painfully out of his vehicle at the post-office and drag himself to the veranda, even the person outraged by his latest flight of fancy forgave and pitied him. Everyone felt that the nimbleness of his tongue was perhaps only some slight compensation for the uselessness of his feet.

His daily drive through Glenoro was something of an event to all the inhabitants, for he was willing to stop everywhere and anywhere and tell the latest news. Old Andrew considered him a most pernicious individual and a breeder of evil in the Glen, and for that reason as well as on general principles, Coonie took a particular delight in libelling the ruling elder. He pulled up as he reached Duncan's gate. He never passed without a few words with the old man. Not because he ever heard or told any gossip at Duncan Polite's, but Coonie could never forget a certain dark night when the mail bag was lost and the drunken mail-carrier in danger of finding himself behind prison bars, a night when Duncan Polite had toiled over the hills through mud and rain, and had rescued him. Not a person in the whole countryside, except the two, knew of the affair, but Coonie remembered, and in his queer way tried to repay the man who had saved him.

"Mornin'!" he called, somewhat crustily, as was his wont in opening a conversation. "How's things this mornin'?"

Duncan had hurried into the house and now emerged with a dipperful of creamy buttermilk. Coonie drank it off in one long pull.

"Ginger, that's prime!" he cried, drawing a long breath. "Goes right to the dry spot. How's your potatoes?"

"Oh, they will be very good, very good indeed," said Duncan. He hesitated a moment and then continued. "You would be hearing about the master and the organ?" he questioned in some embarrassment.

Coonie shot out a look of surprise from his small bright eyes; that Duncan Polite should open any such subject was an amazing thing.

"Yep," he answered sharply. "Why?"

"I will be having no right to interfere, Coonie." Duncan Polite never by the slightest gesture hinted that he had any claim on the mail-carrier's gratitude. "I will be having no right to interfere, but this will be a thing that will do harm to the church and the Lord's work, and if it is talked about,——" Duncan's reticence was overcoming him again after this unusual outburst.

Coonie nodded in perfect comprehension. He planted his foot upon the dashboard once more. "You don't want folks to be gabbin' about yours truly up on the hill yonder?" He jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction where Andrew Johnstone's house appeared far up the slope. "Well, I guess I'll have to choke off a few. Gedap thar, whatter ye doin'!" He gave old Bella a lash with the whip which she noticed merely by a switch of her tail. His shoulders sank to their accustomed limpness and he took no notice of Duncan's thanks as he drove off. He was really disappointed, for he had prepared such a version of the story, purporting to have come from the Oa, as would set Splinterin' Andra in a rage forever. He sighed over his loss.

But his attention was soon diverted by a welcome sight. Sim Baskerville, the village store-keeper and postmaster, commonly called Basketful in accordance with the custom of the country, could already be seen, even from this height, coming out upon the veranda at short intervals to see if the mail were coming. Nothing annoyed the postmaster so much as to have the mail arrive late, and nothing pleased the mail-carrier so much as to annoy the postmaster. Mr. Basketful was a choleric Englishman, and one of Coonie's chief diversions was to put him into a rage by a dilatory approach to the village. So, seeing his enemy upon the lookout, he let old Bella crawl down the hill

with maddening slowness, looking round, meanwhile, for somebody with whom he might stop and talk.

The first opportunity presented itself with the whirring of a sewing machine, coming from a little house on the edge of the village. It was a tiny white cottage, apparently kept from encroaching upon the road by a thick rope of lilacs, a trim little place, painfully neat. When that sound emanated from within, Coonie knew that the village dressmaker was at home; and as she bore a fierce hatred to him and all his doings, he never failed to give her a call when possible. He drew up his buckboard before the lilac bushes, therefore, happily conscious of certain vigorous gesticulations from the post-office veranda, of a character calculated to encourage rapid approach.

"Hello! in there!" he shouted.

There was no response, except for a more determined whizzing of the machine.

"Got a message for you, 'Liza!"

To the angry occupant of the house it was agony to go on sewing. Who knew but that, for once, the old fool might be telling the truth, she reflected. Perhaps someone in the Oa had sent word with him that she was wanted there for a day's sewing, and she knew nothing would please Coonie better than to have her refuse to listen.

But by this time her tormentor, despairing of ever enticing her out by fair words, resolved to launch a bomb which he knew was sure to bring the besieged raging to the walls. "Got a message from Tom Poole!" he roared, loud enough to be heard at Mrs. Fraser's across the valley. "He says to tell you he's comin' down sparkin' to-morrow night!"

Miss Cotton flashed into the doorway, white with rage. She, who had never seen the man who dared to pay her loverlike attentions, to have her name bawled out over the countryside coupled with that of a man who was a widower of six months with a family of as many children! She shook her scissors in his face.

"If you don't shut up your tomfoolery, you blatherin' old idiot!" she cried, in a sort of shrieking whisper, "I'll throw boilin' water over you!"

Coonie stared in injured righteousness. "Well I never! That's all the thanks I get for obligin' you. I can't help it if he's gone spooney on you; next time I bring you a message——"

"Yes, next time you bring me a message it'll be the last you'll take to a livin' soul. Drive your old hearse away from my door, will you, an' tell your lies to somebody that's big enough fool to believe you!"

The door slammed and the sewing machine buzzed wrathfully, and Coonie sent Bella scrambling down the hill, his drooping shoulders heaving with convulsive laughter. To put 'Liza Cotton into a rage, while Sim Basketful, in a similar condition, was popping in and out of his store door like a jack-in-the-box, was worth the whole day's drive. He meandered along chuckling loudly, but suddenly checked his mirth as he espied Maggie Hamilton standing at the gate beneath the oaks and holding a bundle under her arm. This was evidently intended for him, so he drove to the opposite side of the road and crawled along with drooping shoulders and abstracted mien.

But this particular Miss Hamilton understood Coonie's dark ways and knew how to deal with him. She darted across the road and caught old Bella by the head.

"Hold on now, smarty!" she said. "You needn't pretend you've turned deaf and blind all at once, you're stupid enough without. Here's a parcel for Aunt Mary McLean, Coonie, and mother wants you to take it to her, please, like an old duck. You know Aunt Mary thinks you're the handsomest fellow in Oro."

But Coonie was not be flattered into obliging anyone. "Look here, you," he growled, "what d'ye think I run this mail for, anyhow? Think it's a charitable institution? You tell your Aunt Mary Maria stick-in-the-mud that if she thinks the Almighty created me to cart truck over the country for lazy lumps like you that thinks they're too good to walk, she'd better go an' get informed all over again."

But Maggie had expected this and was prepared. "Jess! Sarah! Bell!" she cried, "come out here quick and settle this old donkey! He's gone balky again!"

There was a chorus of shrieks, a swish of skirts down the garden path, and reinforcements in the shape of three more young ladies emerged from the gate and fell upon the rebellious mail-carrier. They climbed into the shaking old buckboard and Maggie seized the reins and turned old Bella up the hill again.

"Now, we'll drive you clean back to Lakeview, if you don't speak up smart and say you'll take it!" she cried.

But Coonie did not mind. Mr. Basketful was by this time in the middle of the road, so he prolonged the encounter as long as possible.

"Go ahead," he said, settling himself comfortably in his seat; "you'll soon be at the Oa, if you keep on. I bet that's where Jessie wants to go to see what's the latest news from Don Neil."

"Yes, and you want to go up the hill and talk to 'Liza Cotton," retorted Jessie.

"That's it," laughed Maggie, pulling the old horse almost into the ditch, "you'd trot off with a bundle quick enough if she asked you."

Coonie roared. "Well, that's true. Haw! Haw! I'd start off that quick I'd never git stopped. Gosh! but ain't she the old scorpion!" he exclaimed with feeling, "Say, if her an' me was the only folks left in the world, I'd kill her an' live alone. See here, you scalawags, clear out an' leave that poor brute alone, an' I'll take your trash."

It was a surrender. The victorious quartette leaped from the buckboard and retired, with many admonitions for his guidance in his future dealings with them, warnings which Coonie pretended not to hear.

His shoulders sagged again as he slowly approached the post-office. He paused a few moments on the bridge, to gaze meditatively into the water, then he spent some time gesticulating to an imaginary person down at the mill-dam, and at last, slowly and with every appearance of insupportable weariness, dragged up to the post-office door.

"Kind of hot," he remarked genially, noticing the perspiring countenance of the indignant postmaster.

Mr. Basketful took the mail-bag with a withering air. "Kind o'," he remarked sarcastically. "Guess your 'orse 'ad a sunstroke on the road. 'Ere 'Syl, tend to that hanimal, will you?"

A stylishly dressed young man came down with elegant leisure from his position on a cracker barrel and proceeded to water Coonie's horse. The mail-carrier's helpless condition called for assistance which was always freely rendered. The person to whom the task generally fell was Mr. Sylvanus Todd, who, by reason of his leisurely habits, found plenty of time, when not assisting his father in the cheese factory, to lounge around the post-office and look up the street to see what the Hamilton girls were doing. Sylvanus always assisted Coonie most willingly; he was a young man who was noted all over the township of Oro for his obliging ways and his mannerly deportment. Indeed, Mr. Todd posed as an authority on all matters of etiquette. He even went so far once as to admonish Wee Andra on the errors of his pedestrianism. "When you're walkin' with a lady, Andra," Sylvanus had said kindly, "you'd ought to let her walk up agin' the buildin's." But so far from improving the giant's manners this good advice only caused him to place his adviser in a tank of cheese factory whey and to continue thereafter to walk as seemed right in his own eyes.

Coonie did not care for Syl Todd; he had much of the simple guilelessness of his parents and did not take teasing with any pleasurable degree of asperity. So the mail-carrier generally treated him with silent contempt. He swung himself from the buckboard and hobbled painfully to the store veranda.

"Business seems pressin' with you, Mr. Todd," he remarked as he lit his pipe. "You're always in an awful rush."

Mr. Todd gave a doubtful grin. "Well say, Coonie, this here's the backwoodsest place I ever seen; us Americans can't stand it."

Sylvanus had spent six months in the United States, managing a gigantic business firm, he had hinted, from which enterprise he had returned to the parental roof, a sadder if not a wiser man, to take up the more lucrative employment of making cheese. He never quite outlived the glory of his travels, however.

Coonie grunted. "You should a' stayed over there an' been President. They must be awful lonesome since you left. Any noos?"

"Well, I should snicker if there wasn't! The master's got into an awful row!"

His listener sighed deeply. What an opportunity this would have been to set his version of the story going!

"What's eatin' him?" he asked with wonderful self-control. "Neil kids been lickin' him again?"

"Worse nor that; he's got into a row with Splinterin' Andra!"

"Gosh!" Coonie's amazement would have deceived a much more astute individual than Sylvanus Todd. "What's that old wind-mill got himself flappin' about now?"

"About gettin' the organ for the Presbyterian church. Watson spoke to Splinterin' Andra about it an' the old fellow gave him Hail Columbia, as they say in the States."

Mr. Basketful was coming out with the mail-bag.

"It's true, every word of it, Coonie," he said, his wrath having vanished. "That's the way with them Presbyterians; they're that stiff they can't 'elp 'avin' trouble."

Coonie scrambled into his buckboard, feeling doubly crippled in the galling restriction that had been put upon his unruly member. He drove off without a word, not even stopping at Mrs. Fraser's gate at the top of the hill. Syl Todd sat upon the veranda of the store, watching until his old buckboard sank behind the south hill, wondering if he were ill.

Duncan had never before tried to exercise a restraining influence upon Coonie's tongue, though as he watched his old buckboard straying down into the valley, crossing and recrossing the road, to allow its owner to joke and gossip with this one and that, the Watchman often thought what a power for good Coonie might be in Glenoro if only his heart were touched by the grace of God. His first attempt at stemming the tide of the mail-carrier's gossip met with wonderful success, however. People discovered that for some inexplicable reason, Coonie seemed to have no interest whatever in Splinterin' Andra's behaviour over the proposal of an organ, and with the chief stoker idle, the fire of gossip soon died for want of fuel. The young people postponed their project indefinitely, and gradually the affair dropped out of the public interest, making way for a much more important matter.

## IV

### THE SECOND JOHN McALPINE

Donald's first year at college passed uneventfully. He returned the next spring to his work on the farm, covered with honours, full of tales of his studies or his freshman adventures, but never a word of his final destiny, though Duncan Polite anxiously awaited it. He was in some trouble about Donald. He had set up a high standard for his boy and was pained and surprised when he failed to attain it. If only Mr. Cameron were living, he often reflected with a sigh, he would soon set Donald's feet in the right path. The lack of a pastor was a great grief to Duncan Polite. What would happen to his covenant if the flock were left so long shepherdless?

And then into the midst of his doubts and fears, his anxiety for the future and his regrets for the past, there came such a rich and abounding blessing, such an abundant answer to all his prayers, that for a season the Watchman was overwhelmed with contrite joy. For, after nearly a year of dissension, the congregations of Glenoro and the Tenth concession of Oro at last made choice of a minister, a choice which won the unanimous approval of both churches and suited everyone from old Andrew Johnstone to the Hamilton girls. He seemed to possess every requisite to suit the varied tastes of the varied people of Glenoro church. The old folk overlooked his youth, and the Oa forgot his lack of Gaelic in the light of his great achievement, for he possessed one quality that made it possible for him to bind together in peace and harmony the different factions of the church. It was not that he was very handsome, that he had a free, winning manner, it was not that he had had a brilliant career at college or that his professors prophesied a great future for him, it was not that he was an eloquent preacher and was filled with zeal for his Master. All these were important; but they sank into insignificance before his cardinal virtue, that which placed him immeasurably above all other probationers and made Duncan Polite look upon him as the embodiment of all his hopes, for was he not a grandson of Glenoro's hero, and himself John McAlpine Egerton?

What more could Glenoro hope for on this earth? What more could be desired? Mr. McAlpine come back to them! It seemed too good to be true. He did not even need to preach for a call. In fact, he had had no intention of doing so, but Peter Farquhar and Donald Fraser had heard him preach one Sabbath in Toronto when they went to the Exhibition, and they brought home such a glowing report of this second John McAlpine that at the close of his college term they all with one consent invited him to come and be their pastor. Even the Oa went for him solidly; a Gaelic preacher seemed an impossible luxury in these degenerate times, anyway, and, as Peter Farquhar said, "Mr. McAlpine's grandson without the Gaelic was better than any other man with it."

There had not been such a congregation in the Glenoro church since the days of the first John McAlpine as there was the Sabbath after the young man's induction. All the old people who had not come out to church since Mr. Cameron's death were there. Many of them remembered their young pastor's grandfather, whose fiery zeal and burning eloquence melted the hearts of those who had gone astray and shook to the very foundations of their being the most hardened sinners,—and here was his counterpart raised up to take his place!

As the young man stood up during the singing of the first psalm, many aged eyes noted with loving eagerness certain resemblances in voice and gesture to their hero. His face was handsome and clear-cut and lit by a pair of kindly, frank, blue eyes, a face which betokened a generous and amiable disposition. And the way he held up his fine head and straightened his broad shoulders was so like the first John McAlpine that many an old couple nudged each other with delight.

Miss Cotton had never seen the first McAlpine, but as she sat at the end of the Hamilton pew she could not resist giving Maggie a nudge when the handsome young man's eyes travelled in their direction, a nudge so pregnant of meaning that Maggie giggled and transferred the same to Sarah, whence it passed down the long row, setting ribbons and flowers quivering, all to the extreme disapproval of Mrs. Fraser, who was not too much occupied with the new minister to overlook any of the misdemeanours of the Hamilton pew.

John Hamilton, himself, was in a state of dazed joy and quite oblivious of his daughters. Any sort of a minister was an object of reverent delight to the pious old man, but this one was so much better than he had ever dreamed, that he looked at him with something akin to awe.



Andrew Johnstone sat at the end of his pew as straight and forbidding as ever, but the gleam of his eyes, from underneath his bristling brows, showed that his spirit was rejoicing.

Back in the last row, the young men of the church sat regarding the new minister with approval and some envy. Syl Todd, who did not follow after his parents' form of religion, but went now to the Presbyterian Church and now to the Methodist, with impartial irregularity, emphatically declared Mr. Egerton the most stylish looking fellow he had seen since he left the States, and during the sermon silently registered a vow that he would part his hair in the middle, too, just as soon as he got home.

Peter McNabb's voice seemed charged with the universal rejoicing. Not since he had missed Mr. Cameron behind him had the precentor let his notes roll out so tumultuously glorious as when he led the first psalm,

"Oh come let us sing to the Lord,  
Come let us everyone  
A joyful noise make to the Rock  
Of our Salvation!"

But of all the happy hearts in that congregation, there was none like Duncan Polite's. He looked up at the young divine standing, like Saul, head and shoulders above the people, and there came to his mind the words spoken by the Lord to Samuel, "Behold the man whom I spoke to thee of!" This was the man of promise, the man of his dreams.

The very air of the church seemed electric as the young minister opened the Bible and began his sermon. The earnest for the future contained in the text thrilled Duncan's soul, "For I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "Nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified!" Duncan Polite repeated the words to himself again and again. Ah, what a transformation was coming over his glen, what a glorious fulfilment of his covenant—"Nothing but Jesus Christ!"

The discourse surpassed even their expectations. It was a fine sermon, sound enough in doctrine to suit the ruling elder and brilliant enough in delivery to keep Syl Todd awake. Indeed, Miss Cotton declared afterwards that it was the cleverest sermon she ever listened to, for she didn't understand more than half of it.

But Glenoro's literary attainments were not represented by Eliza Cotton. The bulk of the congregation carried the sermon to their homes to discuss it until another one came, and Duncan and Andrew stood so long at the former's gate, going carefully over it point by point, that they forgot time and place and were almost late for Sabbath school.

After the service the congregation pressed about their new pastor, welcoming him with hearty handshakes. He went down the aisle in his free, kindly manner, grasping the outstretched hands, and almost overcome by the tearful greeting from the old people. His own eyes were moist when at last he was able to get away and out into the street. The people stood crowding the steps to watch him pass up the hill accompanied by the precentor. Mrs. McNabb had been a school teacher in her younger days, and on account of this distinction the McNabb household was the recognised stopping place for any genteel visitor in the Glen. Consequently, they had the honour of boarding the minister, and, as he walked out of the gate and up the road, the McNabb family moved reverently in his wake, resplendent in his reflected glory.

For the next two days after that happy Sabbath, Duncan Polite moved about in a radiant dream. He was waiting in childlike faith for the blessings which were to descend. His whole thought was turned upon Donald. Here was the man to influence him and bring him to a sense of the great work awaiting his efforts. He was sitting at his door one evening a few days after the new minister's advent, looking down into his glen. His hopes for the valley had never been so high. The little ravine lay in purple shadow, but on the crest of the opposite hill he saw one tall pine standing up erect and grand and all ablaze where it caught the last gleam of the dying sun, a pine tree with golden needles like the one in the fairy tale. Duncan's heart, always in keen sympathy with Nature, thrilled at the sight. It seemed to him the bright promise of a new and greater day. He turned and saw Donald coming up the path.

"Oh, and will you be going to the Glen?" he asked, making room for the young man on the doorstep beside him.

"Yes, but I can't sit down, Uncle. Anything to look after?"

"Oh, no, it will be good of you to be always remembering the old man; no, but—will you be seeing the minister,

I wonder?"

"Yes, sure, I'm going to the Hamiltons"—Donald essayed to make this remark in a casual tone, as though this were not his almost daily habit—"I'm going to the Hamiltons' and Archie said Mr. Egerton was to be there to-night. They asked him down to meet some of the young folks."

Duncan's face beamed. "Oh, indeed, and that would be a fine thing!" he cried enthusiastically. He did not detain his nephew longer, for once he was anxious to see the boy off for the village. Formerly, he had suffered much anxiety because Donald and Sandy spent their evenings hanging around the corner with a crowd of idlers, or at the Hamiltons', where there was nothing but frivolity and gaiety, but now all this was changed, for had not Mr. McAlpine returned to them? And was not the Glen a place of blessing to any young person who entered it?

A few minutes after Donald had reached his destination, the young minister passed out of Peter McNabb's gate on the slope of the north hill and in company with the boys and girls of his boarding place, went away down towards the Hamiltons'. He walked along buoyantly, filled with admiration of the lovely little valley stretched at his feet. Although the dusk was gathering, his movements were noted and commented upon by everyone within seeing distance. The cane he carried came in for special notice, opinion upon it varying from Syl Todd, who was hurrying, oiled and perfumed, towards the Hamiltons' from the opposite direction and who was overcome with envious admiration, to Mrs. Fraser, who, from the post-office veranda, noted the implement of fashion with some misgiving. Of course, it was all right for a minister to carry one if he chose. He was too far above the rest of the community to be judged by ordinary standards; but there was no denying that a slim cane savoured of "pride," and might prove a stumbling-block to Donald Neil and wee Andra and such wayward youths as were easily led astray.

Meanwhile, the object of all this interest had arrived at the gate between the big oaks. The house was a blaze of light, notwithstanding the early hour. Bars of pink lamp-light stretched out across the dusky lawn and into the dark corners of the orchard. Someone was playing a lively jig on the organ. There was a mingled sound of talking, laughter, screams and hurrying feet, and all the usual evening hubbub of this lively place.

The Hamilton family consisted of seven girls who were allowed more clothes and liberty than was considered quite respectable in Glenoro society. The Hamilton parents were not usually reckoned in speaking of the household and were at best only accessory. Old John Hamilton lived in a state of good-natured bewilderment when in the bosom of his lively family. He spent the day at his flour mill down the river road and in the evenings read his Bible and his weekly paper undisturbed and happy amid all the rush and din. His wife was a bright little woman who, having had a hard time in her own youth, felt there was some compensation in allowing the girls to "have their fling," as she termed it, until they "settled down."

As the minister approached, Mrs. Hamilton was standing at the gate waiting to welcome him, Miss Cotton beside her. Being the village dressmaker, Miss Cotton had the open sesame to every home in the neighbourhood and held its occupants at the mercy of her sharp tongue and needle. To-night she chose to bestow her company upon the Hamiltons, determined to lose nothing of the excitement consequent upon the new minister's introduction to society.

The big sitting-room, to which Mrs. Hamilton led her guest, was full of young folks, the Frasers, the Duffys, the Baskervilles, the Balfs and a crowd of McDonalds; college students, farmers and mill-hands, for Glenoro knew no social lines.

But amid all the crowd, the stranger's eye picked out a girl at the other end of the room. She was seated on the organ-stool playing, and turned at the sudden silence announcing the minister's entrance. She was dressed in a transparent white gown with a blue ribbon wound round her slender throat; the lamp on the organ above shed a soft glow upon a dainty head of clustering brown curls and a face of exquisite shape and feature.

The newcomer took this all in with a glance, experiencing a sensation of decided pleasure, but his attention was called by his hostess, who proceeded to introduce him to the assembly. The laughing, chattering groups broke up and all stood back against the wall, stiff and silent, while Mrs. Hamilton triumphantly piloted her guest down the long rows. He shook hands cordially with all and gave a pleasant word of recognition to the few he had met before. The young men received him with a hasty and somewhat limp handshake and an awkward "how d'ye do;" the young women were more graceful, but quite as diffident, and all were painfully respectful. But there was one young man who displayed neither awkwardness nor shyness. He stood leaning easily against the organ, but straightened himself

as the minister approached and was thus between him and the girl at the instrument.

"This is another Mr. McDonald," Mrs. Hamilton was saying for the fifth time, adding the usual vague explanation, "Mr. Neil More, Donald Neil More, you know, Mr. Egerton."

Mr. Egerton did not know, but he could not help feeling that this young man was quite capable of distinguishing himself, even though he bore an ambiguous name. He was tall enough to let his eyes look down just a trifle as he shook hands, but perhaps that was because of the way he held his head. He was friendly and kind; but the young minister, accustomed to the adulation of rural friends, somehow missed the look of deference from his fearless dark eyes and instinctively experienced a slight feeling of constraint.

But the next introduction was an unmixed pleasure, when a pair of sweet grey eyes were raised for an instant to his face and Mrs. Hamilton said, unable to keep a tremor of pride from her voice, "And this is our Jessie, Mr. Egerton."

He was sorry that she did not speak, but she gave him her hand with an alluring shyness, and then he understood why the Hamiltons' was such a centre of attraction.

The introductions were finished at last and the visitor found himself anchored rather insecurely to a slippery haircloth sofa and seated beside a small, youngish woman with a very haughty air, who, he learned, was the schoolmaster's wife.

The buzz of talk had commenced again, though much subdued, and he was at liberty to examine the company. They were four grown-up Hamilton girls, he noticed, and three little ones. With the exception of the beauty on the organ-stool, the young ladies were rather puzzling to a stranger. They were all tall and fair and pretty, but the minister's quick eye soon noted distinguishing characteristics. Bella, the eldest and the one to whom the young Johnstone giant was paying such obvious attentions, was the tallest and fairest. Sarah, the one with the affected air of discontent, was the third in the quartette. He also discovered afterwards that she was the cleverest and quite aware of the fact, and the noisy rattle-brain who was up to some mischief in a corner and to whom Mrs. Hamilton was making gesticulatory appeals, was Maggie, the fourth girl.

But he was compelled to give his attention to his immediate neighbours; with Mrs. Watson on one side and Miss Cotton on the other, he was soon possessed of an exhaustive history of everyone present. Sarah Hamilton went to the High School and was dreadful stuck up about it; Allan Fraser, the pale young man talking to her, was studying medicine, and young Donald Neil was going to be a minister. Both ladies agreed, however, that Mr. Egerton would consider Donald's conduct anything but clerical, though he was good to his mother, poor woman—a bad time she had with those noisy rascals——

The steady flow of information was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hamilton. He had been struggling with his coat and a clean collar ever since the minister's arrival, and now came stumbling hurriedly into the room.

"Eh, eh, good evening, Mr. Egerton," he cried heartily, "good evening, sir, Ah'm jist that glad to see ye in the hoose, come awa into the other room, come awa, man, an' we'll have a quiet word."

"Now, pa," protested Mrs. Hamilton, who had been hovering round her guest, "don't take Mr. Egerton away out there!"

"Tuts, mother, Ah'll bring him back to the lassies, never fear!" he cried, with ingenuous indiscretion. "Come awa, sir!"

The young man followed his host across the hall and into the dining room. It was a big, rag-carpeted room; a large easy chair was set beside the long table and a number of newspapers were strewn about. The evening breeze blew in cool and sweet, setting the stiff, white curtains swaying and bringing the refreshing scent of the river.

"No, jist ye set doon here, Mr. Egerton," said his host heartily, "an' mind, as long's ye're in Glenoro, ye canna come too often! The lassies cut up a bit dust in the room yonder, but there's always a quiet corner here, an' me an' Mr. Watson here,—tuts, tuts, Ah was forgettin'—this is Maister Watson, our schoolmaster, aye, aye!"

A small, slim, young man, with a dark, thin face and bristling hair jumped briskly from the depths of an easy chair and grasped Mr. Egerton's hand.

"Pleased to meet you, sir, pleased to meet you, I'm sure," he cried effusively. "I've been most anxious to meet you, especially since Sunday, sir. That sermon was the best I've ever heard in Ontario, sir; yes, sir, the very best, patriotism, patriotism, from beginning to end! That's the thing! That's what the country needs, sir!"

He pumped his auditor's hand up and down vigorously while he spoke, then, at the end, flung it from him, stepped back a pace and, striking an attitude, stood gazing up admiringly at the young minister.

John Egerton was decidedly surprised and a trifle disconcerted. He had not considered his sermon at all patriotic, though he did remember a slight allusion to the greatness of the heritage of Canadians, but he was a cordial young man and had come to Glenoro prepared to meet all sorts of people. Besides, he was still very young and had not yet got over feeling a thrill of pleasure when his sermon was praised.

"I am glad you liked it," he said smilingly, as he seated himself. "So you think we need more patriotism?"

"Patriotism! Well I should think so! It's the crying need of this country, sir! I'm glad I've got some one to sympathise with me at last. Do you know, Mr. Egerton," he drew up his chair closer and lowered his voice confidentially, "you'll find this an awfully backward place in that respect. If all rural Canadian places are as bad, I don't know what's to become of this country, sir! Why, the absence of any public spirit is simply appalling! Why, Mr. Hamilton here can tell you that when Mrs. Watson and I came here two years ago there wasn't a flag in Glenoro, sir!"

Mr. Hamilton acquiesced apologetically; he opened his mouth as if to speak, looked ashamed, and said nothing.

"Yes, sir," the schoolmaster was rattling along, "Mrs. Watson and I were in the States for a number of years and I can tell you there's where they know how to do things. Great country that, I tell you, sir, isn't it? Well, they know how to be patriotic there, I can tell you; flags waving, bands playing and crowds cheering. It's inspiring! But we could make something even of Canada if her people only had a little more go. What do you think about our organising a patriotic society here, sir?"

John Egerton sat back in his chair, and together the two young men settled the destiny of Canada and her provinces, as well as of Britain and her colonies, while their host sat in rapt attention. He told Peter McNabb at the blacksmith shop the next day that it was, without doubt, the most edifying talk to which he had ever listened. It was interrupted by a summons to the sitting room to join in the singing. Wee Andra, who was the leader in musical circles and who had as his equipment for the position a bass voice in proportion to his size, was marshalling his forces around the instrument. They made room for the minister in the best position. He found it very pleasant to stand and look over Jessie's bright curls as he sang. They rendered a number of gospel hymns and a new anthem which they were preparing for the Methodist service next Sabbath evening, the four parts going very harmoniously. Those young Presbyterians who had a vague fear of their minister discovering that they sang in the Methodist choir, were both relieved and pleased when he cried out, at the end of the anthem, "Why, that's grand! I think I shall turn Methodist myself!" And the Methodists present laughed delightedly.

Then Sandy Neil, who was an imp of mischief, produced the college song book which Allan Fraser had introduced into Glenoro the summer before. The girls were shocked at the thought of showing such a frivolous thing to the minister, and Bella Hamilton tried to conceal it behind the sofa; but, to the astonishment of all, he exclaimed as he caught sight of it, "The College Song Book! Why, here's an old friend! I've sung everything in that book till I've cracked my voice more times than I can tell. Come along, boys, let's have 'The Three Crows!'"

The boys let him have them with a rare good will, till the house rang. Sandy Neil got up on the back of the sofa, where the minister could not see him, and flapped his arms and cawed and altogether imitated the antics of a crow to such perfection that the girls around him were ready to die of smothered laughter. They sang all the old favourites, and when they came to one they did not know, the minister sang it alone. He had a fine deep musical voice, and when he rendered the history of "The Walloping Window Blind," he was rewarded with a hearty and unanimous round of applause.

Wee Andra quite fell in love with him, his diffidence entirely disappearing under the other's frank manner.

"My, I wish you'd get a choir in our church, Mr. Egerton!" he exclaimed in a burst of confidence when they had rendered another anthem with the minister's aid. But John Egerton was too astute to respond to this, otherwise than by a smile. He had learned something already of Glenoro's divided opinions and knew better than to take either side. But he sat down beside the choir leader and they talked about music and the newest anthems and the conducting of choral societies until Wee Andra was completely charmed.

They were interrupted by a commotion at the other end of the room; a group of young people were trying to learn a new game, and Mr. Sylvanus Todd was initiating them into its mysteries. But partly from a defective memory, and partly from terror of Maggie Hamilton's sharp and reviling tongue, he was getting woefully puzzled. The minister sprang up and came to his assistance. He knew the game well, explained it with a few bright, quick words and soon had the whole room joining. He was so free and unaffected, so absolutely one of themselves, that he won all hearts. Very soon all the restraint of his presence had melted away. They joined in the games with even more than their usual vim. The room rang with merriment. They played "Kitchen Furniture" and "Handkerchief"—yes, and even "Old Dan Tucker." This latter was suggested by Sandy Neil, of course, to the horror of the staiders, for "Dan Tucker" perilously resembled dancing and was proscribed in most houses. Indeed, even at the Hamiltons' it was indulged in only behind closed doors and when Mrs. Hamilton was at a safe distance. But the minister was ready for anything; he went into the jolly circling ring of boys and girls as "Dan Tucker" himself, and when the time for changing partners came, he caught Jessie Hamilton's hand just as Donald Neil was reaching for it and swung her into the centre, her eyes dancing, her curls flying.

There was never quite such a grand time before, even at the Hamiltons'; the noise increased, the laughter grew wilder and the dust flew out of the carpet.

They ended up with an uproarious game of "Blind Man's Buff," in which Julia Duffy, a big muscular Irish girl, caught Mr. Egerton round the neck in a strangling grasp, and when she discovered whom she was embracing, she shrieked in horrified dismay, "Murderin' blazes! If it ain't the preacher!"

The crowd went off into roars of laughter, none joining so heartily as the minister himself, who was compelled to lean against the wall for support, and wipe the tears from his eyes.

"Shades of Mr. McAlpine!" said Donald Neil to his chum, as he found himself driven into a corner, "he's up-to-date and no mistake!"

"The Oa'll rear up on its hind legs when it hears," whispered Wee Andra with a broad grin. "There's no flies on him, though, I can tell you. I do like to see a minister actin' like a human being!"

Donald made no reply. He had been brought up under Duncan Polite's influence and was not quite prepared to agree with his friend.

Supper was announced at this moment. Jessie and Bella had slipped away some time before to assist in its preparation, for as soon as the minister had left the dining room Mrs. Hamilton had proceeded to bring up all her culinary triumphs of the morning and spread them out in magnificent array. Eliza Cotton, who assisted the girls to lay the table, gave up exclaiming at last, and resolved she would make Mrs. Fraser just green with envy telling her about it. For, of course, if one didn't do one's best at a visit from the minister, what possible combination of circumstances could call it forth?

The young man for whom the feast had been prepared was properly amazed as he took his seat at the long table, crowded with glass and gaily decorated with china and huge bouquets of tulips, and loaded with cakes and pies and tarts and jellies and cold meats and great heaps of snowy bread and great cups of creamy tea.

The schoolmaster sat next him and gave him his ideas upon the practicability of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Mrs. Hamilton on the other side heaped his plate at short intervals, without stopping to ask permission. There was a great deal of noise and laughter at the other end of the table, for Maggie and Wee Andra and Sandy Neil were there. The guest did not fail to notice that Jessie was quieter than her sisters; her big eyes had a thoughtful expression. He caught himself wondering, more than once, what sort of girl she was; surely a person with a face like

that could not be anything but perfect.

Mr. Hamilton sat at the head of the table, beaming good-nature all round, though he said very little except "Aye, oh aye," in a reflective tone. But, during a lull in the lively conversation at the other end of the table, he leaned over towards the minister with a question, "An' what are ye, Mr. Egerton? Of course, we all ken ye're part Highland Scotch, but not all, Ah hope."

The whole tableful was silent now and every eye was turned towards the young man addressed. The question was one of great importance. John Egerton laughed. "Oh, don't be alarmed," he said gaily, "I have plenty of Lowland blood, too, Mr. Hamilton; the Highland Scotch is only the McAlpine side. The Egertons are English, though."

Mr. Hamilton looked doubtful. "Oh aye," he said. "They never taught you the Gaelic, though. Man, the Oa folk would a' been pleased if ye could speak it."

The young man raised his eyebrows with a comical affectation of despair.

"Don't I wish I could!" he exclaimed. "But I'm not so ignorant as they think. I know more than ten words of Gaelic. You fellows from the Oa remember to tell that!"

There was a hearty laugh round the table. "By Jove, I will tell it," said Donald Neil, when the conversation had become general again, "I'll tell Catchach!"

"Tell him what?" inquired Wee Andra.

"That the minister speaks Gaelic."

A shriek of laughter from those who heard greeted this announcement, and Wee Andra thumped his chum upon the back in the exuberance of his delight.

"Great head, Don!" he roared. "Catchach'll swallow him with joy before he has time to deny it."

"Don Neil," cried Jessie, "you surely wouldn't play a trick on a minister!"

"It would be fearful wicked," put in Sandy piously.

"He'll never know," laughed Donald. "We'll let Catchach foam a while and then bring him down to earth before he does any damage."

"Well, a minister should be considered above such things," said Sarah loftily.

"Not this minister," said Don with conviction, "he's able to take care of himself. Eh, Andra?"

"You bet. There's nothin' o' the old hearse about him. He's jist like the rest of us. It'll be a howlin' circus—" and he chuckled prodigiously.

"If you boys are up to any mischief about the minister," warned Bella, "I'll tell your father. Andra—Hish!"

For the minister had arisen and was returning thanks for the food of which they had partaken. The noise was hushed and every head instantly lowered.

The company broke up with the unanimous verdict that they had had a grand time and that the new minister was beyond praise. The young man walked up the hill with Flora McNabb in an equal state of satisfaction. He had the pleasant assurance that his young flock liked him and he felt sure he was going to be very happy in Glenoro. He wondered laughingly what his fastidious Helen would say could she have seen him playing "Blind Man's Buff" with Miss Duffy. He wrote her a very laughable account of the affair before he retired, and went to bed to dream that he and she lived in the little manse by the bend in the river.

So the evening which Duncan Polite had prayed over so fervently came to an end and, as the young shepherd of

the flock slept peacefully in his comfortable home in the valley, well pleased with himself and the world, the old Watchman lay awake in his little shanty on the hilltop, hoping and praying that the young servant of the Master had dropped some words that would lead Donald and the young people of the Glen into a higher and nobler life.

## A PASTORAL VISITATION

No sooner was he settled in Glenoro than the young pastor commenced a thorough and systematic course of visiting. He found it very slow work, however, in spite of his activity. Each family of his flock vied with the other in lavishing upon him its hospitality. He was detained for nearly a day at each place, and dinners, teas and lunches, so many and so elaborate, were forced upon him that he was divided between the fear of giving offence by refusing to partake and the dread of becoming a chronic dyspeptic.

His earliest visits, he felt, should be paid to the homes of his elders, so, a few days after the lively evening spent at the Hamiltons', he took his slim cane and went up over the northern wall of Glenoro to pay his respects to old Andrew Johnstone. A somewhat difficult task he knew it would be, for he had already been warned by Mrs. McNabb that Splinterin' Andra was a dour old man. But he felt no apprehensions; his sunny smile and his charming manner had often swept away greater obstacles than this old fellow's crustiness. So he strode along in high spirits, flicking the tops off the wayside weeds, whistling a gay operatic air and incidentally wondering whether her eyes were blue or grey.

When he climbed the northern hill of Glenoro and came out upon the broad, sun-flooded highlands, he found that the country sloped gently upwards, rising in great sweeping terraces of green pastureland and fields of early grain, until it reached its highest altitude on the shores of Lake Oro. Andrew Johnstone lived on the borderland between the highlands and the lowlands; his house, a substantial red brick, surrounded by orchards, stood on the edge of one of the wide terraces and commanded a view of the country for miles around. Every step of the way was a pleasure to the newcomer; the sky was dazzling and unclouded, the air was intoxicating with the scent of clover, and the tinkling music of the bobolinks sounded as though all the fairies on the Oro hills were setting out their tiny cups and saucers for a banquet.

He was strolling along, revelling in the beauty of the perfect day and in the sight of the rich slopes of farm lands coming down towards him like a magnificent staircase, when his attention was attracted by a figure on the road ahead approaching with remarkable haste. It proved to be a man, somewhat past middle age; he was of medium height and had a fiery red beard which flew back from his face and accentuated the general air of desperate hurry in his whole appearance.

His face was even redder than his beard, and his wild blue eyes blazed out in fierce contrast. An old Scotch bonnet sat upon the side of his head and a faded tartan plaid flying from his shoulders gave the finishing touches to his fantastic appearance. This rather alarming person was bearing down upon the young minister and he drew off to the side of the road and grasped his stick more firmly. John Egerton did not lack courage any more than his grandfather had done, but he felt it would be scarcely ministerial to have a fight on the public highway the first week of his pastorate. He had not been long enough in Glenoro to recognise the fiery Highlander who kept the Oa in a ferment and who went by the weird name of Catchach. Allister McBeth he really was, but, with their usual avoidance of baptismal names, the neighbours had given him a more descriptive title. He had earned it himself, for he was named after the strange guttural sound which he was in the habit of making deep in his throat, whenever his anger was roused. This was a contingency which arose on an average once an hour and which, when in the company of any mischief-loving youth of the village, became Catchach's chronic state.

His pride was so fierce, and his temper so inflammable, that he was an unfailing source of merriment, especially to the Neil boys and their friends. There was not a kinder or tenderer heart in all the Ontario Highlands than poor Catchach's, but he was always in the throes of a feud with someone, for he loved a fight and might be said never to be at peace except when he was at war.

It was this militant gentleman who was descending upon the unsuspecting young clergyman, setting the stones and dust flying in his haste. But there was no sign of war about him now, only a beaming peace and goodwill. His eyes were shining, his mouth was expanded in a terrible smile, displaying two rows of long, irregular, yellow teeth and his big red hands were outstretched in greeting. He shouted when he was some half-dozen yards distant, "They tell me you will be hafing the Gaelic!"



"I—I am not quite sure that I understand you," said the grandson of John McAlpine, coming to a standstill and wishing with all his heart that his cane was not so slim.

"My name will be McBess, Allister McBess!" cried the rubicund personage, grasping a rather unwilling hand and shaking it wildly, "Allister McBess, oh yes, indeed, an' they will be telling me you will be a real Hielanman, though how could a Hielanman be having such a name as Egerton, it is a misery to me, whatever!"

There was no mistaking the good feeling in Catchach's beaming countenance. John Egerton smiled and shook his hand in return. "I am afraid there is a slight mistake," he answered cordially, "I can't boast of being altogether Highland Scotch, and who has been telling you I could speak Gaelic?" He pronounced it Galic and a change came over Catchach's face.

"Tonal Neil, Tonal Neil, whatever; he will be saying the new minister will be Hielan' an' will be having the beautiful Gaelic!"

The look of good-natured indulgence died from John Egerton's face at the mention of Donald's name. The young man with the easy air of equality had been taking liberties! "I am sorry to disappoint you, Mr. McBess," he said stiffly, making the fatal error of failing to detect McBess in Catchach's lisp, "I am neither Highland Scotch nor can I speak the Gaelic."

Catchach let go his coat; a quiver of mortal disappointment passed over his face.

"And whoever has told you such falsehoods," continued the young man with some heat, "is an untruthful mischiefmaker!"

Catchach's fiery countenance became rigid. He stepped back and stared so wildly at the minister that the young man hastened to add for his own personal safety, "But I have much Highland blood, you know, and plenty of Lowland Scotch, too."

Alas! how little he knew of the spirit of the McBess! "A Lowlander!" It was all Catchach could utter, but the tone in which he said it showed plainly that if Mr. Egerton had confessed to being a full-blood native of the South Sea Islands it would have been infinitely better. "A Lowlander!" repeated the Highlander with withering scorn, "Tonal Neil, Tonal Neil will be saying she would have the Gaelic——" The rest was lost to the ears of the despised Lowlander in a wild outpouring of Gaelic as Catchach turned and went raging down the road to wreak vengeance on the author of his disappointment.

The young minister continued on his way in great annoyance. Under any other circumstances the humour of the situation would have appealed to him, but the name of Donald Neil had driven away all the fun. In spite of his free and easy manner, John Egerton was intensely sensitive about his dignity as a minister, and to find himself the victim of a practical joke at the hands of the most influential young man of his congregation was anything but pleasant.

Had he seen the huge figure of young Andrew Johnstone disentangle itself from the raspberry bushes by the roadside and steal quietly along the edge of the field to where his idle team was standing, he would have been still more incensed; and had he chanced to look back when he reached the hilltop and noticed the same young man leaning weakly against his horses and wiping the tears from his eyes, he would have felt like administering a sound thrashing to at least two of the young people of his congregation.

He arrived at the Johnstone household at a time when he was particularly welcome to his host. Old Andrew had spent the early part of the afternoon arguing with his son upon certain hard points of doctrine. That a youth of Wee Andra's professions should presume to give any sort of an opinion whatever upon the Shorter Catechism was, in his father's eyes, nothing short of impious. But, as the young man was of that class that rush in where angels fear to tread, he had given his views on predestination without any hesitancy and had gone off to the field leaving his father in a very bad humour. Wee Andra himself was particularly happy, for he took an unfilial delight in troubling his paternal relative. At heart he was respectful and dutiful and if any one had dared to breathe a word against his father in his presence, Splinterin' Andra's son would soon have shown himself worthy of his sire's appellation; nevertheless, partly from love of fun and partly through a good-natured stupidity, he proved a veritable thorn in the flesh to his unhappy father. So old Andrew was looking forward to the visit of his pastor with the hope that his

example and admonition would have a steadying effect upon his frivolous son. Like Duncan Polite, the elder looked upon the young minister as the deliverer of the people of Glenoro church from the spirit of worldliness which he felt characterised them. So, when his daughter came to summon him to the house to put on a coat and collar, as the minister had been sighted on the road not half a mile away, he hurried in with great alacrity to greet his visitor.

Tea at Elder Johnstone's was no light ceremony under any circumstances. His was not a place where people went for relaxation and jollity, except on the rare occasions when the old folks were away and Wee Andra held sway. The young minister, anxious to please and be friendly, felt from the moment he opened the gate and went up the path, where neat beds of onions and cabbages encroached upon the very doorstep, that it was going to be something of an ordeal.

His opinion did not alter when he found himself seated at the well-laden table in the big spotless dining room. He could not help contrasting the stiff formality with the ease and gaiety of the Hamilton household. Old Andrew sat, stern and dignified, at the head of the table. Ordinarily he was talkative, but on this evening he restrained himself, for a gentleman of the old school did not consider it good manners to talk too much in the presence of so superior a person as the minister. At the other end of the table Mrs. Johnstone, red-faced and anxious, bustled nervously with the new china cups and saucers. Beside the minister sat Janet, the only daughter, a fair, shy girl of sixteen, afraid to look up, and the son of the house sat opposite in his shirtsleeves responding to Mr. Egerton's friendly advances with monosyllabic answers, a puzzling contrast to his uproarious geniality at their former meetings. Of course, John Egerton could not guess that the young man was holding down his laughter by superhuman efforts and could not afford to waste any strength upon conversation.

There was a very depressing atmosphere over the whole table, but the visitor had plenty of tact to overcome it. He put Mrs. Johnstone at her ease by a cautiously worded compliment upon the repast, for he had learned that a true Scotch woman must ever be approached warily with flattery. He set Janet into a flutter of happiness by relating to her a humorous account of some of his sister's attempts at housekeeping, an art in which Janet was well versed, and he soon had her laughing at the city girl's mistakes with quite a feeling of superiority. Wee Andra was more difficult,—horses, foot-ball, farm work, music, he rose to none of these baits. But he came to life in a most surprising manner when, in dilating upon the beauties of Glenoro scenery, the minister happened to mention the enjoyment he had experienced in his afternoon walk up the green slopes.

This seemed to be the one topic in which the son of the house was interested. He looked up suddenly and remarked, "Awful quiet road; s'pose you didn't meet anybody?"

"Yes, I did meet a man," responded the other readily, glad at having made an impression at last, "a man named McBess or some such name."

"McBeth it would be," said old Andrew, "Allister McBeth,—Catchach they call him. He's a danderin' bit o' a firebrand."

"Were you speakin' to him?" Wee Andra shot out the question and took refuge in a huge gulp of tea. John Egerton glanced across the table quickly. He was beginning to suspect that Donald Neil's chum had had a hand in this childish affair, but he was too wise to show any annoyance.

"I didn't get a chance to say much to him," he said, laughing good naturedly; "he did the talking. He seemed to have become possessed of the idea that I was past-master of the art of Gaelic, and when I confessed my culpable ignorance of the language, he flew into a rage. He seemed to lay the blame upon your friend, young McDonald." He looked steadily at Wee Andra as he spoke.

Old Andrew shot a suspicious glance at his son; that young man's face was an innocent blank which did not deceive his parent.

"Aye," he grunted, "it's quite likely he was to blame. Yon Neil lads are aye up to some ill. Ye hae a hard set o' young people to deal wi' in this place, Maister Egerton, an' Ah houp the Lord'll gie ye grace to wrestle wi' them!"

Mr. Egerton looked uncomfortable. He saw quite plainly that, though the Elder was addressing him, he was talking at his son, and tried to turn the conversation. But old Andrew felt that here was an opportunity to warn the

new minister of the difficulties and dangers which beset him, an opportunity no honourable man could let pass, so he launched forth. He was perfectly innocent of any double meaning in his words, but as he railed away against the lightness and giddiness of the rising generation, the young minister felt his indignation rising. Did this old man mean to point out to him the proper line of conduct? If so, he would soon let him see that John McAlpine Egerton would be dictated to by no man of his congregation, no more than would his grandfather before him! But Splinterin' Andra sailed on and when he had finished he had given the young pastor a dark and most discouraging picture of the youth of his flock.

"Aye, sir," he concluded, "they're jist given over to lichtness an' foolish talkin'. It's the blue beech gad they want; they didna get enough o't when they were bairns. Ah'm pleased that ye're come among them to show them a proper way o' conductin' themsels!"

Wee Andra cast a humorous glance at the uncomfortable visitor. He had his own opinion as to whether his pastor was a model of staid and sober conduct and was, in consequence, enjoying his father's tirade hugely.

John Egerton was very much relieved when the meal was ended, but the feeling was of short duration, for when they repaired to the parlour matters grew steadily worse. The appearance of the room with its black haircloth furniture, its bristling white lace curtains, its coffin-plate of a former Mrs. Johnstone in a black frame on the centre table, its smooth white walls adorned with strange and wonderfully constructed hair and feather wreaths in huge frames, and over all the close, damp odour, made a combination which was anything but cheerful.

The family followed him into the parlour and seated themselves stiffly around the walls. Kirsty McDuff, the servant girl, and Jimmie Bailey, the chore boy, entered also a few minutes later. The young minister noticed, with something of the sensations of a felon going to his execution, that each person held a Bible and Psalm Book, distributed solemnly by Mrs. Johnstone as they entered, and that Janet and the Bailey boy were further provided with catechisms. He glanced at the daughter of the house and pictured himself sitting before the whole household inquiring after her spiritual welfare. The comical side of it struck him and almost upset his gravity.

But there was very little food for mirth in the task before him. He had no idea of what a pastoral visitation meant to the Johnstones. Of course, he had heard very often of the strange old ways of his grandfather's time, but considered them as belonging to the dim past. But Glenoro had not quite emerged from the ancient ways. In the good old days, so lately gone, when Mr. Cameron had visited the members of his congregation, a pastoral visitation was not merely a social function, but a solemn religious ceremony. The minister might discuss with the heads of the family such light matters as the crops or the weather before or during tea; but afterwards, when the family gathered in the best room with their pastor in the midst, temporal affairs were put aside and there was a season of deep heart-searching. There were the Catechism and Scripture verses to be heard from the younger members of the family and personal questions to be asked. The minister must know just what progress each one was making on the upward road. There were virtues to commend and mistakes to rebuke. Then, after the reading of a chapter from the Book and the singing of a psalm, there were a few deep, earnest words from the pastor, words which steadied many a careless youth and instilled into the hearts of the children the knowledge that God and Right are the only factors to be reckoned with in this world. The ceremony was concluded with a long and fervent prayer by the minister, as old and young knelt around the family altar, a prayer which included a distinct comprehensive petition for each member of the family and one from which they all arose strengthened and bettered and ready for the battle against wrong.

Still more solemn had been the visitations of John Egerton's grandfather. That grand old apostle lived in the hard, rough days, and his coming was often looked forward to with dread. His scorching rebuke of sin, his powerful personality and his complete consecration combined to make his visits a sort of foreshadowing of the great judgment day.

But John McAlpine Egerton belonged to a different era. He honestly wanted to do his duty, but his duty on this occasion, he felt, consisted in making himself agreeable to the Johnstone family, not knowing that the head of the household cared not a whit how disagreeable his pastor might be so long as he was solemn. The old man, ashamed of his harsh remarks, was silent and moody. His young pastor's interests were his own and he had spoken from the highest motives. But he sighed when he thought how much better Duncan Polite would have dealt with the situation. Wee Andra was the only one who was quite at his ease; he seemed to realise that this pastoral visitation was something less rigid than former affairs of the sort, and chewed a straw with unconscious impudence. Mrs. Johnstone talked a little, but nervously and in an absent-minded manner, fearing that every word she uttered was

keeping the minister from giving voice to the solemn truths he was waiting to pour forth. Janet sat on the extreme edge of the sofa, her hands folded, her golden head drooping and the unhappy young pastor sat at the other end and made desperate efforts to raise the social atmosphere.

He spoke kindly to Kirsty, a tall, fine-looking girl, very much more composed than the daughter of the house; and he asked Jimmie Bailey about the calves and the lambs, wondering all the while at the oppressive silence. Then he turned to Janet and tried to open up a conversation with her. He had noticed that the stern visage of the ruling elder relaxed almost into tenderness whenever his eye fell upon his daughter and the wily young man guessed that he might reach the father's heart through her. He inquired if Janet played the organ, and, learning that she did, he requested her to favour them with some music.

"Go on, Jinny," said her brother with suspicious heartiness, "give us a rousin' old jig."

Janet glanced at her mother in alarm. To play the organ when the minister was making a pastoral call was surely not to be thought of. But her mother nodded, as Mr. Egerton insisted, and the girl went reluctantly forward, feeling as if she were guilty of sacrilege. She stumbled awkwardly through a loud, noisy march, which made the visitor want to grind his teeth, and as she finished Wee Andra came to life again.

"Won't you sing something, Mr. Egerton?" he asked cordially. "He can sing jist boss, father; you ought to hear him."

Old Andrew drew in a deep breath, but made no reply. The minister demurred at first, but finally yielded. If there was anything in the old adage that "music hath charms," he told himself grimly that now was the time to put it to the test. He took up a hymn book and selected a hymn Janet could play. The leader of the Methodist Choir condescended to flop down noisily from his oblique position and join him. Janet's sweet, timid voice made a pleasant third and the trio rendered some gospel hymns very musically.

When they had finished Wee Andra begged so hard for a song that the visitor could not well refuse and, taking Janet's place at the organ, he played and sang "Sailing" in splendid style. Jimmie Bailey, who was always threatening to run away on a Lake Huron boat, was enchanted and called for more, but something in the elder's face warned the young minister that he had sung enough. He went back to his uncomfortable seat on the sofa and strove to carry on a conversation, but without success.

At length, despairing of ever making friends with this strange family, he made up his mind to depart. He asked for a Bible and Mrs. Johnstone handed him a ponderous volume, bound in gilt-edged leather, which she took, with deep reverence and some pride, from beneath the coffin-plate. Old Andrew drew a breath of relief. Now at last he would see if this young man were really worthy of his high calling and the name he bore; now surely he would speak and show that his mind was set on higher things. Likely he would say something that would set Wee Andra thinking and put some solemn truths in his empty head.

But John Egerton's one thought was to get away as quickly as possible. He read a very short psalm, in a spiritless voice, and they all knelt for a moment while he led in prayer. He took a hurried farewell of the family; the elder scarcely spoke and Mrs. Johnstone regarded him with a puzzled expression.

He walked homeward in the soft summer dusk, down the great wide staircase, which grew a deeper purple towards the bottom, his heart very heavy. He had tried so hard to do his best, but there was something sadly wrong, he could not quite understand what.

He was beginning to fear that Mrs. McNabb's warning that "Glenoro church was full of old cranks" was only too true.

He was passing slowly down the sloping, faintly pink road, absorbed in his unhappy reflections when, glancing up as he neared the edge of the valley, he noticed an old man standing at the gate of a little log shanty. The young minister remembered shaking hands with him at church—a quiet old fellow with a handsome, refined face. He had opened his gate and stood as though waiting, looking so kind, so sympathetic and so altogether different from old Andrew Johnstone that the young man felt drawn towards him. He paused involuntarily. "Good evening," he said pleasantly, "Mr.—Polite, I think?"

Duncan's smile grew more radiant. "Oh, indeed, they will be calling me that foolish name, whatever," he said apologetically, "but my name will be jist McDonald, Duncan McDonald; oh yes, and you will be coming in for a little rest?"

His manner was so eager and kindly that John Egerton readily accepted. He could not account, however, for the look of joy that overspread the old man's face as he led him up the flower-bordered path; for he was unaware that Duncan was saying to himself that Donald would be sure to drop in on his way to the Glen, as he always did, and at last he would see those two together and the Lord would do the rest.

The visitor sat down on the chair beside the lilac bush, having persuaded his host that he preferred to sit out of doors. He leaned back with a sigh of relief and gazed around him. The whole landscape was darkly radiant with that wonderful life-like pulsation which we call the after-glow. The sky was a suggestion of rose and amber fainting into a delicate green and deepening again into a transparent blue where one star hung above Duncan's pines. A world of insect life hummed sleepily in the long grass of the meadow; across the road in the darkness of the woods, a whip-poor-will was whistling away at his plaintive little tune; and from far down in the valley at their feet came up the laughter and shouts of children at play.

"This is a lovely spot," said the young man, feeling soothed and rested. Duncan Polite's face beamed; he did not answer, from sheer joy, but waited in silence for such words of wisdom as his pastor might be pleased to utter. John Egerton talked easily when his company was pleasant, and he was soon chatting away upon such topics as he considered congenial to the old farmer—the crops, the prospects for the haying, the mill in the valley, the amount of lumber sawn and the money realised.

And all the time Duncan Polite's whole soul was waiting for his guest to speak of the one great subject, the subject that would make it possible for him to tell this young disciple of his Master that all his hope for Glenoro and Donald lay in him. But the minister continued his friendly chat upon indifferent topics, until it was interrupted by a noise upon the road above, a sound of loud talking and louder laughter drawing near. He paused to listen and involuntarily the faces of both men broke into smiles in reflection of the mirth which was apparently convulsing those who approached.

"Ah, those foolish lads, hoots, toots, what a noise!" said Duncan apologetically, for he recognised Donald's voice and Sandy's, too, in the uproarious shouts of laughter.

But as they came nearer the smile faded from John Egerton's face. He caught the word *Catchach*, and suddenly the whole truth flashed upon him. Wee Andra had witnessed the meeting of that afternoon and was giving to the Neil boys what they apparently considered a side-splitting description of the affair. All his ministerial dignity rose to meet the insult.

Sandy's voice could be heard distinctly above the others, interspersed with convulsive haw haws.

"Great snakes! You did it that time, Don! Bet it scared next Sunday's sermon clean out o' his head!"

Then Wee Andra's deep voice, "Jimminy! It was a better show than all the monkeys at the circus!"

"Was he scared?" It was Donald Neil who dared to ask that question.

"Looked mighty skittish for a minit, but I was weepin' that hard I couldn't see very good. *Catchach* swore like a trooper. I could tell that by the way he was grinnin', but the fearful pity was neither me nor his Reverence could understand it!"

They went off again with such utter abandon that Duncan feared the minister might be shocked by such uproarious behaviour on the public road. He did not at all comprehend the meaning of their conversation himself, in fact he scarcely listened to it, so eagerly was he watching for Donald.

The noisy crowd passed the house, and one tall figure detached itself from the group and, swinging open the gate, came up the path. Donald never forgot to give his uncle a call, as he passed on his way to the Glen. Duncan rose in a tremor of joy. He did not notice that his nephew gave a start at the sight of the minister. Mr. Egerton rose also and for an instant the two young men looked into each other's eyes with an expression of anything but amity.

"Oh and it will be you, Donal'," cried the old man in a voice which trembled with pleasure. "Here is the minister come to call."

Donald came forward, clinging desperately to the forlorn hope that the conversation had not been overheard.

"Good evening, Mr. Egerton," he said in a rather constrained voice, holding out his hand; but the other young man did not seem to notice; perhaps the dusk accounted for his mistake.

"Good evening, Mr. McDonald," he said stiffly. "I have remained rather long," he continued, speaking to Duncan Polite and incidentally turning his back upon Donald. He shook hands with his host and without so much as a nod towards the younger man, started for the gate. Duncan followed him, protesting, but the minister could not stay. He did not seem to hear the old man's timid suggestion that Donald would be going down to the village, too, and would be glad to accompany him, but strode off alone, indignation displayed in every line of his fine, straight figure.

## VI

### THE FULFILMENT OF PROMISE

There was not one dissenting voice in the chorus of admiration sung by the young people of Glenoro after their new pastor's social triumph at the Hamiltons'. Everybody liked him and there went through the older folk a thrill of joy that their pastor should be the leader of the young and unsteady set, to bring them to a higher and nobler plane of life.

Even Mrs. Fraser, the hypochondriac, was pleased with him in a mournful sort of way. Of course, she was somewhat alarmed when Miss Cotton declared that the minister was "jist a terror to cut up and could play 'Dan Tucker' better than Sandy Neil himself." But Annie Fraser explained that Mr. Egerton had done it just to show that he wasn't stiff or "stuck up."

This phase of the matter was a relief to her mother. Mrs. Fraser was a person to whom the world and everything in it was one series of ever-recurring disaster. She was a doleful body, taking pleasure only in funerals and the laying out of the dead. With her peculiar taste for sorrow and distress, she had come to be self-appointed nurse to the whole neighbourhood. She was always due at the house of affliction and, with her kindly heart and a certain skill in nursing, she proved a sort of melancholy blessing. Her predilection for disaster caused her to be regarded as a bird of ill-omen, for where Mrs. Fraser was, there would calamities be gathered together, and to see her issue from the big gate on the brow of the south hill with her ominous-looking black bag was sufficient to raise apprehension in every heart. Indeed, Mrs. Duffy, who lived nearly opposite the Frasers and who regarded the village nurse with something akin to superstitious fear, would throw up her hands at the sight of the herald of misfortune passing the door and exclaim, "God bless me sowl, who's dead now?"

So if Mrs. Fraser was willing to look hopefully on the actions of the new minister, the rest of the congregation might feel themselves secure. But he was not long in showing that he could be quite as energetic in his church affairs as in playing "Dan Tucker."

He plunged into the work with a vim and ardour which commanded the admiration of a thrifty and hard-working people.

The young folk were no longer the drones in the hive; he had not been among them a month before he had stirred them all up to an activity and interest in church affairs they had never dreamed of before.

He organised a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour and, with the help of Mr. Watson, a Young Men's Christian Association. He joined the Sons of Temperance and infused new life into that organisation. He even went so far as to get the older women out of their homes and before they knew what they were doing they had formed a Ladies' Aid Society and were making plans to carpet and decorate the church.

Miss Cotton was the president of this latter organisation and worked up the interest to such a pitch that even Mrs. Neil More went to one of the meetings, and Archie set fire to the house while she was absent, probably feeling that as the established order of the universe had been completely overturned, the total destruction of all material things should naturally follow.

The Methodists were incited to emulation by all this activity and Sim Basketful started an Epworth League. Then Mr. Egerton, in his free-hearted way, proposed that the two societies join and hold alternate meetings in the two churches, a suggestion which met with hearty approval and raised the young minister to the status of a saint in the eyes of Mr. Ansdell.

He soon established himself on friendly terms with "the boys" who met at the corner in the evenings. He entered into all their sports. Whether it was throwing quoits in the middle of the road, playing foot-ball in the river pastures below the mill, swimming in the milldam or walking the logs on the pond, he was the leader. He was a favourite with all classes. Mr. Watson, who was rumoured to have loose notions on religion, was his constant companion. Syl Todd, the village dandy, worshipped him, and Pat Duffy, who was rather a liberal-minded Catholic, declared him "a blazin' fine chap" and gave as his opinion that it was "a relief to see a parson that didn't look scared

when a fellow swore a little"—which indulgence was a conversational necessity to Mr. Duffy.

The Glen grew livelier every day and the meetings at the Hamiltons' larger and more frequent. John Egerton fell into the habit of dropping in there very often. The whole family were most hospitable and Miss Jessie was very charming. He saw from the first that she and young Neil were avowed sweethearts. Mrs. McNabb informed him that Jessie and Donald had been lovers ever since the day at school when he had thrashed Pat Duffy for taking a forcible and liberal bite out of her one apple. The young minister assured himself that he was very much interested in the pretty rural romance and wrote an account of it to Helen.

But, though he admired the village belle, he could not bring himself to have any warmth of feeling for Donald. He met him almost every evening either at the Hamiltons' or down at the corner and, while he could find no fault in the young man's conduct, he never quite forgave the prank he had played and did not unbend to him as he did to the others. Donald's honest heart was filled with remorse for the mischief he had unwittingly caused and in his straightforward fashion he went to the minister to make an explanation and, if need be, offer an apology. But his friendly advances were met with such cold politeness on the part of his pastor that the apology died on Donald's lips. Instead, he made matters worse by referring to the disagreeable incident and from that time forward relations between him and the minister were somewhat strained.

They were not improved by an incident that occurred shortly. One afternoon Duncan Polite sent his nephew on an errand to some relatives who lived down by Lake Simcoe and he was not able to return until the next morning. Mr. Egerton noticed, with a feeling of relief, that he was absent from the Epworth League that evening and at the close of the meeting the thought struck him that there would surely be no harm in his walking down the hill with Jessie Hamilton. He had no sooner thought of it than his mind was made up and after the close of the meeting he found himself, somewhat to his amusement, standing with the crowd of young men who waited, at the gate, the coming of their respective chosen.

The young ladies crowded out, some hurriedly and anxiously, others, sure of their power, with provoking leisuireliness. The Hamilton girls were among the last. Wee Andra seized Bella and disappeared into the darkness as suddenly as if they had been engulfed in oblivion. Sarah followed, very disgusted at being accompanied by Peter McNabb, Junior, who worked in his father's blacksmith shop and did not even know that there were such things in existence as Euclid and Algebra. Jessie came next; John Egerton stepped out from the ranks and raised his hat. "And may I have the pleasure of walking down the hill with you, Miss Jessie?" he asked, and the girl, murmuring some faint, shy words of consent, they walked side by side down the leafy path where the moonbeams through the trees made flecks of light upon her white dress.

The few stragglers still standing at the gate noticed the little scene and many were the comments upon what would likely transpire if the minister took to "keeping company with Don Neil's girl."

There was one who had noted the affair with perfect approval. Sylvanus Todd had long worshipped Maggie Hamilton from afar with absolutely no success; but so far from being disheartened by continuous rebuffs, he only seemed to increase in ardour under them. He adored Mr. Egerton's elegant ease and tried to copy it upon all occasions. His manner of addressing Jessie he considered irresistible and felt sure it would not fail with even so hardhearted a divinity as was his. Maggie was just emerging from the church, talking and laughing in a way that would have scandalised old Andrew Johnstone, when Syl stepped forward to put his new formula to the test. Raising his hat in precise imitation of the young minister's easy grace, he said, in as near an approach to Mr. Egerton's deep, musical tone as he could manage, "And may I have the pleasure of walking down the hill with you, *Miss Maggie*?"

But the result was quite different. Maggie turned and stared at him in genuine consternation. "Merciful gracious!" she screamed, "he's gone clean, stark, staring crazy!"

Mr. Todd was about to reply with some dignity, when Allan Fraser, who followed the more expeditious if less elegant method of the ordinary young man of Glenoro and never asked permission, caught Maggie's arm and swept her unceremoniously from underneath Sylvanus' nose.

Meanwhile, John Egerton, strolling slowly down the leafy path at Jessie's side, was enjoying himself. This was the first time he had ever been alone with the girl and by tactful questions he found out more about her in their short walk than in all of their previous acquaintance. His discoveries were all pleasant. As he had surmised, she was more



serious than her sisters; she had read a little, too,—Dickens and Scott and some of Tennyson. They stood at the gate in the moonlight for a long time, talking of books. He found she had a thirst for them and he promised to lend her as many as she could read. It was late when at last he left her; the radiant moonlight, the heavy scent of the dewy garden, the soft rushing sound of the river and the slim, graceful girl beneath the wide oaks had made a combination which was intoxicating. He did not describe this scene to Helen, however, as he had done so many others.

But of course Donald heard of it, and very soon. When Coonie came down with the mail the next morning, Syl Todd confided his troubles to the mail-carrier as he watered his horse. "Now, that there Allan Fraser ain't got no more manners than if he'd never been outside of Glenoro," he said in conclusion of his mournful recital; "he don't know nothin' about how to treat a lady." Syl was the only young man in Glenoro who gave "the girls" the dignified title of "ladies."

"Always the way with them college chaps," agreed Coonie. "They think they're some punkins and they don't know enough to make cheese."

"That's true," assented Mr. Todd, warmed by this unwonted sympathy. "An' there's Don Neil; he's another that's been puttin' on airs, but I'll bet he'll quit now; mind you, Coonie, the minister went home with Jessie last night."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Coonie, expectorating copiously, "that's noos!"

"You bet! Don'll be hoppin' when he hears it. All the fellows has been sayin' they bet Mr. Egerton would have liked to go with Jessie ever since he come here if Don didn't keep him shooed off. Wait till he goes back to college and the minister'll have his turn. Long's he don't go hangin' round Maggie, I won't bother him." And Mr. Todd put his head on one side and gazed sentimentally up the hill, a pose which was slightly damaged by old Bella throwing up her head and spattering him with water.

As Donald Neil came cantering homeward, he met the mail driver dropping down the Glenoro hills towards the Flats. "Hello, Coonie!" called the young man, "how's yourself to-day?"

Coonie pulled up his old horse, which stopped with as much difficulty as she started. He was very glad to meet Donald. "Oh, jist chawin' an' spittin'," he answered with suspicious cordiality. "What kind o' a new apostle's this you've got up here?"

"Who? Mr. Egerton? Oh! he's all right," said Donald, giving Bella a poke in the ribs with his whip. "Haven't you seen him?"

Coonie spat disapprovingly. "Yes, you bet. Seen him this mornin' showin' off the soles o' his boots on Peter McNabb's veranda an' readin' novels. Soft snap them preacher fellows have. Nothin' in the world to do but run after the girls. Don't wonder that you're headin' that way yourself; guess Mr. Egerton thinks you're tryin' to get up to him in the religion business, so he'll race you in the sparkin' line. Haw! Haw!"

Donald looked down at him calmly. "Go on," he said quietly, "you've got something on your mind, Coonie, and you'll never be easy till it's off. I saw you were loaded when I was half a mile back; what's the trouble?"

Coonie did not enjoy this; Donald Neil was not the right sort of person to torment. He took that sort of thing too indifferently and one was always left in the tantalising doubt as to whether he cared or not. Coonie did not believe in casting his pearls before swine, so he cracked his long whip with the usual admonitory inquiry, "Gedap there! What're ye doin'?"

Bella gave her preliminary scramble, stopped, tried again and slowly shambled off. But her driver could not resist turning in his teetering seat, as the dust began to rise, to shout back, "If I'd a girl I was as spooney over as you are, I'd keep an eye skinned for chaps as good lookin' as the parson. Haw! Haw!—*Gedap!*"

Donald rode off with a laugh, but his face became grave as he climbed the hill. A dark suspicion that the minister might some day be his rival had long been forming in his mind. Perhaps jealousy was the cause of his unforgiving spirit. He went to Wee Andra for an explanation of just what Coonie meant and his mind was not eased by it. He had never had a dangerous rival before and he was forced to confess that the minister was certainly a very captivating young man.

Duncan Polite had hoped that ere this his nephew and Mr. Egerton would have been firm friends. He wondered sadly over his failure to bring them together at his house. He wondered over other things, too. He regarded the revival of activity in the church with a heart of overflowing joy, but a joy tinged with a puzzled uncertainty. He knew that the young people of the congregation were now taking a greater interest in religious matters than they had ever done, and yet he could not quite understand why it was that, though the boys went regularly to the meetings of the various organisations and were constant in their attendance at the weekly prayer-meeting, which they had formerly eschewed, still they showed no consequent change of conduct. Sandy's fiddling and dancing went on uninterruptedly, parallel with his Christian Endeavour meetings. Wee Andra was even more irreverent than formerly and Donald showed no signs of an added desire to enter the ministry. Donald's case was particularly disappointing. He wanted Donald to sit at his young pastor's feet and learn the lesson of true consecration. He never dreamed that those two whom he desired to be fast friends were in great danger of becoming enemies, and that events were shaping themselves to widen the breach between them.

## VII

### A DISASTROUS PICNIC.

Dominion Day was approaching, the day upon which Glenoro had held a picnic in Isaac Thompson's maple grove, about half a mile down the river, ever since there was a Dominion Day.

The affair was ostensibly for the Presbyterian Sabbath School, but all Glenoro and the surrounding neighbourhood attended. The people from the Oa and the Flats and even from over on the Tenth flocked to Thompson's grove and swung in the trees and joined the swimming matches and helped on the festivity. Besides the sports and other attractions, there was always a programme of music and speeches after tea. Andrew Johnstone, as superintendent of the Sabbath School, was responsible for this part of the entertainment. The young men erected a platform of new pine boards from the mill and the young women decorated it with evergreen boughs and the visiting clergymen and township orators seated themselves upon it in dignified array. Peter McNabb led the whole assembly in a psalm or paraphrase and then Mr. Cameron and the Methodist minister and all others honoured with a seat upon the platform delivered addresses to the people seated in semi-circles on the ground. Some of the speeches were sound and edifying, some were of a lighter tone and were sprinkled with judicious jokes culled from many sources for the occasion. Old Mr. Lawton, an itinerant Baptist preacher who, no matter what his peregrinations might be, always happened to be in Glenoro on Dominion Day, had told the same jokes annually within the memory of the oldest picnicker, but, as they came only once a year, they were quite fresh after their long rest and the audience laughed at them each season with unabated mirth.

When Mr. Watson participated in the Glenoro picnic for the first time, he was filled with a deep disapproval. He was an energetic, well-meaning young man, rather injudicious and fiercely patriotic after the spread-eagle manner of his cousins across the international boundary. The Glenoro picnic struck him as being nothing short of disloyal. There was not a flag to be seen anywhere in the woods, only one of the speakers mentioned the fact that it was Dominion Day, and then in a mere incidental way, and at the closing they actually sang "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" instead of "God Save the Queen!" The schoolmaster made up his mind that if he lived till the next first of July, he would show the people what a Dominion Day celebration ought to be. For this purpose he sought the co-operation of the minister. Old Andrew Johnstone was ruining the rising generation, he explained, and it was time somebody showed him that he and his old-fashioned ideas were antediluvian. John Egerton hesitated at first. He did not like the idea of running counter to his ruling elder, but he secretly agreed with Mr. Watson that that old man had too much to do with the affairs of the church. He felt also that this would be a fine opportunity to come in touch with the boys and girls; so, after some demurring, he finally yielded and consented to give a helping hand in the patriotic demonstration.

Mr. Watson set to work with wonderful zest. As the picnic was for the Sabbath school, the children should properly be the entertainers, he declared, so the public school pupils were detained every day after school hours and the minister came down and helped drill them in patriotic songs and exercises. Of course, they needed a musical instrument, so they hired the Temperance Society's organ, and Jessie Hamilton was asked to play. The whole arrangement proved highly satisfactory to the young minister. He found himself looking forward to the practise hour with pleasure, for he would walk down to the Hamiltons', call for Jessie, and together they would stroll across the bridge and up the river road beneath the trees to the school house where they spent an hour in each other's company.

The undertaking had its drawbacks as well as its pleasure, however. The chief one was young Neil Neil, a worse imp than Sandy even, and an unfailing source of disorder. He and his bosom companion in iniquity, a wild Irishman from the Flats by the name of Patrick Regan, conspired to make the practise hour a burden to both their instructors. John Egerton was sometimes tempted to wonder if Donald Neil was taking his revenge by inciting his young relative to acts of rebellion. Then, too, some of the parents grumbled because their children did not return home in time to do "the chores." This gave the schoolmaster very little trouble, however. He paid no attention to such base sentiments; patriotism must be inculcated in the minds of young Canada, whether the calves were fed or not.

But in spite of all discouragements the work progressed. There were flag drills and motion songs, patriotic songs and public spirited recitations and when the programme was finally completed Mr. Watson heaved a sigh of content. There was to be only one speech, for Mr. Egerton insisted that Mr. Ansdell be asked to say "a few words."

They quite forgot, however, that the superintendent of the Sabbath school had always given the opening address and that Sim Basketful, though a Methodist, had never missed contributing to the programme. For the postmaster was undoubtedly the orator of Glenoro and had never before seen a picnic bill between the Oa and the Flats without his name on it in large type. Mr. Watson brushed away any doubts the minister had regarding the innovation. "Was he going to be ruled by Splinterin' Andra, or was he not?" he inquired, and John Egerton had responded that he most decidedly was not, so the preparations went on unabated.

To Donald Neil the new arrangement was anything but pleasing. He never seemed to be able to see Jessie any more. She was always trying over some new songs with the minister or reading a book he had given her, or in consultation with him over their preparations for the picnic. Donald's opinion of his pastor was not improved by this. He was too jealous to be quite impartial in his judgment and, therefore, did not realise that his rival was more careless than culpable. Donald's conception of a minister heretofore had been the Glenoro ideal, heightened by Duncan Polite's teachings,—a holy man, set apart from ordinary humanity for the Lord's special work. John Egerton was a revelation to him. Was this the sort of man his uncle worshipped? he asked himself. Was this the sort of man he was to emulate? He concluded by deciding that if John Egerton was a good sample of the ministry, then Donald McDonald would have nothing to do with the profession.

Meanwhile, John Egerton went happily on his way, all unconscious that he was doing any harm. As the date of the picnic approached he found, to his intense amusement, that there was still another faction in Glenoro church. This one was not at all formidable, however, for it was neither religious nor national, but merely culinary and geographical, namely, a strong rivalry in the production of pies and cakes between the matrons north of Glenoro and those beyond the southern hill. It broke out violently twice a year, at the first of July picnic and at the New Year's tea-meeting. When the date of these functions drew near, it was the custom for the North to muster their forces at the house of Andrew Johnstone, while the South flocked to their standard at Donald Fraser's and each made stupendous efforts to out-bake the other. But very rarely was there an advantage on either side. If one party got ahead of the other by so much as a cookie at one festivity, the defeated were sure to produce some unheard-of ammunition at the next. One New Year's Eve the South came charging up with thirty different varieties of pie, causing rout and dismay in the ranks of the enemy. But on the next Dominion Day the North responded gallantly with an eleven-story iced cake looking like a triumphal monument to celebrate their victory, and the balance of power was restored.

This summer, with the inspiring presence of the new minister, efforts were redoubled and for several days before the picnic the houses of the Johnstones and the Frasers were turned into bake-shops, and pies and cookies and tarts and story cakes were produced in such quantities and with such elaboration that the producers themselves were rather alarmed.

The great day arrived at last and Nature did her part nobly. It was one of those intensely clear, sunny days which only our Lady of the Sunshine can produce, a day when the thermometer announces that it is very hot, but when Nature denies the slander and the blood dances to the time set by the bracing air.

The blood was dancing in Mr. Watson's veins, at any rate. He was up early and had all his plans laid before noon. He collected his pupils at the school house early in the afternoon and gave them copious instructions. As soon as a sufficient crowd had collected at the picnic grounds, they were to walk in procession with him down to the grove, and just at their entry into the woods to burst into song and march in twos up to the platform, waving their banners and singing of the glory of Canada. After this they were to be given the freedom of the woods until such time as the performance should commence.

The idea had been Mr. Egerton's and had been planned by him with great care. He felt that the sight would be inspiring enough to please even Splinterin' Andra. For the ruling elder looked with dark disfavour upon any prominent performance by children and his young minister was rather anxious as to the effect the programme would have upon him.

John Egerton assisted his colleague at the school house and then repaired to the grove ahead of the procession, on purpose to be able to report afterwards upon its appearance. When he arrived, the picnic grounds presented a lively and pleasing appearance. Away back among the trees, in the flecking light and shade, the long, white tables were already being laid. White-aproned girls, among whom he recognised Jessie's trim figure, were flitting about them, setting cups and saucers with a musical clatter. Away in the background, a blue column of smoke rose straight into the treetops from the old stove where Mrs. Fraser and Miss Cotton were superintending the boiling of the tea

and at a table near by, piled with baskets, the matrons of the North and South laughed and chatted over their rival productions. Over in an open space of sunlight the boys and young men of the village were engaged in athletic sports, jumping, racing and throwing the shoulder stone. As he looked, he saw the slim, lithe figure of Donald Neil go up over a bar with easy grace, amid the applause of the surrounding spectators. Between the trees to the right flashed a line of blue and silver, where the shouting and splashing of the swimmers had already commenced. Everywhere to right and left there were swings—little swings and big swings. The latter were patronised by young ladies and their attendant swains and manned by two stalwart young men who sent their burden of sober dun-coloured masculinity and fluttering muslin and ribbon swaying far into the treetops, to the accompaniment of many personal and highly mirth-provoking remarks from the crowd waiting to be in the same position.

There was a mingling of shouts, laughter, neighing of horses, scraping of turning buggies and clattering of dishes, harmonised by that wonderful power which the forest possesses of turning all discordant sounds within her bosom to perfect music.

The young minister moved about from group to group with a pleasant word for all. He swung with Maggie Hamilton and Annie Fraser and Julia Duffy; he entered keenly into the young men's athletic competitions; he carried water for Miss Cotton and waited on the young ladies at the tables; and finally he strolled over towards the platform where the fathers of Glenoro were gathered. They sat on mossy logs or stumps, with drooping shoulders, smoking their pipes in solemn content, discussing crops and creeds, horses and heresies and enjoying life to the full. Old Andrew Johnstone was there; but Duncan Polite was not with him. Duncan never went anywhere except to church. The ruling elder seemed in a rather mild frame of mind in spite of the fact that the reins of government had been taken out of his hands. The young pastor could not know that Duncan Polite's influence had soothed his wrath. He sat beside the old man and chatted away genially, while Splinterin' Andra watched him solemnly and with a certain wistfulness in his stern face.

But John Egerton did not rest long; he was beginning to wonder why Mr. Watson and his flock had not by this time startled them all into admiration by their appearance. The time set for their arrival had long passed and still the burst of music and the gleam of banners which was to herald their approach did not come. He arose and walked towards the road to see if they were in sight, when he saw the schoolmaster approaching alone and with a haste which betokened disaster. His friend hurried to meet him. "Why, what has happened?" he cried. "Where are the children?"

But Mr. Watson was in a state of speechless wrath. The heat of the summer sun combined with the internal burning of his indignation would have produced apoplexy in a less cadaverous person. Some minutes passed before he could quite explain the situation. When at length he could tell it, it appeared that he had collected his flock at the school in proper order and supplied them all with full instructions. Then he delivered a flag to each boy and a maple branch to each girl, to be waved as they entered the woods singing. Mr. Watson had an eye for the artistic, and had at first decreed that each flag should march beside a maple bough; but the proposition was received with such hysterical squeals and giggles from beneath the Canadian emblems and such dark looks of terrible rebellion from the red banners that the schoolmaster was compelled to change the order of their going. So the boys led the procession, going two and two, with the girls tripping demurely behind, as was compatible with the masculine idea of the fitness of things. The procession marched along quietly enough. Only one digression occurred, when Neil Neil and Patsy Regan halted long enough to hold a muscular dispute as to who should lead the van, a contest in which both the Flag that Braved a Thousand Years and the Maple Leaf Forever were trampled in the dust of the highway. The matter was settled by their teacher setting the two belligerents, with sundry cuffs and jerks, to march side by side, which they did in perfect peace until they reached the grove.

And then it occurred—the great disaster! Just how it was managed, or whether it was impromptu or with malice aforethought, the schoolmaster did not know. But just as they entered the leafy path and he was clearing his throat to give the keynote of "Upon the Heights of Queenston," without warning or disturbance, the flags of their country were flung to the ground and the disloyal young Britons were scurrying off through the woods in twenty different directions, leaping over fallen logs, crashing through underbrush and whooping like a pack of wild Indians. The crucial moment had proved too much for schoolboy modesty. Mr. Watson glared around to find himself left with only a handful of embarrassed and giggling girls. Just one boy remained, little Tommy Basketful, who was too small to run away and who held to his sister's hand. There was no use trying to have the procession now; the master dismissed the girls in a choking voice and went raging through the woods to find Mr. Egerton, his progress and his wrath accelerated by snatches of the interrupted song coming in high falsetto voice or deep bass growl, from tree-top

or hollow stump.

"I'll wager my next year's salary it's that young Turk, Neil, who's at the bottom of it all!" he cried when he had finished the dismal recital and wiped the perspiration from his face. "By Jove, if it isn't a fix! There's Splinterin' Andra over by the platform; he'll never get over it! Yes sir, it's young Neil Neil's done it all, with Patsy Regan's help. They think they're safe because it's holidays, but I'll lay my rawhide on to them next term or my name's not George Watson!"

"Never mind," said the minister, with his usual kindly cheerfulness, "we shall have the programme at any rate."

"Programme! That's just what we won't have! Those young reprobates are gone for good. I know them! The girls can't do the drills alone and there won't be one piece fit to be given!"

The case was certainly more serious than the minister had at first thought. They had advertised their entertainment far and wide and the people were expecting something unique. If Neil Neil would not bring back his rebel band the whole affair would be a complete failure; he and Mr. Watson would be the laughing stock of the community and Splinterin' Andra would be grimly pleased. The young man's face darkened when he reflected that it was Donald Neil's brother who had wrought all this mischief. Was that whole family in league against him? The two looked at each other in dismay.

"Those Neil boys are a bad lot!" Mr. Watson burst forth again. "They've been the plague of Glenoro school ever since Donald started—— By Jove!" He started up suddenly, his face aglow, "I have it! Don can make young Neil do anything. We'll get him to order the young rascal back and to bring the others with him! Let's hunt him up!"

John Egerton drew back; he knew his relations with Donald Neil had not improved since Jessie had begun to help with the picnic programme and he did not at all relish the idea of asking his assistance in his dilemma. But Mr. Watson was already tearing off impetuously and, as there seemed no other way out of the difficulty and he could not leave his friend to bear the burden alone, he reluctantly followed.

A rapid survey of the grove showed that Donald was not at the sports, nor at the swings. Mr. Egerton noted with satisfaction that he was not with Jessie. She had put aside her apron and was on one of the big swings with a youth from the Tenth, her muslin dress swaying in the breeze, her brown curls flying. But Mr. Watson would not suffer him to stop one moment to admire the picture.

"He'll be down at the water," he cried, plunging headlong into a little path which led to the river. "Come along, we've no time to lose—if I only had my rawhide on that young Turk's back!"

The path they were following dipped suddenly into a little hollow where it was completely concealed from the picnickers by thick clumps of cedar and, at a sudden turn in the most secluded part, Mr. Watson almost ran against the object of their search. He was hurrying up from the river; his face was flushed, his hair damp and curly; he had evidently just emerged from the water. He drew back suddenly to let the schoolmaster pass.

"Are you playing tag?" he asked.

But Mr. Watson was in no mood for joking. "You're just the chap we're looking for, Don! Mr. Egerton and I are in a beast of a pickle. That young brother of yours has got to be looked after; he upset the procession from the school, and he's cleared off with all the other boys and we can't have any programme without them, and our whole entertainment's ruined!"

Donald glanced past him at the minister, standing in dignified silence, awaiting the issue, and for an instant a gleam of mischievous pleasure flashed in his eyes, a glance John Egerton did not fail to detect and at that moment he would have preferred to let the whole picnic be ruined rather than ask a favour of Donald Neil.

"What have I to do with it?" Donald was asking gravely.

"Oh, you know," returned the schoolmaster in a wheedling tone; "you can make Neil do anything. You order him to come back and bring the other chaps, and we'll be eternally grateful; that's a good fellow, Don."

Donald's eyes were beginning to twinkle again; he could not help enjoying his pastor's discomfort. "Why don't you discipline him yourself?" he asked teasingly. "If he's amenable to neither religion nor education"—he glanced at the minister again—"I am afraid I can do nothing with him."

John Egerton's face flushed angrily. "I think you should feel yourself responsible for your brother's action, Mr. McDonald," he said coldly. "I must say he has been an unmitigated nuisance ever since we commenced to practise, and now he promises to spoil everything. If you have the slightest interest in the entertainment, you will see that he does his duty."

Donald looked steadily into his pastor's eyes. For an instant a wild desire to refuse help, to even command Neil to see that the programme was a failure, entered his heart. But it was only momentary; Donald was incapable of being petty. But he could not resist the retort, "I couldn't think of assuming such honours in the presence of the clergyman and the schoolmaster, but I can at least produce the cause of this serious mishap." He put his fingers to his lips and gave three sharp whistles, ending in a long musical note. A moment later a boy came bounding up the path from the river; he was barefooted, his coat was off and he was plainly preparing for a swim. He stopped suddenly a few paces away when he saw who was with his brother and hung his black curly head sheepishly.

"What d'ye want?" he called.

"Come here," said Donald quietly, and Neil obeyed; he knew that whatever judgment was to be meted out to him, Don would see that he got justice. "Mr. Egerton and Mr. Watson have something to say to you."

The culprit's bright eyes took on a look of alarm; he wriggled his small bare toes in the dead leaves.

Donald pushed him towards the minister half mockingly. "Here," he said with suspicious gravity, "you must judge this grave matter for yourself."

John Egerton's sensitive face flushed hotly. He felt himself to be in an extremely ludicrous position, Mr. Watson stood in the background ready to second anything he might say, but very glad to be able to take a subordinate position in the affair, and Donald leaned back against a tree and looked upon the little scene with an extravagant solemnity which was maddening.

At that moment the young clergyman would have enjoyed turning upon the insolent fellow standing there with his arms folded so evidently enjoying his discomfiture and thrashing him soundly, had he been able to find an excuse. Unhappily he had none, however, and his wrath all burst forth upon the boy.

"What did you mean by breaking up Mr. Watson's procession and leading all the boys away?" he demanded hotly.

Neil's inbred reverence for the cloth had suffered somewhat under Mr. Egerton's efforts to teach him to sing, so he answered promptly, "I never! I jist cut off with the other fellows."

The minister's temper was fast slipping from his control. "Don't dare to tell me that!" he cried, snatching the boy's arm. "You know you planned this disgraceful affair!"

But the lad had darted a glance at his brother, and the keen instinct of childhood had perceived that Donald was not in league with his judges. So he looked up into the minister's face and said with incisive impudence, "It's a lie!"

John Egerton might have restrained his rage even then, had he not again caught the gleam of laughter in Donald's eyes. The double insult was too much. He promptly caught the saucy boy a sounding box upon the ear which sent him sprawling upon the ground.

The next instant Donald was in front of him. "Try something nearer your own size, you coward!" he was saying, and barely giving his opponent time to prepare, he planted a blow right between the minister's eyes and sent him reeling back against a tree.

He was up and at Donald in an instant, and so sudden and terrible was his onslaught that the champion boxer of Glenoro had a distinct impression that he was meeting his match. Donald was just settling to the fierce joy of battle

when the schoolmaster flung himself upon them.

"There's somebody coming! Stop, Donald! For heaven's sake stop, Mr. Egerton!" he implored frantically.

The antagonists parted with a sudden awakening to their position. The minister was fighting with one of his church members! For an instant the two young men stood back and regarded each other with something like horror. Donald looked at the dark bruise on the other's lately handsome face, and, realising who it was he had struck, his generous heart smote him.

The approaching group turned off into another path, and as their voices died away a terrible silence fell upon the four. Donald was the first to break it. Duncan Polite's nephew could be courteous even in the midst of his anger.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Egerton," he said with quiet dignity; "I should not have struck you; I forgot your position."

But John Egerton's rage was still shaking him. "I regret very much that my position makes it impossible for me to give you the thrashing you deserve. If I were not the minister of this place——" His voice choked with anger.

Donald's lips grew tight at this reception of his apology. "You are happy in your choice of profession, sir," he said quietly. "It is at least—safe."

The other stepped forward, his hands clenched. "Do you intend to insult me again?" he demanded, his face white.

"I was merely going to add," said Donald with a smile, "that it's rather hard on the profession."

Mr. Watson caught his pastor round the waist in a determined grasp.

"Splinterin' Andra's coming down the path!" he whispered wildly. "He'll be here in two minutes! Don Neil, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! Mr. Egerton," he implored, "for goodness' sake come away!" He dragged the unwilling young man out of the pathway. "If this gets out you'll not be able to stay in Glenoro another day! Think of yourself! Think how it would look!"

Donald stood for a moment after they had left, torn between anger and shame. The small cause of all this commotion stood shifting from one foot to another and looking up at his big brother with frightened eyes. "I never made the other fellows cut off, Don," he whispered as they stepped quickly out of the way of the elder, "honor bright, I didn't."

"I know," said Donald dully. "It's all right; run off now. And look here, Neil, not a word about this to anyone, remember, and you and the other boys be at the platform when Mr. Watson wants you."

Neil promised and ran swiftly back to the river. Left alone, Donald glanced about anxiously and was much relieved to see no one near. Personally, he did not care if he had been seen, but he knew that Duncan Polite's happiness would be at an end if he knew his nephew had been fighting the minister. With a heavy heart he walked slowly back to where the boys were pitching quoits. He was equally enraged at himself for starting the fight and for not insisting upon finishing it, yes, even though all the congregation of Glenoro Presbyterian Church, elders included, had been watching. But above all, the sense of the disgrace he had brought upon himself and all that his uncle held dear weighed upon the boy's heart. Jessie was at leisure now, standing with a group of girls near the swing, but he could not go and ask her to swing with him after what he had done. He was tormented by the thought that she might blame him if she knew. So he turned and wandered off alone into the depths of the woods, farther down the river, full of anger and misery.

The first tables were being filled when he returned. He found an excited group gathered around one of them.

"Mr. Egerton's sick!" cried Wee Andra, as Donald approached; "Watson took him home."

"I wonder if it was a sunstroke, poor young man!" exclaimed Mrs. McNabb, bustling about with motherly anxiety. "I'm going to run home and see, and if he isn't any better I'll not come back. Liza, you and Mrs. Johnstone'll



have to 'tend to those sandwiches. Dear, dear, isn't it a dreadful pity!"

Mrs. Fraser was already on her way to the afflicted one, and in the bustle and consternation Donald was able to hide his perturbation. He was filled with compunction at the havoc he had unwittingly wrought, for he knew the minister's disfigured face prevented his appearance in public.

A gloom seemed to be thrown over the whole festivity. The minister's sudden affliction was the one subject of conversation at the tea-table. The usual mirth and jollity gave place to a quiet gravity which might have satisfied even Splinterin' Andra. The schoolmaster did not return, so the original programme was dropped altogether. Instead of the grand-march and chorus which was to open the exercises, they sang the twenty-third psalm, and Mr. Ansdell led in prayer, adding a fervent petition that the young pastor might speedily be restored to health. Then there were some speeches after all. Sim Basketful, who was always ready, and old Andrew Johnstone, as was his unfailing custom, gave long, earnest addresses, and they sang the Doxology and went home.

Mrs. Fraser returned just before the assembly broke up with the news that Mr. Egerton was not ill, but had had a nasty accident. Mr. Watson said that he had stumbled and fallen when they were running through the woods, and had cut his face upon a stone. Mrs. Fraser considered it a mercy that he was not killed. Poor young man! In the midst of life they were in death, and likely Providence had sent this as a warning to the young people who were careless about their future state.

Miss Cotton didn't know what in the world the minister wanted to go tearing through the bush like that for, anyhow. It wasn't very becoming, she thought, and it was likely if Providence meant any kind of a warning it was for himself.

## VIII

### BURSTING OF THE STORM

Duncan Polite stepped out of the little gate one Sabbath afternoon, late in July, and joined his old friend on his way to Sabbath school. To-day the service was to be of unusual interest, for Mr. Egerton was to pay his first visit to the Sabbath school. Though he had been some months in Glenoro, he had never had such an opportunity before, on account of the afternoon service at his other charge. But to-day the service at the Tenth was to be taken by a visiting clergyman, and the superintendent of the Sabbath school was looking forward grimly to his pastor's visitation.

A few months previous this event would have been hailed by Duncan as a blessing from on high, but he had learned to expect much less from his pastor than in the early days of his ministry. He still hoped and prayed for great results, for to confess, even to himself, that the young man was a failure seemed like pronouncing his own doom. Still, it was being slowly but surely borne in upon him that Mr. McAlpine's grandson was neither a prophet like his relative nor a shepherd like his predecessor. Duncan's hopes for his valley were beginning to wane. What better were they now than four months ago? What better was Donald? And at the thought of his nephew, Duncan's heart ached. What was the matter with his boy? Some strange, unpleasant change seemed to have come over him; he never went to church, and it was whispered so loudly that it was heard even in the Watchman's exclusive little shanty that Donald Neil and the minister had quarrelled, and that Jessie Hamilton was the cause. Just how badly fate was using his boy Duncan could not know. In his honest endeavours to guard the young minister from the rumours afloat regarding the picnic Donald fell under his sweetheart's suspicion. It was their first quarrel, nothing serious at first, but Donald withdrew indignantly and devoted himself to his farm work. Full of repentance Jessie watched and waited for his return, and finally, as a means of hastening him to her side, she accepted cordially the kindly attentions of the minister.

And this was the condition of affairs at a time when Duncan Polite had hoped to see the two young men in perfect sympathy over a common cause—that of raising the spiritual life of his glen. The old Watchman's eyes grew deeper and more mournful every day over the fading of his cherished hopes. His promise to his father was not being kept. The covenant the founder of Glenoro had made, and which his son had renewed, was forgotten, and often in the distress of his soul the cry of Job came to Duncan's lips, "Oh that I might have my request and that God would grant me the thing I long for!"

But in the presence of Andrew Johnstone, the peacemaker was careful to hide his fears. He knew that his friend's dissatisfaction with the young minister was smouldering ominously and he watched Splinterin' Andra with ever-increasing anxiety.

On this Sabbath, Andrew was in such a sour frame of mind that the peacemaker's task was an especially difficult one. He plunged into the dangerous subject as soon as Duncan joined him.

"We're to hae oor bit meenister the day," he announced sourly. "We need na expec' ony great thing though, Ah'm thinkin'," he added soberly. "Ah suppose Ah'll ask him to take the Bible class."

"Oh, that will be a fine thing," said Duncan, with a great show of hopefulness. "The young man will be knowing his Bible well, and he will jist be giving the young folk some grand thoughts. Oh yes, indeed."

"Mebby." Andrew Johnstone's voice was anything but hopeful. "He could learn them plenty aboot fit-ball and croquet better, though."

Duncan saw the danger and hastened into the breach with soothing words. "It would be too soon to look for results," he declared. They must be patient. He managed to guide the conversation into smoother channels, and by the time they reached the church the danger of an outburst had been once more averted.

Mr. Egerton taught the Bible class in a most kindly and pleasant manner considering the ungracious way the superintendent requested his services. But Jessie Hamilton sat in one corner of it, her sweet face half hidden beneath her wide drooping hat, and that may have partially accounted for the feeling of pleasure with which he undertook the task.

During the remainder of the exercises he sat with the pupils, a silent spectator of old Andrew's methods. The superintendent was more impressively solemn than usual, and to the young minister, accustomed mostly to city Sabbath schools where the average boy conducted himself with considerable freedom, the place was oppressively rigid. He was amazed at the solemn silence. The children were unusually well behaved; even Mr. Hamilton's class was exemplary, for beside the usual terror of Splinterin' Andra, the presence of the minister demanded the very best conduct.

But the atmosphere of the place was oppressive to the bright, high-spirited young man. The bare severity of the building was bad enough in church, he felt, but in Sunday school it was disastrous. It should be a bright place, full of light and life. He made up his mind he would set Miss Cotton and the Ladies' Aid to redouble their efforts towards improving the place. When the service ended with a long, slowly-droned psalm and the children filed quietly out, whispering even on the doorstep, the minister drew a deep breath of relief.

He found himself walking up the hill with old John Hamilton and Peter McNabb. Behind them came the superintendent and Duncan Polite. Mr. Hamilton turned to include them in their conversation.

"And what do ye think o' oor Sabbath school, Maister Egerton?" he was saying. "Maister Johnstone here has made us a fine superintendent for mony a lang year."

"It's very good indeed," answered the young man heartily; "fine attendance, and the order is better than I ever saw it. But don't you think children need a little more brightness and life in their service to keep them interested?" He turned to his sour-faced elder with a charming air of deference which would have disarmed any man but Splinterin' Andra. But the elder's stick was already waving threateningly behind him, like the tail of a lion aroused. The young man did not notice the ominous sign and hastened on to his doom.

"I believe your Sabbath school to be a most exemplary one, Mr. Johnstone, but I hope you do not mind my saying that I believe the children should take a more active part in the exercises. They should feel it is theirs. A few good rousing hymns, now, in which they are interested, and—" he hesitated a moment, and then remembering how often the young people had begged him to open the subject of a musical instrument to Splinterin' Andra, and feeling that he was doing well, and now was his opportunity, continued—"and perhaps the use of an organ to help the music would aid greatly and add brightness and interest to the school."

The red rag had been shaken in the bull's face! Shaken very politely and gently it is true, but a maddening challenge nevertheless. Had the minister only left out the organ the presence of Duncan Polite might have restrained his friend from violence, but an organ stood for everything that was frivolous and worldly. And now that this man who had been the Joshua of his hopes, who was to lead the young people into the promised land of righteousness after their old leader had gone up to his rest, now that he had come out avowedly the promoter of instability and the apostle of fashion, it was too much for Splinterin' Andra. He had loved and revered the young man so long, in spite of his many failures, that his resentment was now in proportion to his former confidence.

Peter McNabb saw the danger, and burst in with a not altogether irrelevant remark about there being thunder in the air; but he was too late; already Splinterin' Andra's stick had darted from its place like a sword from its scabbard.

"Man!" he exclaimed, turning a face of righteous wrath upon the well-meaning young clergyman, "man! It's ma' opeenion, that wi' an instrument o' wund in the pulpit, we're no in great need o' anither in the congregation!" and sweeping a clattering shower of stones down the hill, he tramped away ahead, leaving consternation and dismay in his wake.

Duncan Polite walked by his friend's side in silence. He sympathised deeply with Andrew's feelings, but this new disaster was like to break the old man's heart. But Andrew Johnstone was not done.

"An organ!" He repeated the words with all the bitterness of his disappointed soul. "An organ! The Lord peety the kirk that has a fule for a meenister!"

"Oh, you must not be saying that, Andra," said Duncan Polite. "The Lord will be a better judge than man——"

But old Andrew interrupted him tempestuously.

"Man, Duncan, Ah've kept it tae ma'sel for mony a day, but Ah jist canna bide it ony mair! Him an' his organ! Aye, he's after some bit balderdash a' the time. Ah tell ye the buddy's no got the root o' the matter in him! He can preach, aye, Ah'll no deny yon, but what's the gude o' what he's haverin' aboot? This mornin' he preached jist half an oor, aye, an' twenty meenits o' it taken up in provin' that Paul was a gude man, a thing that no the biggest fule in the Glen would gainsay, no, not even oor Andra'," he concluded sombrely.

Duncan sighed. He had noticed that the sermons were steadily growing shorter. Indeed, from the first Sabbath of his pastorate the young minister had deliberately set himself to abbreviate the church service, commencing with the sermon. He had done it so gradually that he flattered himself it was unnoticed, but no one could depart one jot or one tittle from the ancient ways without the argus eye of the ruling elder spying out the offence.

"Oh well, indeed," said Duncan Polite, "it would be a clever sermon, Andra, and I would be thinking he gave us some fine thoughts on Paul."

"Paul!" cried the other with withering scorn. "Paul! and who sent out meenisters to preach Paul?"

Duncan could not answer. John McAlpine Egerton was a clever speaker certainly, with much of his grandfather's fire, but to the brilliant discourses on the heroes of the Bible which had constituted his sermons lately Duncan had listened with a remote ache in his heart. For though Paul was a great apostle, and David the Lord's anointed King, who were they to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Old Andrew was still talking, his stick waving furiously. "It's railin' agen this, and rowin' agen that: it's Socialism and Anarchism and some other rubbishy ism every Sabbath. Man, why can the crater no preach the Gospel? Aye, an' we had a half an oor o' havers aboot infidelity last Sabbath. Tod! Naebody in the Glen kened what infidelity was till he cam' except mebbey yon lad o' Silas Todd's, an' the crater's no wise onyway!"

Duncan made a feeble attempt to stem the tide. "But these societies, maybe they will be doing good, whatever."

This was only fuel to the fire. "His societies! Man, wi' his Y. P. S. C. E. an' his Y. M. C. A. an' his X. Y. Z., fowk's heids are fair turned! Jist sparkin' bees, every ane o' them! An' him the biggest spark o' them a'! A Chreestian Endeavour Society! Man, where's he gaun to get it, wi' oot the Chreestians? Our Andra an' yon natral o' Silas Todd's, an' thae huzzies o' John Hamilton's, an' yon nephew o' yours! *A Chreestian Endeavour!* Eh, man, does the buddy no ken he canna mak' bricks wi'oot straw?"

Duncan made no reply. He was as utterly crushed as though he were guilty of all the sins imputed to the minister. His heart was crying out in its pain and disappointment. Andrew's parting words sounded like the closing forever of the door of hope. "Aye, an' we thought he would be anither Mr. McAlpine! The Lord forgie us for oor meeserable presumption!"

When the first sting of his resentment against the elder was over, John Egerton was not sorry that the disagreeable affair had occurred. The quarrel had not been of his seeking, everybody knew that; and the knowledge that he did not need to be on friendly terms with the cantankerous old man was a distinct relief. He realised now that the ruling elder had been something of an encumbrance to him ever since he came to Glenoro. He represented everything unprogressive in the church, and he, the minister, had always been under the unpleasant obligation of conciliating him. He almost drew a breath of relief when he found it was quite proper for him to take the opposite course.

So the consequence of Andrew Johnstone's hasty words was that the young minister joined the rising generation in all their risings. Fortified by his support they soared higher than they had ever dared before and demanded every innovation that has ever been known since churches began to follow the fashions. And first of all they set themselves tenaciously to the getting of a church organ.

They went about it with the wisdom of the serpent, too. The Christian Endeavour Society went through the congregation, collecting money from such as were favourable to the project. When they found themselves with a sufficient sum, their plan was to purchase the coveted instrument, present it to the session, and they would just like to see how Splinterin' Andra would prevent their accepting it.

But that was exactly what Splinterin' Andra intended to do; failing that, he determined to carry his old threat of violence into effect, rather than allow the desecration. He grew fiercer and more resolute every day, and yet in spite of his strength it was plain that at last he was approaching defeat.

Duncan Polite strove to bring about a peaceable settlement. He counselled yielding.

"It will be a great sin in the Lord's sight, Andra," he said pleadingly, "these wranglings among his own people. 'Peace be within thy walls, oh Zion!' that will be the will of the Master and, indeed, I will be thinking if we would jist all be of the right mind, this organ would be a source of blessing, and like David's harp that drove the evil spirits from Saul."

Andrew gave a derisive snort. "If ye can see ony similarity between David and yon bit, gigglin' light-headed lass o' Donald Fraser's that thinks she's to play the thing, ye're mighty far seein', Duncan. And ye ken weel if the Gospel does na' touch them, they'll no be converted by a few bit worldly squeaks from a music-boax. No, it's jist all vanity, Duncan, jist vanity, an' we'll no hae the thing in Maister Cameron's church as lang as Ah've gotten the use o' ma' arms!"

But the organ party went on collecting money unheedingly, and Duncan was in despair. He appealed to Donald, but found very little satisfaction. Donald was working hard in the harvest fields, and came to Glenoro very seldom. Duncan could not but guess the reason; the minister's attentions to Jessie Hamilton were growing more marked every day. Wherever he looked Duncan could see signs of trouble, which he was powerless to avert.

The great day arrived when the sum of money was complete. At the next Endeavour meeting they would make all arrangements for purchasing the organ. Mr. Egerton preached a very clever and caustic sermon that Sabbath upon narrow-mindedness, and Duncan Polite's face was drawn with pain as he listened.

On Monday evening, the night before the final and crucial meeting the young minister was walking briskly down the road from the Oa. He had been taking tea with one of his most friendly families and had stayed rather late playing croquet with the young ladies. As he went along the winding thoroughfare it suddenly occurred to him that he could save time if he went over the fields and through the woods, coming out on the road again just above the Glen. He was over the fence in an instant and crossing the dusky fields, the sharp stubble of the wheat clicking against his feet as he walked. Then he crossed a sweet-scented pasture, with the dim, shadowy outlines of the cows lying here and there, the stillness broken now and then by the soft tinkle of a disturbed bell. Next he entered the woods, so dark and still, with only the light of a few stars peeping through the branches. The young man forgot Splinterin' Andra and Donald Neil and all his worries as he moved through the mysterious darkness. The strange, still whisper of the forest, that gave a sense of life, as if the whole dark surroundings were some great breathing creature, touched him nearly. He felt awed; the trivial things which made up so much of his life seemed infinitesimal now, in the face of this mysterious wonder. When he emerged into the grey light of the open fields again, he was both saddened and uplifted. He climbed the fence into Duncan Polite's pasture field and made his way round the little shanty, stepping quietly for fear of disturbing the old man, who might be sleeping. But as he passed the place a sound arrested his footsteps, a sound of a human voice full of anguish.

The minister paused and drew nearer. The green paper window-blind was rolled up a few inches and from beneath it shone the light of a lamp. He stepped up to the window and peeped in. In the middle of the bare room knelt Duncan Polite. His Scotch bonnet lay on the floor at his side and the rays of the little lamp on the table touched his thin white hair with silver. His pallid face was upturned, his eyes closed. Collie stood beside him, his head on one side, a look of longing on his canine face, as though his dog's heart were striving to know and share his master's grief. He stiffened and bristled at the scent of the intruder, but Duncan had begun to speak again and the dumb sympathiser was once more all attention.

"Oh, my Father, my Father!" The words broke from him like a cry of pain. "Oh, my Father, Thou knowest there will be dissension in Thy House and trouble in Thy Holy Place! Oh set Ye open unto us the gates of righteousness! Father, lead us to the light and let not Thine Holy One be put to shame among us!"

His voice broke, and Collie gave a quivering whine. Then the man's tones rose again in passionate pleading. He poured out his whole, great soul in such an anguish-laden prayer for the young man who was listening, that he stood for a moment overcome. Then, unable to bear it, he turned and slipped softly around the house and out upon the

road. He stumbled often and he did not walk with his accustomed easy swing. And as he entered the valley, the lights of the village swam below in a mist, and the sad drone of the river rose to meet him like the echo of Duncan Polite's prayer.

## IX

### THE PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES' AID SOCIETY

Miss Eliza Cotton took her scissors and roll of dress patterns and started across the street for a day's sewing at the Hamiltons'. She liked to sew there, for she was fond of the girls in her queer way, and there was plenty of life and fun. To-day she was particularly pleased to go to some place where she could pour out the vials of her wrath upon the minister for the ridiculous way he had acted in refusing to go on with the organ scheme. Next to the latest news of the neighbourhood, Miss Cotton loved what she termed "style." Before Mr. Egerton's advent the Glenoro Church had been utterly devoid of this saving quality. Since his arrival, however, matters had improved rapidly. But now, just when they had got a carpet for the pulpit stairs and matting for the aisles, and were on the eve of purchasing the long-talked-of organ, the very prompter and head of all the enterprise must suddenly declare a complete change of front. To Miss Cotton the loss of his support was an absolute disaster, as it was to many others, especially those who had to tramp over many miles of country to return the money they had been at such pains to collect. Even Mrs. Fraser was disappointed in the minister's action, for she had been in hopes that Annie would be the organist, and she sighed long and deeply over the mutability of the young minister. Such sudden changes of opinion, she declared, denoted an unstable character, and she feared he would not have a good influence over the wild and unsettled young men of Glenoro.

Miss Cotton did not care what characteristics were denoted by the affair. She only knew that in her opinion Mr. Egerton had behaved outrageously, and she went over to the Hamiltons' prepared to maintain the same at the point of her sharp tongue.

"Well, 'Liza," said Mrs. Hamilton, as soon as the dressmaker was settled in her corner of the wide, breezy kitchen surrounded by billows of light blue silk, "what do you think o' the minister changing his mind in such a hurry?"

She did not ask because she was seeking information, for Miss Cotton had left no one in doubt as to her views on the subject, but only as a pretext for getting launched upon the all-important subject.

Miss Cotton sniffed indignantly. "Mighty queer, that's all I have to say. He knew as well as we did all along that Splinterin' Andra an' a whole crowd o' old fogies didn't want an organ, an' to think he'd stand up at the very last meetin' an' say it would cause trouble—cause fiddlesticks! I'll bet there's somethin' at the bottom o' all this; mebbey some o' you girls knows more about it than I do. Jessie here seems to be gettin' awful thick with him." She glanced sharply around at each young woman, engaged in some household duty.

"That's just to make Don jealous. Jess is awful cute!" said Maggie, who was making intermittent attempts to wash the breakfast dishes.

Jessie was accustomed to such attacks, for she was the sweetest-tempered member of the family, with much of her father's grave gentleness, and she received even more than her share of teasing. But her heart was still very sore over her disagreement with Donald, and she bent lower over her sewing.

"Be quiet, Mag," said Bella, who was the only one in the Hamilton household who exercised any authority. "Leave Jess alone and go on with your work."

Maggie seated herself complacently upon the sewing machine box and swung her dish-towel to and fro. "To tell you the truth, Liza," she said solemnly, "I believe the minister was scared. I think he thought that when Splinterin' Andra got done makin' kindlin' wood o' the organ, he'd make sausage meat o' him, an' if he was in that condition he couldn't marry Jess——"

"To Don Neil," put in Sarah neatly.

"Mother, come and make the girls be quiet," pleaded the victim.

"Jess would make a fine minister's wife, though, Liza," continued Maggie, knowing well that every word she

uttered would be repeated verbatim to Mrs. Fraser at the earliest possible date. "She takes pious fits, doesn't she, mother?"

"I never notice much piety about any of you," retorted Mrs. Hamilton smartly.

"Oh, mother Hamilton, you ought to be ashamed to own it, and here's Bella and Jess getting themselves fixed to join the church. Shouldn't wonder but I'll be doing something rash like that myself, now that I've turned Christian Endeavourer."

"A fine specimen of a Christian Endeavorer you are," said Miss Cotton scornfully. "An' you an active member, too!"

"Of course! I wouldn't be in anything where I couldn't be active. It's heaps o' fun."

"My goodness, if you giddy folks had old Mr. Cameron over you, he'd show you how to behave. It's my private opinion the minister don't know a Christian from a wheelbarrow or he wouldn't have all you feather-heads joining his societies."

"That's true, I do believe," agreed Maggie, "or he'd never a' got you for President of the Ladies' Aid, for you know you say heaps more than your prayers!"

"Maggie, you're a caution; do behave!" cried her mother, glancing at Miss Cotton with secret pride to see how she appreciated Maggie's sharp tongue.

"Oh, she's gone daft. Don't listen to her, 'Liza," cried Bella impatiently. "Whatever do you 'spose made Mr. Egerton turn 'round and act the way he did, anyhow?"

Miss Cotton looked mysterious. "I know a good bit more about that chap than I've ever told," she said, nodding her head in a tantalising manner. "I've got a letter over home that might throw some light on the matter." She took up her work again, waiting for this startling piece of intelligence to take effect.

"What in the world is it, 'Liza?" cried Mrs. Hamilton, approaching the sewing machine. "I jist knew by the look o' you when you came in that you'd something in your mind that——"

"That's so, she does look queer," declared Maggie, stopping, with her dish-cloth suspended, to examine Miss Cotton critically. "Now, I've seen 'Liza so often when her mind was empty——"

"Don't listen to her, 'Liza!" cried Jessie, her small mouth twitching with laughter. "What were you going to say?"

"Well, if that young gas-bag would shut up for half a minit, I'd tell you something pretty queer about the minister. But, mind you, it's a dead secret, and you must *promise*——"

There was a chorus of solemn pledges to secrecy from the group which collected hastily around the sewing machine. Mrs. Hamilton left her bread-making and came, with floury hands held carefully away from the blue silk, to listen.

Miss Cotton leaned back in her chair and raised her scissors. Such moments as this were her happiest. "Well, I don't pretend to know what made him change his mind so sudden," she said, lowering her voice mysteriously, "for I don't, not any more than that sewing machine; but I do know somethin' about him, that not a soul in Glenoro knows, an' it makes me have some idea why he acts so queer." A solemn silence fell over the listeners.

"I've known it for two whole days, an' never whispered it to a livin' soul!" she added, proud of this achievement in reticence.

"My! it's a wonder you didn't explode." Maggie's voice somewhat relieved the tension. The narrator paid no heed.



"Now I guess you won't believe me, but mind you, I seen that fellow before he ever came here. It was when I was in Toronto that fall, visitin' Maria, an' you'd never guess where I seen him, if you was to try from now to the crack o' doom!"

She resumed her sewing with the most aggravating coolness.

"Drunk in the street," suggested Maggie.

"Maggie, it's awful to talk about a minister like that!" cried her mother, weakening her reproof with a laugh.

"Where in the world was it, 'Liza?"

Miss Cotton resumed her oratorical attitude. "Well, mind you, I never knew myself that I'd ever clapped eyes on him, till night before last, but his face puzzled the senses out o' me ever since he came here. Only I'd heard so much about what old McAlpine looked like, that I thought it was because he looked like him. But if I've told Mrs. Fraser once, I've told her a dozen times that——"

"Oh, go on with your yarn!" Maggie's dish-cloth was waving impatiently.

"Well, you mind that fall I went to the Exhibition an' stayed with Maria till near Christmas? My, the sights I did see that time! You girls ought to take a trip to the city now, why——"

"Oh, never mind, 'Liza," said Maggie, knowing the narrator's weakness. "Settle the minister first, an' you can talk Toronto all day after."

"My! but you're anxious about him, Maggie! That's a bad sign. Well, as I was sayin', I stayed all fall, you know, an' Maria she was bound and determined I'd see an' hear everything that was worth while, an' her and James they jist trotted me 'round till I was near dead. James Turner does make Maria an awful kind man, I will say, though I ain't got much use for men. Well, one night we went to a high-toned concert, got up by a lot o' college fellows. I tell you there's where you see the fine lookin' chaps! Don Neil couldn't hold a candle to them, the way they was dressed up, reg'lar doods every one o' them, an' the style! If I'd been a young thing like one o' you girls now, I'd a lost my heart a dozen times over. But if you'd a' seen the fellows that took part in the concert, you'd a' died, the way they were rigged up! They all came a-flippin' an' a-floppin' out onto the platform, an' besides their pants an' coats, every mother's son o' them had on some kind of a long cloak, for all the world like Mrs. Duffy's black dolman. An' they had the curiousest things on their heads, jist exactly like the black shingles that was flyin' 'round here the night the sawmill burned down!"

"Why, they were college gowns and caps," said Sarah; "Don Neil and Allan Fraser are both going to get them."

"Well, don't I know that, you young upstart. An' Mrs. Fraser's in an awful way about Allan wearin' one, too, but that don't prove that they didn't look jist like the mischief itself."

"Dear me, do they wear them kind o' things out amongst other folks?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton in mild alarm. She had supposed that such raiment would be confined to the seclusion of one's own bed chamber.

"Indeed, they jist do, Mrs. Hamilton. If Jessie an' Don Neil makes up this little lovers' quarrel they've got up lately, you'll have him comin' flappin' down the hill to see her in one o' them next winter. But reelly, you wouldn't believe what awful trollops they were; an' if I couldn't turn out a stylisher lookin' wrapper an' a mighty better fit, too, I'd go an' choke myself."

"You'll choke before you get this story told, if you don't quit talkin'," said the plain-spoken Maggie. "Did the minister have a wrapper on?"

But Miss Cotton had a fine eye to the structure of a story. "Oh, I'm comin' to him, at the right time. Well, as I was sayin', there was a whole swarm o' these fellows came floppin' an' flounderin' onto the platform an' they all squat down in a long row with their wrappers an' shingles on, an' started to play like all possessed on what they call bangoes or some such tomfoolery."

"Banjoes," corrected Sarah. "Lots of the boys and girls play them at the High School."

The orator paid no attention.

"An' they set there fiddle-dee-deein' for about a quarter of an hour,—an' now I'm comin' to the important part. There was one tall, good-lookin' chap, sittin' right in the middle o' the row——"

"Mr. Egerton," whispered Maggie.

"An' he was scratchin' away for dear life on some sort of a fryin'-pan thing, an' I leans over to James an' I sez, 'James,' sez I, 'ain't it for all the world like gratin' nutmegs?' sez I. Well, we were bang-up in the very front seat, for James Turner always believes in gettin' all he pays for, an' the fellows was makin' the awfulest clatter, an' you know, James Turner's as deaf as a post, anyhow, an'—well, now, if any o' you scalawags lets this out I'll massacre the whole lot o' you!"

A chorus of renewed promises and entreaties to continue followed this terrible threat.

"Well, jist as I was sayin' it, good and loud, what should that blessed racket do but stop short, jist as if they'd all been shot dead; an' jist at that very min'it I was yellin' 'gratin' nutmegs!' at the top o' my lungs!"

She joined heartily in the shrieks of laughter, for Miss Cotton loved a joke on herself, as well as on another.

"O' course, they all went at it again, with a bang," she continued, "but them fellas heard, o' course, an' they started to shake. An' this tall chap in the middle, I'm tellin' you about, was the worst of all. I thought he'd a' took a conniption fit an' when he did manage to sober up a bit, he stared down at me that hard, that if I'd been a skit o' a thing like one o' you girls, I'd a' blushed, sure. But I jist stared back at him, good and hard, I tell you, till he had to look away.

"There was lots more programme besides that, singin' an' speakin' pieces an'—oh, land! there was one girl come switchin' in with a long tail to her dress, that would reach clean from here to the mill, an' the neck of it cut that low it would make a body want to get under the seat; it was jist shameful! An' the way she sang was jist near as bad. She squalled an' took on as if everybody she'd ever knowed had been massacred, an' you couldn't make out one single word she said no more than if it had been Eyetalian. An' all them folks set with their mouths open, an' seemed to think it was jist grand, low neck an' all, an' when she finished up with a yell jist like the sawmill whistle, they clapped fit to kill. I'm sure I'd heaps rather listen to Julia Duffy singin' 'Father, dear father, come home with me now,' an' you know what that's like."

"But that ain't near the worst yet. After all them fellas got through some more scrabblin', out comes the tall chap again, I was tellin' you about. Maria said it was him, or I never would a guessed it, because, as sure as you're standin' there, Mrs. Hamilton, he was all blackened up and togged out with a long-tailed coat, an' a high hat, an' danced, an' cut up jist fit to kill. The people all went clean into fits; an' I thought James Turner would a' died laughin'. It was real kind o' comical, too, the way he went on. But now I'm comin' to the real part o' my story. When we were goin' home on the street car, Maria says to me, sez she, 'Do you mind the fellow that sang the coon song?' sez she. 'Well, I should think I do,' sez I, 'an' of all the bold young scamps!'—'Well,' sez she, 'that fellow's goin' to be a Presbyterian minister!' 'A minister!' sez I; 'what on earth's a minister doin' flappin' 'round in a black night-gown an' playin' on a fryin' pan an' singin' nigger songs? He ought to be home readin' his Bible!' sez I. 'Well,' sez Maria, 'he's goin' to be one anyhow. He's jist in Var-city yet,' sez she, 'an' I guess it don't matter.' 'Well,' sez I, 'Maria Cotton, the sooner he gets out o' Var-city, or whatever you call it, the better, for it must be a wicked hole!' Well, we didn't say any more about him, 'cause we was racin' an' tearin' 'round to somethin' new all the time, an' I clean forgot all about it, until Monday night, I was goin' home a piece o' the road with Mrs. Fraser, an' Mrs. Basketful called to me that there was a letter from Maria for me. I was scairt for a minit, for I thought her an' the children must be all dead, she writes so seldom. But here if she didn't write to tell me the most surprisin' news you ever heard, no less than that my gigglin' dancin' chap with the bangjo was no less than our own minister!"

There was a chorus of startled exclamations. Everyone had guessed the end of the story, but it was astounding nevertheless when put into words.

"How I could ha' been so stupid as to forget," continued Miss Cotton, "I can't imagine. It's a good long time ago, though, an' Maria never told me his name; but now what do you think o' that, Mrs. Hamilton?"

"Dear, dear, ain't it awful!" exclaimed that lady, in genuine distress. She was of the old school, who considered a minister removed far beyond the frivolities of ordinary mortals, and was completely bewildered. "Mebby that was when he was sowin' his wild oats," she said at last, with some hope.

"Pshaw, mother, ministers ain't supposed to grow wild oats!" cried Bella piously. She was not as much enamoured of Mr. Egerton as formerly; for Wee Andra was openly antagonistic to him since his mysterious disagreement with Donald Neil.

"Don't any o' you girls breathe a word o' this," warned Mrs. Hamilton. "Andra Johnstone an' some o' the other elders aren't too well pleased with the poor fellow now."

"My!" sighed Maggie. "Wouldn't I love to tell Splinterin' Andra that the minister could sing nigger songs and play a banjo. He'd say—'Show me the sinfu' instrument of Belial an' Ah'll smash it into a thousand splinters!'" She accompanied the speech with such an exaggerated imitation of the old man's vigorous gestures, using the poker in lieu of a cane, that the spectators shrieked with laughter.

"I'm afraid he'd smash the minister, too," declared Sarah.

"Oh, well," said Jessie, "I don't see that there was any harm in Mr. Egerton's singing and playing when he was young——"

"Oh, yes, o' course you'll take his part!" cried Miss Cotton. "But I'll tell you this much, I've got something more to tell, bigger than all that, something that'll make *you* think he ain't quite so perfect."

"Why, 'Liza!" cried Mrs. Hamilton in alarm, "there surely ain't more!"

"There jist is, Mrs. Hamilton, an' something pretty queer." She was whispering again, and her audience drew near with bated breath. "Maria wrote two whole pages about him, an' she left the worst to the last. She said, 'I s'pose he's a great fella' for the girls, he always was in Toronto, an'—Jessie's lookin' scairt, I do declare! Well, she said he'd better take care 'cause he was engaged to a high-toned lady in Toronto, engaged to be *married*, mind you! It's true, too, because Maria knows. She's rich, an' awful stylish, an' her name's Helen Weir-Huntley, mind ye, one o' them high-toned names with a stroke in the middle. An' Mrs. McNabb told Mrs. Fraser on the sly that Mrs. Basketful told her he wrote to a girl by that name every week o' his life, only not to tell. An' he gets a letter back every week, too, with a big chunk of red wax on it, an' some kind of a business stamped on; jist stylish folks uses that kind. So I guess you girls had better quit playin' organs an' doin' things for him!"

Jessie's face flushed crimson. "I don't see what difference that would make, 'Liza," she said with a steady look from her deep grey eyes.

"Well, well, ain't it awful!" commented Mrs. Hamilton for the fifth time, quite overcome by this second disclosure.

"Well, I think it's a pretty queer thing, anyhow," said the narrator, setting the sewing machine whirring again; "I don't set up for no saint myself——"

"That's a good thing, 'Liza," interrupted Maggie, who had recovered somewhat; "just think how it would bother you!"

"But I *do* say," continued the other, imperturbably, "that ministers ought to act different from common folks. And when I heard about his goin's on, I jist thought it wasn't any wonder he acted so queer about the organ. Bella, let's see if this band fits. Goodness gracious, girls, speak of angels! Who's that comin' in at the front gate?"

"It's him! It's the minister!" cried Maggie, dancing wildly around, "Let's go an' ask him how Miss Thingy-me-bob-with-the-stroke-in-the-middle-of-her-name is!"

"For pity's sake!" cried Mrs. Hamilton, an ejaculation of no particular meaning, but one she always used under unusual excitement.

"Bella, run an' show him into the settin' room, while I wash my hands out o' this bread. Who'd a' thought of him comin' here this mornin' an' us jist talkin' about him!"

"Mercy me, mother! I can't go to the door in this wrapper. Send somebody else; Jess, you look all right."

"Yes, Jess, you trot out an' show him in. Tell him the President of the Ladies' Aid's here, in a most pious frame of mind, and she'd like to hear him play the bangjo and sing the other Joe—'Old Black Joe,' or whatever you call him, and maybe he'll dance the 'Highland Fling,' too!"

"Maggie!" implored her mother. "He'll hear you! There's the knocker!"

The minister's sudden appearance put an abrupt termination to Miss Cotton's gossip, but the story did not end there. Jessie concluded for the time, that, though a minister, Mr. Egerton must be something of a flirt, and as Donald was now repentant she soon found no time to bestow upon his rival. The young minister missed the girl's pleasant companionship, but he soon discovered that there was much greater trouble ahead of him. The story of his musical attainments in his college days rolled through Glenoro, gaining in bulk as it progressed. For, contrary to Miss Cotton's warning but quite in accord with her expectations, the tale leaked out. Bella told it to Wee Andra, who told "the boys" at the corner. Syl Todd rehearsed it before Coonie the next morning, and that was all that was necessary. Coonie embellished it to suit himself, and produced such a work of art that he shocked Mrs. Fraser beyond speech when he delivered it to her at the top of the hill.

By the time it reached the Oa it was to the effect that in his college days Mr. Egerton had been a very wild and dissolute youth. Glenoro might not have objected to a thoroughly reformed villain, but this young man's gay conduct left them in doubt whether at heart he was any better now than in the past. Old Andrew Johnstone, who had been somewhat mollified by the young man's action in regard to the organ, was once more aroused. At first he paid no heed to the story, for his son had told it to him. Wee Andra did not think it necessary to repeat it verbatim; he was rather vague concerning details, but extremely serious. Some tale Liza Cotton had heard, he explained. It was quite true, he feared, something or other about his playing a fiddle and dancing, far worse than Sandy Neil had ever been guilty of, for this was in a theatre. Wee Andra knew the word theatre was to his father a synonym for the bottomless pit. "Mebbe the minister had been an actor once." Wee Andra hoped, for the sake of the Church, that it wasn't true.

"Ah, ye tale-bearer!" cried his father with a withering contempt, which could not quite hide his perturbation. "It's a fine pack ye meet every night in the Glen! Their only thought is to hear or tell some new thing, let it be false or true! Ye canna' even keep yer ill tongues aff a meenister o' the Gospel!"

"But this is true, father," declared the young man seriously. "'Liza Cotton saw him herself; you can ask her, if you don't believe me. Man!" he continued, growing frivolous again, "it'll be fine here next winter if he plays the fiddle! Sandy Neil's goin' to ask him to learn him some new dance tunes!"

"Ah, ye irreverent fool!" shouted his father, rising up from the dinner table where this conversation had been held. "Man, ye an' yon Neil pack neither fear God nor regard man! Get oot o' ma' sight!"

Wee Andra, having wisely deferred his last shot until his dinner was finished, obeyed his father's injunction with alacrity, and went off to the fields, consumed with unfilial mirth.

Meantime the subject of all this discussion was not oblivious to the fact that some strange undercurrent of feeling was working against him. Coonie was the instrument used to make a reality out of the intangible thing.

The mail-carrier was coming slowly down the hill one September morning with hanging head and sullen mien. Eliza Cotton had been sewing down on the Flats for over a week and he had not had any fun for a long time. He was just sweeping the valley with his green eyes like a huge spider in search of prey, when he caught sight of a tempting fly. The young minister was coming up the leaf-strewn path by the roadside. He was just turning in at the McNabbs' gateway, when Coonie pulled up. He had brought a bundle from Lakeview for the blacksmith's wife with his accustomed grumbings, and had intended to fling it over the gate, as he passed, in the hope that it contained

something breakable. But now he recognised in it an instrument in the hand of Providence to give him the long-wished-for speech with the minister.

"Good-mornin'!" he called, rather crustily, for Coonie affected good manners before no one, no matter what was his aim. "Will you hand this bundle to the Missus in there, if you're goin'. It's some o' the fool truck I've got to lug across the country for weemen."

Mr. Egerton stepped towards the buckboard, and Coonie grinned as he saw the brilliant polish of his boots disappear in the grey dust of the road.

"Hope you're likin' Glenoro," he said as he handed out the parcel.

John Egerton met the unaccustomed friendliness of the mail-carrier with the utmost cordiality. "Oh, yes, very well indeed, thank you!" he answered, but without the enthusiasm he would have displayed a couple months previous.

"Awful place for talk," replied Coonie righteously. "Never saw the likes. If a fellow's ever done anythin' in his life he shouldn't a' done, cried too much when he was a baby, or anythin' like that, they'll find it out. S'pose you'll find they're rakin' up all the things you ever did?"

John Egerton looked at the questioner keenly. He was not sufficiently acquainted with this queer specimen to be able to answer him according to his folly; so he said curtly, "I am perfectly willing they should, Mr. Greene; I never did anything I am ashamed of."

Coonie's face expressed profound astonishment, not unmixed with gentle reproof. "Is *that* so? Glad to hear it, sir, glad to hear it." He shook his head doubtfully as he spoke, and rode away, his shoulders drooping suspiciously. He was in such good humour that seeing some of the Hamilton girls on the veranda, he drew in all the breath he was capable of and bawled, "Say, which o' yous girls is goin' to marry the minister? I hear you're all after him!"

There was a chorus of smothered shrieks and a sudden vanishing of whisking skirts within the doorway, and having satisfied himself that Mr. Egerton must have heard, Coonie swung his whip round old Bella and clattered up to the post-office in high glee. And Duncan Polite from his watchtower on the hilltop witnessed his meeting with the minister and prayed that the young servant of his Master might be speaking to Coonie of things eternal.

John Egerton returned to his study in deep annoyance. He now realised certainly that someone was circulating slanderous tales about him, tales that had caused Jessie Hamilton to avoid him. His thoughts instantly reverted to Donald. He had noticed him and Jessie strolling along the river bank nearly every evening lately; probably he was filling the girl's mind with disagreeable untruths regarding her pastor. He believed young Neil capable of it. The knowledge of his perfect innocence in the past only served to increase his anger at anyone who had dared to malign him. He waited until four o'clock and then went up to the schoolmaster's house and demanded an explanation.

Mr. Watson confessed all he knew, making the story as much like the original as possible. It was not Donald but 'Liza Cotton that had told it, he explained. At first the victim of the tale could have laughed at the absurdity of it all, it seemed so trivial. But that did not explain why Jessie Hamilton had so suddenly preferred Donald to him.

"Are you sure that's all, Watson?" he demanded, "absolutely all?"

"Well—," the schoolmaster hesitated, but he was the minister's slave and could deny him nothing. "There was something more, about your being engaged. They've even got the lady's name; the post-mistress indorsed it, too. Aren't they a pack of jackals, anyhow!"

The young shepherd went home without denying this imputation against his flock. He was overcome by a feeling of impotent rage against everyone in Glenoro. Did ever mortal man have such a position to fill? He must be all things to all men. He must have the inspiration of his grandfather in the pulpit, and the piety of Mr. Cameron in the home; he must be a hail-fellow-well-met with every country bumpkin who came under his notice, and he must have the manner of a judge pronouncing death, to meet with the approval of his elders. He must not pay attention to any particular young lady, and yet he must dance attendance upon all; he must have the gift of tongues in the Oa and an Irish brogue in the Flats. And just when he was pleasing the party he felt to be the most influential, and to him the

most congenial, they must turn upon him and rend him for the very qualities they most admired in him! He was exasperated beyond endurance. He would resign: yes immediately, and leave the silly, gossiping place to its fate. And then he thought how it would look before his compeers: he, John McAlpine Egerton, the pride of his year, the hope of the professors, and the most promising young man in the college, could not manage this little back-woods church for one year. And then there was Jessie. Of course he was not in love with her, he told himself, but he did want her to think well of him. She had heard about Helen, of course. It was the old story. He could not lift his hat to a girl but the whole congregation must stand waiting for him to marry her. He fairly writhed in his indignation during the night, the only night his Glenoro congregation had disturbed his slumbers, and the next morning he was no nearer a solution of his difficulties.

The poor young man was treading a hard road, one which was made all the harder because it was of his own choosing. For he had, like the foolish priests of olden times, tried to do, with carnal means, a holy task which demanded heavenly, and was suffering the naturally resulting confusion and distress. For he had forgotten that the Jehovah who demanded holy fire from Nadab and Abihu, does so even to-day; and the priest who raises unconsecrated hands to His altar must even yet hear the dread tones of the Omnipotent—"I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me: and before all the people I will be glorified."

## THE WATCHMAN'S DESPAIR

The summer was gone. The harvest days, the days of crimson and golden woods, of smooth-shaven fields, of orchards weighed down with their sweet burden, and of barns bursting with grain had come. A tingle of frost in the bracing air told that they must soon give place to winter.

One mild evening Duncan Polite sat at his shanty door, watching the sun go down behind the flaming trees. He knew the nights would soon be too chill for this pleasant pastime and he cherished each moment spent at his open door. In his sadness and anxiety, the glorious robes assumed by Nature at the sunset hour lifted, for a little, the shadow from his spirit.

But to-night the sun went down in a colourless silver glow, which prophesied winter and storms, and to Duncan the grey dreariness seemed in keeping with his feelings. For Donald had gone back to the city that day, and when he had bidden the boy farewell the old man had also parted with his great aspiration. Donald had come to him the week before, and with his usual frankness made known the fact that he could never entertain any further thought of entering the ministry, and had therefore abandoned all idea of returning to college. The sacrifice of his education was a great trial to Donald, but he could not return under a false pretence.

Duncan Polite made no appeal, uttered no reproof. He realised that he had been expecting this all summer, and he had become so accustomed to disappointments of the bitterest kind that this one did not move him as he had expected.

"It will be between your own soul and your Maker, Donal'," he said gently. "And I will not be urging you; for only the Lord must guide you to this great work." He sighed deeply and at the sight of the pain he was inflicting Donald's heart suddenly contracted.

"But you will be going back and finishing your colleging, my lad,—yes," as Donald protested vehemently, "you will be doing this for me, for my heart will be in it, and if the Lord will not be calling you to the church, you will be a good man, like your grandfather, and that will be a great thing, whatever."

Donald could not answer. Even when he came to say good-bye, he could find but few words of gratitude. But the reticent Duncan understood, and the young man went away with the fixed determination, that though he could not attain to his uncle's ambition, he would at least, with God's help, be such a man as would never bring dishonour upon Duncan Polite.

When his boy left him the brightness seemed to die out of the days for the lonely old watchman on the hilltop. He realised now how much he had hoped for and expected in the springtime, when Donald returned from college and Mr. McAlpine's grandson stood in Glenoro pulpit. When he thought of all his great hopes, he could not forbear, in the bitterness of his soul, saying to himself, as he saw around him the signs of a dying season, "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

A figure grew out of the dusk of the road, and the gate latch clicked, and a familiar form, erect and sturdy, came up the path. Duncan arose with a sensation of comfort at the sight of his friend. Andrew Johnstone never went down to the village without dropping in for a few minutes at the little shanty.

Duncan brought out a chair, and together the two old men sat at the door and watched the stars come out in the clear, pale sky, and as if they were their earthly reflections, the lights appear in the valley. Andrew puffed a while at his pipe in silence.

"So Donal's awa'" he said at length, guessing partly the reason of the weary look in his friend's face.

"Yes, oh, yes,"—Duncan's voice was like a sigh—"he would be going back to-day."

"Aye, it's jist as weel. He'll come to nae mair harm in the city than he would in yon gabblin' crew o' young folk

in the Glen. Man, Duncan, the Scripiter described them weel. They're jist naething but the cracklin' o' thorns under a pot, aye, an' yon foolish bit crater that an ill fate has gie'n us for a meenister is the lightest o' them a'. May the Lord forgie the man that disgraced Maister Cameron's pulpit an' Maister McAlpine's name!"

Duncan did not seem to have the strength to combat his friend's statements; and Splinterin' Andra sailed on, encouraged by his silence.

"Ah dinna ken what's come till the man; he acted maist strange about the bit music-boax, an' whiles Ah hoped he'd got some sense intill him. But there's nae change in him. It's a tea-meetin' or a huskin' bee, or ane o' his society meetin's ivery night. Och, for a meenister wi' the grace of God in his heart an' a hunger for souls! We hae fallen upon ill times, Duncan!"

Duncan Polite roused himself with an effort. "They will not be so bad but the Father can mend them, Andra, an' indeed it will not be like the times when your father an' mine would be praying here for the Glen."

"Ah dinna ken that," replied old Andrew morosely. "If they didna' have a meenister in thae times, to show them the way o' salvation, they didna hae a bit worldling to lead them astray."

"Oh, it may be better than we will be thinking; the young folk now are always at the church, Andra, and at the prayer meeting."

"Hooch! an' they might jist as well be awa' for a' the good they get. There's a pack o' godless young folk in the Glen that naething but the terrors o' damnation'll iver reach an' they listen to a meenister who says 'peace, peace' when there's nae peace!"

"Oh, well, indeed, indeed,"—Duncan Polite's gentle voice again stemmed the torrent—"we must jist be praying for an awakening, Andra, like our fathers would be doing. And it will be coming," he added with a sudden fire. "But I will be fearing the sacrifice."

Andrew Johnstone paused in his fierce puffing at his pipe, and turned to look at his friend. The light of the dying sun touched his white hair and his thin face and showed the sudden, mysterious, supernatural fire in his deep eyes. The matter-of-fact Scot felt a strange sensation as of the presence of some greater power.

"The sacrifice, Duncan?" he asked in a tone of surprise. "Ye ken they will na' heed the one great Sacrifice that's already been made."

"Yes, oh yes, that's jist it, Andra." Duncan's voice sank to a whisper. "They have rejected the Sacrifice and the Lord will require one from among us. It would be a message to me."

His voice died away; his eyes seemed to pierce the violet mists of the valley with prophetic power.

Andrew Johnstone was silent, oppressed by a feeling he did not understand. Duncan continued, as though speaking to himself:

"Yes, oh yes, indeed. There will be a sacrifice, and I will be fearing it! What will the Lord require? It would be the first fruits in the olden times, Andra, and I will be thinking of Donal' an' Sandy an' the lads——"

"Ah, they're jist a scandalous pack!" cried the other, relieved at again being able to pour out his feelings upon something tangible. "Yon lad o' mine's the worst o' them a' wi' his singin' an' his dancin'. It's the blue beech gad they want, ivery one 'o' them. Ah wouldna' be botherin' wi' them lads o' Betsey's, Duncan; they're a sair burden to ye!"

"I have a burden, Andra," said Duncan, after a long silence, and speaking with an effort. "But Betsey's lads will not be making it any greater. I——" he hesitated again. To the reticent Duncan Polite the confession of his heart's secret was extremely difficult. "I have a burden," he continued, "but it is the whole Glen I carry, day an' night, Andra, day an' night!"

There was a wail in the old man's voice which sent a thrill of sympathy through his old comrade.



"Yes, they will not be like they were, and the sin will be growing; the tavern is at the lake yet; and the lads will not be heeding the word of God, and I will be saying, what will be the end, what will be the end?" He paused again; his friend was gazing at him wonderingly.

"My father would be praying and watching the valley all his life, for he would be making a covenant with the Lord at the big stone over yonder; you will be minding that, Andra. But when he died, he would be leaving it to me, and when he was going he would be saying, 'Duncan, lad, remember Bethel. God hath set you as a watchman on the hilltop here, to warn every soul from the way of death; see that He doth not require the blood of a soul at your hands.' And I would be thinking, in my presumption, that I would be like my father, and that I would be worthy for this work. And the Lord would be answering my father's prayer by sending Mr. McAlpine, and I would be praying, too, for a deliverer, but I would not be worthy; and He has punished my pride. And I will be bringing all this sin and worldliness on the place."

"It's havers ye're talkin', Duncan!" cried old Andrew sharply. "It's no yer fault! If the careless an' godless willna' listen to the Gospel ye're no to blame, man!"

"Look you!" cried the old man, pointing down the dim valley with its twinkling lights. "I will be seeing this day and night, all my life, and the Lord hath put it into my heart to be a watchman of souls. I have heard Him say it, 'Son of man, I have set thee a watchman ..... and if the people be not warned, and if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hands!' ..... '*At the watchman's hands,*' mark you, Andra; and the sword of unrighteousness will be hanging over my father's Glen, and I will not be keeping my covenant!"

"Duncan!" cried his friend in alarm, "this is not right for you. The Lord doesna' lay the sins o' ithers on one man's heid. By their own deeds shall they stand or fall."

Duncan Polite shook his head slowly; he seemed scarcely to hear. "He would be showing me I was not worthy," he said, in deepest humility. "For I would not be warning the people as my father would, and I will be punished for my sin. The blessing will not be coming as in my father's time; for I will be hearing Him say, 'Bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar,' and what will it be, Andra, what will it be? The watchman will be an unfaithful servant. Oh, wae's me for a worthless vessel!"

Old Andrew's sympathy moved him to rough, quick speech. "Ye're tryin' to carry the sins o' people who must suffer for their ain, Duncan McDonald," he said, with a harshness Duncan did not misunderstand. "It's nane o' your fault, man!"

"It will be my inheritance, Andra," said the other, with quiet but firm conviction. "I would be hearing it, 'Son of man, I have set thee a watchman.' It would be a message to me."

There was a long silence, broken only by the distant sounds of the village. To the matter-of-fact Andrew Johnstone the mystic Highlander was a puzzle; but his faith and sympathy remained unabated. Duncan had never fully opened his heart before, and his friend stood awed at the depths revealed. He had little to say in reply; the elder was a man whose emotions, except that of righteous indignation, were kept suppressed. But every word of his old friend sank deep into his heart. He parted with a word of comfort.

"We mustna' forget that the Lord has us a' in His hands, Duncan," he said awkwardly, as he rose to go, feeling strange in his entirely new role of comforter to the hopeful one. "He is all-wise, an' He kens, ye mind."

"Oh, indeed yes, indeed yes." Duncan's tone was full of contrition for his late despair. "He will be a very present help in time of trouble."

But he sat at his dark little window, looking over at the place of his covenant until the shadowy, ethereal greyness of the dawn concentrated itself in a glorious bar on the eastern horizon and gradually grew into the great awakening of another day.

He had been disturbed in his meditations and prayers only once. At about midnight, a laughing crowd of young folk passed the house on their way to the village. They were returning from a husking bee. Duncan could hear their

noisy, gay chatter, and among the merriest voices he could distinguish the one that he had once hoped would call all the youth of his valley to a higher and better life.

## XI

### COALS OF FIRE

When Donald Neil left Glenoro his pastor drew a breath of relief. Donald's conduct towards him, since the day of the picnic had been above reproach, but try as he would, he could not help associating all his troubles with that young man. With his removal the minister was not surprised to find that his affairs settled down to their old happy level. The story of his youthful frivolity was dying out; when Coonie furnished a new variation of it every day, sensible people ceased to believe even the original. The young people, always ready to follow him, convinced themselves, though somewhat reluctantly, that he had acted rightly regarding the organ; and the older folk considered his conduct in that affair wise beyond his years.

Without any volition on his part he gradually drifted into his old intimacy with Jessie Hamilton. Since her reconciliation with Donald he had enjoyed very little of her company, and had missed it more than he cared to admit. Jessie admired him profoundly; the very fact of his being a minister set him immeasurably above all the other young men of her acquaintance. He must be a wonder of goodness and unselfishness, the girl felt, to give up his whole life to the service of God, and she was filled with a sublime joy to find that he deigned to single her out to assist him in his great work. Though she never dreamed of setting him above her hero, she felt compelled to admit that he must be a great deal better than Don, for Don had lately scouted the idea of being a minister. She felt herself highly privileged to be the friend of such a man. And since he was engaged to be married, there could be no harm in her being friendly with him.

Whatever mistakes John Egerton made, they were committed with the best intentions. He determined, while enjoying Jessie's friendship, to maintain a strictly impartial position among the young ladies of his congregation. But somehow fate seemed against him. The very night after Donald left there was a husking bee at Big Archie Red McDonald's in the Oa, and as he sat down in the long, noisy row of boys and girls and helped to fill the barn with laughter and dust, he found himself next to Jessie. He had never seen her look prettier, and she had never found him more entertaining. He threw himself into the work with all his might, and was so gay and so witty, that the common verdict was spoken by Big Archie Red's bigger and redder son, that "they didn't know what fun was until the minister came." He could not resist the pleasure of a walk down the great terraces in the moonlight in such pleasant company as Jessie afforded. That walk was the beginning of it; what was to be the end, all Glenoro was in a fever to know. There was no doubt of one thing; the minister was "keeping company" with John Hamilton's second girl whether his congregation liked it or not.

For a short season John Egerton experienced an uncomfortable sensation that he was not acting just rightly. This was at Thanksgiving time, when he paid his first visit to Toronto. As the train whirled him northward again, through the sunlit spaces of brown earth and blue sky, he told himself positively that he had gone too far with the little village belle, and that he must hereafter walk more circumspectly. For when he had found himself once more in the stately home of the woman he loved, and Helen, tall and beautiful, had swept into the spacious drawing-room to greet him, he realised, for the first time, what a difference lay between the queenly young woman of society and the simple little country girl who had been absorbing such a dangerously large amount of his time and thoughts. Helen, so composed, so elegantly poised, so thoroughly at home in the best social circles of the city, would be a perfect companion for him, one in every way suited to take her place at his side in the brilliant career he had mapped out for himself. Jessie would have looked out of place, he feared, in Helen's elegant home.

But when he returned, and met the Glenoro girl coming down the northern hill, her nut-brown curls dancing in the wind, her cheeks crimson from its caress, her eyes as clear and radiant as the river which flashed before her, he was forced to admit that Jessie was as perfectly in accord with her surroundings as Helen had been in the flower-scented drawing-room. He was bewildered. Was it possible, he asked himself, for a man to have two natures, quite distinct in tastes? He worried himself almost to distraction over the question; but as there was no one to answer it, he drove it from his mind by spending the evening at the Hamiltons' teaching Jessie to play chess.

And so the autumn passed very merrily for the minister of Glenoro, disturbed only by occasional doubts as to his course, until, with the opening of winter, came the Christmas holidays and Donald Neil. Duncan Polite's heart grew happy again under his boy's sunny presence. Donald's deep regret at the disappointment he was causing his

best friend made him assiduous in his attentions to Duncan. He spent so much of his time at the old shanty on the hill that the old man's cares were for the time forgotten.

Unfortunately, Donald's advent brought anything but peace in other quarters. John Egerton asked himself with keen self-reproach if it were possible that he was jealous of the young man. He could not help resenting Donald's cool manner of appropriating Jessie's time and attention. The young minister was not accustomed to being set aside in that lordly fashion. He felt it was high time that this haughty youth, who had behaved so ill to him ever since his arrival in Glenoro, was taught a lesson. He would show him that John Egerton was to be shoved aside by no man. So he steadily continued his visits to the Hamiltons', and abated not one whit his attentions to their pretty daughter.

Those were exciting days for Glenoro. Coonie was kept so busy manufacturing and spreading tales of the rivals, that he quite neglected Miss Cotton, and sometimes even forgot to linger on the road. Jessie, herself, seemed to enjoy the excitement as much as anyone. Perfectly secure in the knowledge that Donald loved her, and equally sure of her love for him, she felt there could be no harm in having "a little fun." She was carried away by the flattery, and took a foolish pleasure in encouraging both young men. She lived only in the intoxication of the moment, quite careless of the fact that she was laying up sorrow for herself as well as for others.

The winter had opened with a severe frost preceding the snow, and the Oro was a glittering sheet of ice. In the daytime the school children covered the shining expanse, and when a game of shinny was in progress Mr. Watson might ring his bell till it cracked. But in the evenings the grown-up youth of the village appropriated the pond. Every night it was black with skaters, while occasionally a group would spin away up the river under the dark, overshadowing banks.

The pond, however, was the centre of attraction. For several evenings Wee Andra had been furnishing hilarious entertainment for the village by his agonized efforts to skate. Donald had undertaken the herculean task of instructing him in the art, and no one envied him his position. For while the Glenoro giant was not utterly devoid of agility on his native element, on the ice, and crippled by skates, he was as helpless as an ocean steamship without an engine and almost as difficult to navigate. The crowd generally gave him a wide space for their gyrations, for, when Wee Andra succumbed to the forces of gravity he never managed to descend unaccompanied.

One evening the tutor called in reinforcements. It was the last night of his holidays and he did not want to spend it all on even such a faithful friend as Andrew. So Donald summoned Allan Fraser to assist him in piloting his unsteady burden to the other shore. With their pupil hanging helpless between them, the two young men staggered uncertainly along, followed by a noisy crowd, very merry, and very prodigal of advice of a highly mirth-provoking order. Between his frantic lunges the victim was vowing death and destruction to all and sundry, from his faithful teachers down, as soon as he was free from the accursed shackles. The young man's wrath was not appeased by the fact that his supporters were weak with laughter and that Bella Hamilton was skimming gaily up the river with Mack Fraser, the most expert skater on the pond.

Jessie was circling around with Maggie, waiting for Donald. She had promised him this last evening. He was to join her as soon as he had dragged his friend once more over the slippery circuit. Just as Donald turned away, the minister came skating smoothly towards her. He had just arrived. Would Miss Jessie not come up the river a little way with him? She glanced across the pond. The boys were still struggling manfully with their wobbling burden. They could not be back for some time, she reflected. Don would never know if she took just one little skate up to the school house and back. She gave the minister her hand and they glided up the winding silvery track to where the moonlight was hidden by the towering river banks.

Meanwhile, Wee Andra, goaded to desperation by his absolute lack of success and the facetious remarks which were rendering his guides weak and incompetent, resolved to give up the hopeless struggle. He shoved aside his supporting comrades fiercely, and came down upon the ice with a crash that seemed as if he had decided to end his tortures Samson-like and die with his tormentors. But fortunately the ice held.

He tore off his skates, and, hurling them in the direction whence had arisen most of the remarks upon his uncertain locomotion, leaped up and charged headlong into the ranks of the enemy.

Very much relieved, Donald skated back eagerly to Jessie. When he reached the spot where he had left her, he saw her disappearing with his rival up the glittering pathway. Donald's face grew dark with anger. He was too

indignant to consider that he had returned much sooner than she expected. He realised only that she had left him on this his last night, and for that fellow! He turned with a fierce jerk, and almost skated into Maggie. That young lady was darting wildly here and there in her efforts to elude Syl Todd. Whatever trouble Syl might have with his head, he was the perfection of nimbleness with his feet, and Maggie was almost cornered. She clutched Donald's arm.

"Oh, Don," she cried, "get me out o' this. That crazy little mosquito is after me again!"

Glad of an excuse for swift motion, Donald caught her hands and swept her forward with a force that made her gasp. Away they spun in a mad race up the river, Maggie propelled by the impulse of a wild glee, Donald by the anger that was consuming him. Neither had any thought of the direction they were taking, neither dreamed that their winged flight was to be a race with death.

A few moments earlier Jessie had declared that they must turn back. They had gone farther up the river than they had ever ventured before, and she was troubled at the thought that Donald might be waiting. John Egerton felt chagrined at her evident anxiety to return. He could not shut his eyes to the fact that Donald was very much to her, perhaps everything. "Let us cross here, and go down the other side," he suggested, wishing to prolong the pleasure. They glided out from the shadow of the overhanging cliffs, the ice ringing beneath their feet. Here the banks were close together, and a narrow strip of moonlight marked the middle of the stream. Just as they touched its silvery edge, there came a loud crackling sound. John Egerton realised with appalling suddenness that he had made a fatal mistake. With a powerful swing of his arm he sent the girl flying forward. "To the shore!" he shouted. Before Jessie could grasp his meaning she felt herself darting forward with the impetus from his arm, and at the same instant the ice beneath her companion gave way with a sickening crash, and he was engulfed in the swirling black water.

The girl's wild scream of terror was scarcely uttered when there was a rush past her; she realised as if in a dream that Maggie was beside her and that someone was darting out towards the middle of the river, grasping a stout rail. The sisters clung to each other for an instant in dumb fear, as they saw in the narrow strip of moonlight, the minister's head, just above the black hole. He was clinging desperately to the edge of the ice, which broke off now and then in his benumbed grasp. Donald shouted a word of encouragement, and laying the rail upon the ice he threw himself across it and worked cautiously forward. As he went down upon the rail there was a cry from the bank.

"Oh, Jess, Don's in too!" gasped Maggie, faint with terror. Jessie's heart stood still. In the darkness of the shadow Donald's figure was scarcely discernible to her terrified gaze.

"Oh, he's gone down," she cried; "if he drowns I'll die!" She tore herself from Maggie's grasp and shot down the stream calling for help.

As Donald reached cautiously forward and clutched the drowning man in an iron grip, Jessie's cry of terror floated out to him. He never dreamed of applying the words to himself. In the whirl of the moment he scarcely grasped their meaning. That came to him later with overwhelming force. With all his strength he was struggling to draw his burden up on the ice. But already Jessie had returned with assistance; another rail was being propelled towards the dangerous spot, another pair of strong arms were stretched out and in a few moments the young minister was dragged back, unconscious, into safety.

The next morning brought to John Egerton a vivid recollection of the last night's events. His first impulse was to get out of his bed and go straight to Donald and thank him from the bottom of his full and humble heart. But Mrs. McNabb sat at his side, sympathetic but inexorable. He was not to move out of his bed that day, she commanded; Mrs. Fraser had left instructions to that effect. The helpless prisoner appealed to Peter Junior. That young man came into the room before going to his work to see if his hero had quite recovered. "See what your mother's doing to me, Pete," he complained, half laughingly. "I'm as well as you are, and she won't let me get up. I want to see Donald. He pulled me out all alone, didn't he?"

Peter Junior was a garrulous youth of seventeen indiscreet summers. He was enthusiastic over Donald's courageous deed. "You just bet he did, Mr. Egerton!" he cried, seating his blacksmith's overalls on the minister's immaculate white counterpane, too eager to notice that his mother was telegraphing frantic disapproval. "You just bet! Mack Fraser got there in time to give a little pull, but Don did the most of it. Say! but it was fine though! All the fellows 'round said it was jist nip an' tuck for about a minit whether he'd go in himself or not!"

"It was simply splendid of him!" cried the minister warmly. "I shall never be able to thank him."

Mrs. McNabb left the room for a few minutes and her son became confidential.

"Say, though," he exclaimed sympathetically, "all the fellows was sayin' last night it must be kind o' awkward for you, havin' Don pull you out. They're all wonderin' how Jessie Hamilton'll take it."

If Mrs. McNabb had happened to take her patient's temperature at that moment she would have been highly alarmed. But it was impossible to resent Peter's blundering sympathy.

"Where's Donald?" he asked, with an effort. "I must see him."

"He went off this mornin' early. Sandy drove him to Mapletown. Don't know what he was in such a fearful rush for. Allan Fraser's goin' on the same train an' he doesn't go till the afternoon. Hello, there's Flo yellin' at me. Now, you take care o' yourself, an' do what mother tells you," he added, rising, and gazing affectionately at the young minister. "You'll soon be all right. There's been about a thousand people here this mornin' already askin' for you."

John Egerton scarcely heard the kindly words. Left alone he turned his face to the wall. He was descending the valley of bitter humiliation and regret. Donald Neil, the young man he had almost hated, had saved his life at the risk of his own, and had then gone off apparently to escape his thanks. Did the young man despise him so much then? His conscience smote him relentlessly as he went over the events of the past two weeks. How must his conduct have looked in Donald's eyes? And he the minister, the guide and example of the young men of the community. It was impossible to bear his self-accusation and lie inactive. In spite of his landlady's prayers and protests he insisted upon rising. He felt rather weak and giddy, but he got to his writing desk and there poured out his repentant soul in a letter to Donald. He thanked him humbly from the bottom of his heart for the great service he had rendered him. He hinted that if he had ever done Donald an injury, either in word or action, he was willing to make amends ten-fold. He declared that he was ready, nay anxious, to do anything or everything that Donald might suggest that would in any small way help to repay him for what he had done.

Donald was touched by the letter. It was impossible not to read the sorrow and repentance in it, not to feel its ring of truth. He pondered over it deeply. A man who could write such a letter as that could not but be honourable, he reflected. And why should he blame him for falling in love with Jessie? Indeed Donald confessed that he did not see how he could help it. And was he justified in hating the man because he had won that which he himself had lost? It was hard to be generous, but Donald's nature was so essentially honest he could not but respond to the heartfelt words. He intended to answer the letter the very next evening, but was prevented by an invitation to the home of one of his professors.

Donald was glad to escape from his own moody thoughts, so, early in the evening, he found himself packed into a layer of fellow students against the wall of the crowded drawing-room. He was listening absently to the strains of music that floated in from another room, when he felt himself clutched violently from behind. He turned to meet an elegant young man, small and dapper, who was struggling eagerly to his side. Donald recognised him as a law student whose field of labour was in society, and who went by the name of Dickey Deane.

"I say, McDonald," he whispered eagerly, when he had dragged Donald aside, "don't you hail from Glenoro, or some such place, and don't you occasionally masquerade under the title of Neil?"

Donald confessed that he was guilty on both counts.

The young man slapped him joyously upon the back. "By Jove!" he cried enthusiastically, "I've found you at last! Come along here, my Eureka; there's a young lady here waiting to fall down and worship you. Didn't you pull the Reverend Egerton out of a hole in the ice at Christmas? You close beggar, why couldn't you tell people? And Jack Egerton's your minister! Well, Jupiter, wouldn't that drive anyone to drink! You'll know all about Miss Weir-Huntley, then. She's had me doing amateur detective work for nearly a week, running down a glorious hero by the name of Neil. I didn't know you had to travel incog. Come along here; you may be a questionable character, for all I know, but she thinks you're Neptune's own son. There she is, under the lamps, the goddess in pale green. Isn't she a stunner? Don't you wish you had let the Reverend Jack go under?"

Donald's grip brought the young man's headlong progress to a sudden termination. His brain was in a whirl. The young lady's name had awakened vague memories of Glenoro gossip.

"Hold on there," he said firmly, "what are you raving about? Who is Miss Weir-Huntley anyway, and what under the canopy does she want with me?"

"Why, you unshorn, backwoods lamb, she's the belle of Toronto! She's Jack Egerton's dearly-beloved, and finally and most important of all, she's the faithful and adoring worshipper of your glorious self!"

But Donald was in no mood for levity. He looked across the heads of the crowd at the regal young woman beneath the chandelier. "Do you mean to tell me," he asked, "that she's engaged to—to marry our minister, Mr. Egerton?"

"Why, of course. Everybody knows that. She's waiting till he gets famous. Don't faint! By Jove, old fellow, I believe you're hit already! All the fellows get that way over her; I'm a chronic case myself. Cheer up; shouldn't wonder if she'd throw Jack over for you. She's awfully taken with you already, and when she sees you——" He broke off with an extravagant gesture of admiration which was not altogether feigned.

Donald did not notice him; he was asking himself why he had not let the double-dealing cad drown, but the next moment he was bowing over a beautiful, jewelled hand and a pair of dark eyes were looking unutterable gratitude into his, and Donald felt ashamed. He left her as soon as was possible without seeming rude, and went home to face the matter squarely. This man, this despicable creature who had won Jessie's affection, was playing with her. He was amusing himself making love to the little country girl while this haughty young queen held his heart. Donald was torn by conflicting emotions. Should he write to Jessie and tell her? He was too sorely hurt to do that, besides she would not listen to him. Should he write to John Egerton and tell him in a few scorching words what he thought of him? In the end he did neither, and two in Glenoro who expected to hear from him wondered at his silence.

Miss Weir-Huntley found young Mr. McDonald a difficult puzzle. She wanted to show her gratitude to the young man who had saved Jack's life, but this strange youth would have none of her favours. He refused coldly all her invitations. Donald could not be friendly towards John Egerton's betrothed; Jessie's cry was still ringing in his ears. The young lady gave him up at last, concluding that he must be a boor in spite of his fine appearance and his courage. Only once was she able to show him any attention. She was driving home in her carriage when she came upon Donald crossing the campus. She insisted upon his taking the seat at her side as far as his boarding-house. As Donald stepped from the carriage and stood on the sidewalk bowing his thanks very gravely, Allan Fraser appeared at the street door. That young man was profoundly impressed.

"My eye!" he gasped, watching the elegant equipage disappear down the street, "the Prince o' Wales and all the royal family! I say, Don, is that the girl little Deane says is all gone on you? Who is she, anyway?"

Donald turned his back upon him in disgust. "Oh, shut up, will you?" he cried, slamming the door in his friend's face.

Allan uttered a long whistle. "Hello! it's serious, all right," he said to himself. "Christmas, but isn't she a daisy! I'm glad he's got over mooning for that little Hamilton flirt, anyway!"

## XII

### JESSIE

The first great January snowfall was heralded by a leaden sky and a surly looking sunrise, and early in the forenoon down came the white flakes, thick and fast, whirling this way and that, until the valley and the surrounding hills lay pure and soft under their fairy covering.

In the afternoon Miss Cotton took her sewing, put a shawl over her head, and ran over to the Hamiltons'. She was lonely, and, besides, she had some news to tell.

"Here's 'Liza comin'," announced Maggie to the group sitting around the dining room stove. "Chuck full o' news, too, I know. I can tell by the way she's hoppin' along. Old Mother Fraser's jist gone away from there; she's been tellin' her something new about Mr. Egerton, I guess!"

She ran out to the hall and flung open the door. "Hello, 'Liza! Come along in; we're all here, Sarah'n all. It was too snowy for her to go to school. My, but you needn't bring all the snow in; leave a little outdoors for sleighin'."

"If you weren't such a lazy poke, Maggie Hamilton, you'd have a path shovelled to your gate; it looks like the track to a wigwam!"

"It's jist too bad, 'Liza," said Mrs. Hamilton as she swept the snow from her visitor's feet and skirts. "If I've told them girls once to sweep that path, I've told them a dozen times. Where's Mary Fraser been?"

"Up to see old Duncan Polite." Miss Cotton spread her cold hands over the stove, and surveyed the four girls sharply. "My, but you're pretendin' to be awful busy! An' Maggie sewin', too, as I'm alive! The poor old man's got brownkaties, she says."

Sarah covered her face with her French Grammar and giggled.

"Oh yes, smarty! You've got to snicker at somethin'. I s'pose they've learned you some new-fangled way o' sayin' it at the High School. But brownkaties is good enough for ordinary folks, an' bad enough, too. An' that's what the poor old fellow's got anyhow. They had a doctor out from Mapletown, an' Betsey Neil's been there three nights. He's had a cold all fall, Mrs. Fraser says, an' wouldn't look after it."

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Hamilton in distress. "One o' you girls must run up to-morrow with some beef-tea or something. That's too bad. Sit close to the fire, 'Liza, it's dreadful cold."

"You'd better send Jessie up with the stuff," remarked the visitor, planting two trim feet upon the stove damper. "Maybe she'll get news o' Donald."

"How d'y'e know she don't get news anyhow?" demanded Maggie.

"Well, I got some news I'll bet she never got. Don's up sides with you now, Miss Jessie!"

Jessie looked at her with a startled expression in her grey eyes.

"I don't know what you mean," she said with attempted lightness.

"Well, Mrs. Fraser told me to-day that Annie got a letter from Allan yesterday and he said Donald Neil was jist gone crazy over a city lady, a real high-flier, too, rich as a Jew, mind you; she has a carriage and she calls at the college every afternoon for my gentleman Donald and drives him home, coachman and footman and everything. Now wouldn't that kill you? I guess nobody in Glenoro'll be good enough for Don, now; he'll be gittin' stuck up, like all the other folks that take to book-learnin'"—she cast a meaning glance at Sarah, who smiled good naturedly. She rather enjoyed being considered proud of her educational attainments.

"Well, what do you think o' your old beau now, Jessie?" continued the visitor.



Jessie's cheeks were very pink, but she returned Miss Cotton's gaze steadily. "Why, I guess he's got a right to do anything he likes," she said indifferently.

"Well I should hope so, specially when you've been carryin' on with the minister all fall. I guess Don thought two could play at that game." She looked sharply at the girl, in some doubt. She really hoped she did not care, for 'Liza Cotton's heart was a kindly one, and she never told her tales from malice, but from a sheer inability to be quiet. "You'd better look out you don't lose both your beaux," she added. "You and the minister don't seem so chummy since Christmas. Did you have a tiff?"

Jessie's eyes sparkled, and the garrulous visitor knew she had gone too far. "I think that's my affair," said the girl quietly.

Miss Cotton laughed easily. "There now, you needn't get mad over it. Goodness me, I always thought you were the good-tempered one o' the family; you'll soon be as bad as Sarah for firin' up."

Sarah flew to defend herself, and incidentally to establish more firmly her reputation as the bad-tempered member of the household, and in the war of words which ensued Jessie's embarrassment was forgotten. Mrs. Hamilton sat and stitched placidly through the altercation, breaking in at last to ask if Mrs. Fraser had said Duncan Polite could eat anything. There was some chicken broth in the house she could send up with Babbie when she came home from school.

Jessie slipped away, when the conversation turned from her affairs and crept upstairs. So this was the reason of Don's silence. Someone else had her place in his heart. She realised with a sharp pang that it was her own fault. She had trifled with his love, because the minister's attentions flattered her, and now she was reaping her just reward. It was the first real trial of the girl's bright, easy life. But she came of a stock of pioneers, hardy folk, accustomed to shoulder the adversities of life, and she bore her burden bravely. Only her mother knew that the news of Donald meant more to her than wounded vanity.

Every day during Duncan Polite's illness, Mrs. Hamilton, as was her custom in all cases of sickness in the village, sent one of the girls to his house with some tempting delicacy, jellies or custards or gruel or beef-tea, the best she could produce. Jessie had refused positively, from the first, to take her turn at these errands of mercy; though she had always been very willing under such circumstances in the past. But 'Liza Cotton's words had aroused a feeling of delicacy regarding a visit to Donald's uncle.

But one day she found it impossible to refuse. Sarah and the little girls were at school, Bella and Maggie were away, and her mother was preparing to make the snowy journey up to Duncan Polite's house, when Jessie interfered. She would go this once, she said, but never again.

The morning was clear and bright, the world a dazzling vision of white, with here and there intense blue shadows. Above, stretched a cloudless dome of the same deep azure. The air was mild, and the girl let her dark coat fly open, revealing a jaunty scarlet blouse; her cheeks were pink and her eyes bright from the exercise. So it was no wonder that as she passed the McNabbs' a pair of admiring eyes watched her, their owner wishing he could find some plausible excuse for going up the hill that morning. But it was Friday, and his sermon was not yet commenced.

Duncan Polite saw Jessie coming. He was able to sit up at his window by this time and look over his little hedge of blooming geraniums at the glittering white world. One of the little girls had always come formerly, and he had been able to reward her with a wonderful story of the fairies that danced on the heather in the old land, or of Bonnie Prince Charlie, or some other charming personage. But this young lady was different. Duncan had scarcely spoken to her since the days she used to sit on his knee and have her turn at the stories. But he had long known that she was Donald's sweetheart, and he saw her come with feelings of mingled embarrassment and joy.

He arose quickly with all the natural courtesy that had earned him his name, and had the door wide open, before Jessie reached the steps. "Oh indeed, indeed, it would be too kind of you and your mother to be troubling," he said deprecatingly, as he took the little tin pail. "Come away in, come away!"

"You should not come to the door when you are sick, Mr. McDonald," said the girl kindly. "Are you better to-day?"

"Oh, yes indeed, yes indeed, I will jist be all right," cried Duncan, sweeping the snow from her small, neat boots. "And now you will jist be sitting by the fire for a rest after your long walk."

His tone was so eager that Jessie's heart was touched. She took the proffered seat, and Duncan in his pleasure and overwhelming hospitality began to cram the stove full of wood.

"Oh, I'm not cold, Mr. McDonald," she said, "not a little bit. Why, I was *hot* coming up the hill, the sun is so strong."

Duncan smiled at the bright, beautiful face. "Ah, it will be good to be young," he said, sinking into his old rocking chair again. "Oh yes, indeed. Then you will be taking off your things for a little?" he questioned nervously.

The girl slipped off her jacket and fur cap, and sat by the window, her curly head and her bright dress making a pretty picture in the bare little room. Duncan regarded her with a wistful admiration.

"Oh yes, yes," he sighed. "You will be minding me o' the times when Betsey would be a lass, and my father and mother would be here."

Jessie's soft grey eyes were full of sympathy. "I suppose everything has changed for you since then, hasn't it?"

Duncan nodded. How sadly things had changed for him, the girl could not guess.

"Father always says," she continued, "that people aren't nearly as good now as they were in the old times, when Mr. McAlpine used to come here. He says we young folks have too good a time." She gave a little half-apologetic laugh.

Duncan looked up suddenly with a feeling of joyful surprise. He had not dreamed that this bright young creature would understand or appreciate his troubles, but she had touched the keynote at once. His sensitive nature opened to sympathy as a morning glory to the sunrise: his reticent tongue was immediately loosened.

"I will be afraid that sometimes us old folk will not be giving the young ones the credit they deserve," he said indulgently. "But indeed the lads and lasses in the Glen will be doing work in the church we would never be having in my young days. There will be this new society, whatever, the Christian Endeavour."

Jessie looked out through the red and green of the geraniums at the brilliant blue and silver of the landscape. She knew that the purpose of the new society was above reproach, but somehow she could not quite understand just what good it did. "Yes," she said vaguely.

"And you will be a member of the church now," Duncan ventured gently. "And I would be very glad to see all the young folk that would be coming to the Lord's table at the last communion, for it will be a very holy consecration to God."

Jessie felt her cheeks growing hot; she looked down at the bare, white floor.

"It will be a fine thing to be giving up the life to the Lord's work in youth," continued Duncan softly.

The girl looked up with an effort. She knew that her joining the church had had nothing whatever to do with giving up her life to the Lord's work. She had taken that step at the last communion because Bella and a large number of the young people of the church were doing the same, and because she had arrived at the time of life when, in her opinion, everyone was supposed to join a church; and most of all, because Mr. Egerton had asked her. *He* had never said anything about a holy consecration. She knew her catechism perfectly and could repeat whole chapters of the Bible; she had never done anything wicked in her life, not even what *she* considered wicked, and she had supposed these qualifications were sufficient. Mr. Egerton had given her the impression that he had thought so at least. Duncan Polite's conception of the act seemed entirely different.

"I know we all joined the church, but it didn't seem,—I didn't think it was like that," she faltered. "I don't think I'm any different."

"Oh, indeed, you will be a good lassie, yes indeed, oh, yes! But when the Lord calls His chosen to take of His broken body and His shed blood"—he whispered the sacred words tenderly—"He will be expecting them to do much for Him."

"I don't think I'm like that. I know I'm not," burst out the girl. "Mr. McDonald"—she looked at him, suddenly resolved to ask him some questions that puzzled her. She had never been able to bring herself to ask her father, and Mr. Egerton would not understand. "Is it wrong for all us girls and boys to belong to the church, and just go on acting the same? I—I like nice clothes, and fun, and—and it's just the same now, I don't see any difference." She stopped, overcome.

Duncan's brown eyes were radiating kindness. "My child," he said tenderly, "I will not be wise to tell you these things, but——" he hesitated a moment and a tenderer light came over his face; his voice sank to a whisper—"but if you would be having the *vision*, the vision of Calvary; if you would be seeing how the Lord Jesus put away His life for us, you would be knowing then that His work is all and these other things will be just nothing."

Jessie's bright head drooped, her eyes filled with tears. She was looking at her half-hearted, worldly interest in the work of the Master in comparison with Duncan Polite's devotion. The old man's words were not all; piety creates its surrounding atmosphere, stronger than any verbal expression of it, and Duncan's manner said far more than his tongue. He saw her emotion and with his usual tact changed the conversation to lighter subjects. Jessie's face grew brighter after that, and she chatted away unreservedly until it was time for her to leave. Just before she rose, Duncan lifted his old leather-bound Bible from the table and glanced at her timidly. "Would you be minding if I would read jist a word?" he inquired eagerly.

"Oh, I should like it so much," said the girl gently.

Duncan opened the Book reverently, his face glowing; then he paused and looked at her again. "Oh, but it is you will be the fine reader, and my eyes will not be so good, indeed, since this cold, and maybe you would jist be reading this now, and I would be much obliged, whatever."

Jessie took the Bible, and read where he had indicated. It was the sweet story of Mary, who sat at the Master's feet. She had read it many times before, but it had never seemed quite the same, for, when she finished, Duncan Polite said softly, "Yes, that will be it, oh yes, indeed, jist to sit at His feet and learn of Him."

That was the first of many visits the girl paid the old man. Duncan never left his own house, though his sister begged him to spend the winter with her. But the watchman must not leave his post, he felt, and his loneliness was more than compensated for by Jessie's visits. Through his long, weary convalescence the girl came regularly two or three times a week, with the dainties her mother was in the habit of lavishing upon the sick. At first her sisters teased her about her sudden change of mind regarding visiting Duncan Polite. Maggie declared she liked to go because she had to pass the McNabbs' and would likely see the minister, but Sarah gave it as her opinion that she went to get the latest news of Donald.

Jessie paid no heed to their raillery beyond smiling enigmatically. They little guessed her real motive. She looked forward to her visits eagerly as the winter progressed. Gradually her heart was opening to the old man's teaching. He said very little, but every word he uttered the girl carried away in her heart. The visit always ended by their reading a few verses of the Bible together, and one day, before she left, Duncan laid his hand gently upon her curls and said softly, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee!" and she went away feeling that a benediction had fallen upon her.

At the time of these visits to Duncan Polite, Jessie was studying, with the other members of the Christian Endeavour Society, the life of Christ. The meetings were well attended, and Mr. Egerton gave them a most graphic and interesting account of the historical and picturesque aspect of the wondrous season upon earth of the Son of the Most High. But Jessie went up to the little shanty on the hilltop for the spiritual side. Under Duncan's gentle, humble dealing with the divine mystery, the girl gradually came to comprehend, in a measure, what Duncan had termed "the vision." She understood, at last, the meaning of the Great Sacrifice, beside which all possible human sacrifice stands poor and mean. She caught a gleam of the light from Calvary, and in its searching effulgent blaze all the faint glitter of worldly achievement grew dim and disappeared.

Among other things which she saw for the first time in their proper light was her association with the young minister. She knew now that only her poor pride in the envy she excited had made her desire his attentions. She looked at the man himself with new eyes, and though slow to blame another in her new-found humility, she could not help thinking how different it might have been with her and Donald had their pastor had more of the spirit of Duncan Polite.

But she did not criticise him; her own idle, careless life she found too full of faults to censure another. That life was gradually being turned to higher aims, for a new Jessie Hamilton had been born that winter, and one who was destined to help fulfil the old watchman's great desire.

### XIII

#### THE CANADIAN PATRIOTIC SOCIETY

The winter passed swiftly and merrily in Glenoro. Since the accident on the river skating had fallen into disfavour, but the minister loved coasting, someone discovered, and the young people turned the south hill into such a splendid slide that the teams could scarcely get down to the mill with their saw-logs. Then there were parties and tea-meetings, and the weekly meetings of the many organisations in connection with the church. The young pastor and his youthful friends lived in a constant whirl.

This state of affairs brought down many a wrathful condemnation from the ruling elder upon the heads of the young minister and all his generation. Andrew Johnstone had well-nigh lost all hope of the young man's ever accomplishing any good. But he and Duncan Polite still clung to one straw. Every winter the Methodists held a series of revival services, and this year the Presbyterian Church was to be asked to join them. Such friendly relations had been established between the two denominations since Mr. Egerton's arrival in Glenoro that this was at last possible. Andrew and his friend looked to this period of special services as an anchor in the great tide of worldliness which, to them, seemed to be sweeping away their church.

But when the Methodist minister approached his brother clergyman with the proposition, Mr. Egerton was compelled to give a reluctant refusal. He was grieved at his inability to help Mr. Ansdell in any undertaking, but he had already promised all his spare time and energy to a scheme of the schoolmaster's. Early in the winter Mr. Watson had dropped into the minister's study, his small, thin face full of eagerness.

"Look here, Mr. Egerton," he said, tilting his chair back against the wall, "let's get up a patriotic society this winter; it'll keep things lively."

The young clergyman was already beginning to realise that he had very little time for reading or study and scarcely relished the thought of additional engagements. "What should you do at the meetings, for instance?" he asked.

"Oh, stir up a spirit of loyalty. I'm not just sure how; but you'd be sure to find a way."

"Why not make it a literary society, and study one of the poets; don't you think that would be better?"

Mr. Watson did not look satisfied. "I don't believe you're half patriotic," he said banteringly, "but I'll make a bargain with you. I know a literary society would be a good thing, and I'll go in for it head and feet, if you'll promise to call it the Canadian Patriotic Society, and let's talk about Canada for ten minutes or so before you begin on your poets."

John Egerton was rather pleased with the idea. Certainly young Canadians were grievously ignorant of their own country, and a literary society would supply a great want.

So the Canadian Patriotic Society was duly organised and from the first was a great success.

But a quiet weekly meeting at a private house was not sufficient for the insatiable energy and fervid patriotism of Mr. Watson. He decided that the Canadian Patriotic Society must come before the public. His last attempt at a patriotic demonstration had met with such humiliating disaster that he had abandoned all such projects for a time, but here was a grand opportunity to educate the public. They would give a patriotic concert that very winter and astonish all the township of Oro. Of course the society was ready for anything and was soon plunged in monster preparations for the event. It was at this juncture that Mr. Egerton was asked to assist in the period of revival services. But this new society and its concert completely filled his spare time, so the two weeks of special meetings, when the old minister laboured faithfully to bring souls to Christ, were carried on without help from his young confederate. The attendance was smaller than on former occasions, and the interest seemed faint. John Egerton was sorely troubled. He felt he could not be blamed, and yet his conscience rebuked him.

In spite of its immense popularity the Canadian Patriotic Society met with some opposition. As the minister was

taking such an active part in it, Duncan Polite watched its development with a faint hope. But Splinterin' Andra soon dispelled his illusions. "It's jist some more o' his balderdash to keep young folk oot o' their beds at night," he declared bitterly. "Man, if the buddie'd be faithful to his Maister, he needna' fear for his country!"

Old Mark Middleton, whose forebears were United Empire Loyalists, was another active dissenter. Mark's ancestry placed him in a position to speak with authority upon such subjects and his opinion had some weight with the community. He declared that the whole thing savoured of rebellion, and he, for one, would be very glad if he were sure the schoolmaster and the Presbyterian minister weren't hatching some Irish plot against the Government.

Coonie found this a tempting morsel, and delivered it duly to the schoolmaster the first Saturday he found him at the corner. "Awful sorry to hear about the row you'n the minister are gettin' into," he remarked sympathetically, as he crawled into the store, and pulled his poor, half-frozen limbs up to the stove.

Mr. Watson turned sharply from the contemplation of the pound of butter Mrs. Watson had cautioned him to bring home, and stared at the speaker.

"What on earth do you mean?" he inquired incredulously.

"Why, didn't you hear?" Coonie's tone was a master-piece of pained amazement. "Why, old Middleton's kickin' like a steer about this patriotic concert you're gettin' up. Says he bets it's another Mackenzie business all over, and he'll have the law if it ain't stopped. An' Splinterin' Andra says that a minister o' the Gospel who——"

"Oh, go along, Coonie!" cried the other, much relieved. "You're surely old enough to know that Mr. Egerton's got more sense than to pay attention to anything quite so pre-historic as Splinterin' Andra! And as for old Mark," he continued impressively, "you can tell him, from me, that if there'd been a few more concerts like this long ago, William Lyon Mackenzie couldn't have raised a rebellion and wouldn't have wanted to if he could."

Coonie shook his head doubtfully. "Fraid it would only make trouble. Mark says it's all danged nonsense. Awful language that old man uses!" He sighed piously, and, lighting his pipe, proceeded to make himself comfortable.

"Well, I'll tell you one thing," he continued seriously, putting his feet on the top of the stove and expectorating into the open damper at a perilous distance, "I'll tell you one thing. This here dispenser o' religion you've got in this town tries to run too many shows at once. He's tryin' to keep the Gospel trade hummin' an' have his eye on all the fun that's goin' at the same time. I ain't up in the religion business myself; there ain't likely to be any wings sproutin' 'round where I'm at, but I can tell a minister from an alligator seven days in the week, an' without specs, too, an' the first time I laid eyes on that chap you've got now, I knew he wasn't the sort that made folks hop along to Heaven any faster than they wanted to go."

"You certainly ought to be a competent judge of a minister's duty, Coonie," replied the schoolmaster sarcastically.

Mr. Basketful paused in the operation of weighing the butter. "Coonie's right," he said, with conviction. "Mr. Egerton can preach, but 'e's not wot I call spiritually minded."

"That's it!" cried Coonie. "That's the word I'm rummagin' for; he's a sort o' sleigh-ridin', tea-meetin' parson. I didn't take much stock in old Cameron when he was livin'; you couldn't take a chaw o' tobacco without him knowin' about it, but all the same he was the genu-*ine* article. It was uncomfortable times for sinners when he was 'round. This chap's different grade; he needs a label on him."

Mr. Watson went out, banging the door in disgust, and Coonie kept himself warm for many a mile past Glenoro, chuckling over his joke.

But the schoolmaster was too enthusiastic to be depressed by such ignorant opposition. He felt that he was creating an epoch in Canadian history; he was stirring up a sentiment which would permeate the whole country from Halifax to Vancouver and from the international boundary to the north pole, a sentiment which would fire the lukewarm blood of this people and bring glory and honour upon Canada and George Watson.

If he had remained long enough in Glenoro, he might have witnessed a condition of affairs which would have surprised him. Could he have seen the boys he had taught in the school, grown to men, pushing and jostling each other in their jealous and frantic efforts to be of the glorious chosen few who marched away to uphold the old flag on the African veldt, could he have foreseen that the disloyal young Neil, who had been the first on that shameful Dominion Day to throw away his flag and desert his country, would one day face a whole regiment for Queen and Empire, he might have confessed that he had mistaken British reticence for lack of sentiment. But the schoolmaster, though whole-souled and well-meaning, was not by any means far-seeing, so he went on stirring up a spirit of loyalty with an energy worthy of a better cause.

Through it all John Egerton was dissatisfied and worried. He felt positively grieved over the loss of an opportunity to show his appreciation of Mr. Ansdell's friendship, and he knew that the elder people of his own congregation blamed him. He had another trouble, too, which he scarcely confessed to himself; it was the strange, subtle change in Jessie Hamilton. When Donald ignored his humble letter, his repentant mood had slowly vanished. He told himself the young man was all he had suspected, and not worth his trouble. He would have resumed his attentions to Jessie with a clear conscience, but was met by a gentle but firm opposition. He was puzzled and annoyed by the change in her. She was as sweet and friendly towards him as of old, but her manner of timid deference seemed to have changed to an intangible air of superiority. The young pastor could not know that she had passed far beyond him on the spiritual road, and the distance between them bewildered him. He began to realise too, to his chagrin, that she was avoiding him. No matter what pains he took to seek her company, she managed, in some mysterious way, to elude him. He wondered gloomily how much Donald Neil had to do with the change.

But soon all personal affairs had to be set aside, for the date of Mr. Watson's great celebration had arrived. Whatever diverse opinions there may have been in the community regarding the aims of the patriotic society, all seemed unanimous in regard to attending their entertainment. The concert was to be given in the Methodist Church, while tea was served previously in the Temperance Hall across the street.

At an early hour eager spectators began to pour in.

Inside the hall, waiters, struggling through the crowd around the tables, left more cake and pie upon the human obstructions around them than they carried to the hungry folks already seated. Turkey, sandwiches, cake and pie disappeared as if by magic, as the long tables were filled again and again.

Waiters flew, dishes rattled, babies cried and everyone talked and laughed and made a noise. And every five minutes the door would fly open, creaking on its frosty hinges, to admit a rush of chill, fresh air and still another crowd.

The cooking had been done on a tremendous scale, and the results were beyond praise. The North and the South had "played a drawn game," Wee Andra declared; for even Mr. Egerton, seated with the Methodist minister at the head of the longest and most heavily-laden board, was unable to detect one slight shade of greater excellence in one than the other and ate Northern pies and Southern tarts with an impartial relish.

He and Mr. Watson succeeded after supper in extricating themselves from the hungry crowd. They crossed the street to where the windows of the church gleamed warm and bright.

"Well, Watson," said the minister encouragingly, "the crowd is here at any rate, whether it's a patriotic one or not."

"Yes siree!" The schoolmaster was in high spirits. "If it's not patriotic now, I'll bet my head it will be before we're done with them. This is all owing to our efforts!"

But John Egerton did not share his enthusiasm. He was watching morosely three figures that were just disappearing into the church ahead of him. They were Jessie and her father and mother. She had formed the habit lately of going out only with her parents, and when they remained at home she stayed with them, much to their wonder and delight. When he entered the church he found her safely ensconced between the two, and knew there was no opportunity for him to gain a word with her.

"Here comes the choir!" announced a voice from the back, as the broad shoulders of Wee Andra heralded their

approach. That august body walked leisurely to their seats of honour in a bower of evergreens behind the organ, secure in the knowledge that the meeting could not possibly commence without them. They were soon settled in their places, and Syl Todd found to his unspeakable delight that he was seated next to Maggie Hamilton. His father and mother, seated in the front row, nudged each other in ecstasy at the sight of their son sitting up there on the platform with the minister and the schoolmaster and looking far handsomer and better dressed than either of them.

But poor Syl did not derive as much enjoyment from his proud position as did his parents. Maggie was extremely difficult. "Ain't the decorations lovely," he remarked, by way of a propitiatory opening of conversation. "If it hadn't a' been for you, Maggie, them flags wouldn't a' been hung near so graceful."

His divinity jerked herself round impatiently. "Oh, my goodness, I wish something else had been hung besides flags," she said with heartless meaning.

Syl laughed nervously. "Oh Maggie, you are such a tease! I never seen such a monkey of a girl as you. Look here what I got you." He handed her a little white candy tablet on which was printed a sentimental inscription. "I bought three pounds of them congregational lozengers at Basketful's to-day jist for you."

Maggie glared at the unoffending piece of confectionery, but did not deign to touch it. "My, but you must have thought I could eat like a horse!" she remarked scathingly. "You can give them to Julia Duffy," and she flounced out of the seat to another at some distance, leaving Syl to endure an evening of tormenting doubt as to whether he might see her home.

Mr. Watson came bustling over nervously to confer with the choir leader. "The crowd's nearly all here, do you think we'd better start, Andrew?"

"Jist as you like," was the reply. Wee Andra was of too huge proportions to be moved by any excitement. "There's Mr. Thomas Hayes, M. P., no less, comin' in at the door now!" he added, stretching his neck to get a view of the other end of the church and sending a rather unstable cedar tree and a deluge of flags crashing upon the organ. "Gosh, I've pulled down the whole shootin' match!"

Mr. Hayes was the Member of Parliament for Glenoro's constituency, as well as the Burke of the Flats, Oro's Irish settlement. He was the only orator honoured with an invitation to address the meeting. Mr. Watson hurried down the aisle to welcome the distinguished visitor, amid a hail-storm of conversation lozenges. When he had been brought to the platform and duly honoured everything was in readiness.

Glenoro custom demanded that all such affairs should be opened with prayer, but in his capacity of chairman, Mr. Watson did not see fit to call upon either clergyman to perform that ceremony; the programme was long enough, he reflected, and the praying could be dispensed with easier than anything else. The audience settled into expectant silence as Mr. Egerton arose and in a few well-chosen words explained the double mission of the Patriotic Society, and the aim of its entertainment. His audience listened attentively, and, judging from the applause that followed, seemed to be quite in sympathy with the movement. It is true that some of the babies, not yet old enough to realise their glorious heritage, occasionally interrupted his remarks, and one disloyal youth shied a "congregational lozenger" across the room; but the speaker did not appear at all disturbed.

The programme which followed was one calculated to arouse the most sluggish soul present. The choir sang quite thrillingly "The Maple Leaf Forever"; the mouth organ and concertina band played "Upon the Heights of Queenston" four times through without stopping to take breath; while the boys at the back of the church kept time vigorously with their feet. During the performance Sim Basketful made several ineffectual excursions to that abandoned region to demand order, but was met by a fusillade of confectionery. Wee Andra roared out "The Battle of the Baltic" at the top of his prodigious lungs, and was thunderously encored. The fact that in his exit he once more knocked over the evergreen tree with its burden of flags detracted not one whit from either his or Nelson's glory. Then Annie Fraser played "The Battle of Waterloo" on the organ with an execution quite worthy of the carnage of that event. The only drawback to it was that Sandy Neil, who had been detailed to announce each different part of the action, and apprise the audience of the fact that certain sounds meant "cannonade," while others symbolised the "cries of the wounded," as usual allowed his spirit of mischief to carry him away. He sang out the names of the different movements in the long-drawn-out tone associated with "calling-off" at a dance, much to the horror of the staid portion of the audience. Mrs. Fraser told 'Liza Cotton afterwards that it just gave her a turn with her heart to



see her Annie sitting right up there in the midst of such iniquity.

Crooked Sandy McDonald, who was as straight as a pine stem, but who lived under the misfortune of his ancestor's distinguishing appellation, and who, next to Syl Todd, was the best elocutionist in the neighbourhood, recited "The Charge of the Light Brigade"; and though he said "Half a leak" owing to the inconvenience of a Highland accent, he rendered the selection with such vim that his efforts brought down the house, and a deluge of lozenges.

Such a warlike programme had never before been heard in the township of Oro. The very air seemed to smell of gunpowder. The schoolmaster was electrified. He sprang to his feet almost before the Light Brigade had ceased charging, and announced in a voice high and tremulous with emotion that the auspicious moment had come, for they were now to be favoured with the great feature of the evening, a patriotic address by Mr. Thomas Hayes, Member of Parliament!

Mr. Hayes arose with the ease and deliberation of an old election campaigner. He was a tall, lean man, with bright penetrating eyes, and a delightful suspicion of an Irish brogue, a man with hands horny from the plough and a brain that belongs only to the rulers of men. He represented a political party that had its stronghold in Glenoro and its impregnable fortress in the Oa; so he took his place upon the platform amid uproarious stamping and cheering.

Canada could not well have had a better champion. He spoke in the most glowing terms of his beloved land, of her wonderful scenery, her healthful climate, her free, hardy people, her glorious future. He reeled off enough information about her mines, her fisheries, her agricultural resources and her manufactures to fill an encyclopedia. He dilated upon the beauty and grandeur of Canadian scenery. He stood his audience upon the heights of Quebec and showed them the whole panorama of their wonderful country in one sentence. He swept from ocean to ocean; he swam the great lakes and sailed down innumerable rivers; he scooped out a canal to Port Nelson and shot across Hudson's Bay; he rolled across the prairies; he hewed down the forest belt; he dug gold in British Columbia; and, finally, he climbed the highest snow-capped peak of the Rocky Mountains and poured down from its dizzy heights the torrents of his eloquence; and when his bewildered hearers recovered from the delightful deluge, they found that the exponent of the Canadian Patriotic Society had skipped across the Atlantic and was thundering forth upon the wonders and beauty of Ireland!

This was a long way from Canada and the aims of the Canadian Patriotic Society, and the chairman's face lost its rapt look. John Egerton hid a smile behind the pulpit desk and that part of the audience that was of Irish extraction applauded uproariously. When, after nearly half an hour's lauding of the Emerald Isle, the orator did stop, he was so carried away by his own feelings that he wound up with a stanza, recited most thrillingly, from "Erin-go-Bragh" and sat down amid deafening applause without referring in the remotest way to his original text.

Mr. Watson was rising to announce the next piece, in a rather doubtful mood, when a voice from the back called out, with no uncertain sound as to either the sentiments or the origin of its owner, "Wot's the matter with England?"

There was a roar of laughter and a loud clapping of hands. Mr. Hayes arose again. He was too old a politician not to see that he had made a mistake in his one-sided speech. He was about to supplement it, and was beginning "Ladies and Gentlemen," when a loud voice from the centre of the church interrupted him.

Mr. Sim Basketful had sat with an expression of utter boredom during the latter portion of the member's speech, finally working himself up into a volcanic mood as it neared an end. His face was purple and his short, thick neck showed veins standing out dangerously. He might have held down his righteous indignation had it not been for the challenge from the back of the room, but the sight of that "blathering Irishman" rising in response to it was too much. Mr. Basketful was not of Mr. Hayes' political opinions and, besides that, was his rival upon tea-meeting platforms. He had convinced himself that it was due to the Presbyterian minister's interference that he, a Methodist, had been denied the honour of being the speaker of the evening. He, a class-leader in the very church where the performance was given, to be set aside for that Irish Catholic! He would show them all a thing or two before he sat down. He was standing now, looking straight ahead of him, and grasping the back of the seat before him, with true Saxon doggedness.

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen," he shouted, and Mr. Hayes, who had met Sim Basketful many a time

in his political campaigns, sat down, somewhat disconcerted.

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies *and* Gentlemen, if there's anybody in this 'ere haudience wants to know wot's the matter with Hingland, I'm 'ere prepared to state, sir, that there ain't one bloomin' thing the matter with 'er!" (Loud cheers from his Anglo-Saxon hearers.) "And wot's more, *Ladies and Gentlemen and* Mr. Chairman, I think it's 'igh time we were 'earin' just a little about that country that's made us all wot we are!" (Applause, mingled with noises of an indefinite character.) "We've been 'earin' a lot o' nonsense about Hireland and Hirish scenery and Hirish soldiers, but wot I'd like to be hinformed about, Ladies and Gentlemen *and* Mr. Chairman, is if anybody in this 'ere haudience is under the himpression that a Canadian Patriotic Society is a *Hirish* society!"

The withering contempt of the last words, and the cheers they elicited, brought the first speaker indignantly to his feet. Not one word could he get in, however. Mr. Basketful was a true Briton, and with the aid of a voice which drowned all competitors he clung to his theme with magnificent tenacity. When the noise calmed sufficiently for him to be heard, the audience found that he was discoursing fiercely and doggedly upon the inimitable land of his birth.

Sandy Neil, his eyes dancing, slipped out of his place in the choir, and made his way softly down the aisle at the side of the church. "Catchach's down there," he whispered to the choir leader as he passed; "I'm goin' to stir him up;" and Wee Andra threw back his head with a laugh which blew out the lamp on the organ.

But none of these things moved the patriotic Englishman. He was launched upon his favourite theme, his native land, and was irresistible. England was the only country in the world. He stamped, he sawed the air, he used metaphors and similes and hyperboles in a vain endeavour to give some idea of her glory. He eulogized her commerce, her statesmen, her Queen. He brought up her infantry, he charged with her cavalry, he poured upon his hearers her heavy artillery. And at last, backed by the whole great English navy, he swept every other country off the face of the globe and retired to his seat behind the stove, the Wellington of one last, grand, oratorical Waterloo.

Mr. Egerton reached over and, catching the distracted chairman by the sleeve, shouted above the din that if he wanted to avoid further trouble he must either close the meeting or make the choir sing something, and be quick about it. The chairman arose and strove to make his voice heard above the noise, but the chirping of a sparrow in a tempest would have been as effectual.

For down at the other end of the church a most alarming tumult was in progress. Cries of "Order!" and "Sit down!" were mingled with "Go on, Catchach; speak up! Scotland forever!" and equally ominous sounds.

Through the struggling crowd a man was fighting his way fiercely to the platform.

"Order! Order!" shrieked the chairman. But the disorderly person had reached the platform, his red whiskers flying, his blue eyes blazing, and his big fists brandishing threateningly above his head. It was Catchach! The schoolmaster sat down very discreetly and hastily. It was Catchach, worked up to a white fury over the insult to Scotland—Scotland, the flower of creation, to be neglected, while the scum of the earth was being exalted!

"Mister Chairman, Ladies an' Chentlemen!" he shouted, "I will not pe a public spoke, as you will pe knowing, put—" he went off into a storm of Gaelic, but suddenly checked himself, at the roars of laughter from his Sassenach enemies. The ridicule saved him—and Scotland. He had been incoherent with rage, but that laugh steadied him, and settled him into a cold fury. He would make a speech for the glory of Scotland now, if they pulled the church down about his ears. And he did it well, too. England was forgotten, Ireland was in oblivion, Canada did not exist. But Scotland! the land of the Heather and the Thistle! Catchach grew wildly poetic over her. The noise of English groans and Irish jeers and Scottish applause was so great that much of the effusion was lost, but in the intervals of the uproar could be caught such snatches as, "Who iss it that hass won efery great pattle in the last century? Ta Hielanders!" "Who won ta pattle of Palacklafa? Ta Hielanders!" "Who stormed ta heights of Awlma? Ta Hielanders!"

On he swept down to the last page of history, shouting the answers to this glorious catechism with a ferocious defiance that challenged denial; and at every shout there was an answering roar from the inhabitants of the Oa which threatened to dislodge the roof.

The distracted chairman had not the courage to attempt to stem the torrent. He did not care to obtrude himself inside Catchach's range of vision, for before he was done with Scotland the orator was rolling up his sleeves and calling out like Goliath of Gath for all the township of Oro to come forward and contradict him. Many of the audience became alarmed, and some of the older folk were starting for the door, when at last the flow of fiery eloquence ceased. How he ever managed to stop, no one could understand; some people said they supposed he had come to the limit of his English. If Catchach had been able to address his audience in Gaelic, it is likely they would not have seen their homes until morning.

But he did stop at last, and went tearing down the aisle and out of the door, shaking the dust of the place from off his feet. The back row arose in a body, and went roaring after him, for Catchach in a rage was better than all the patriotic demonstrations on earth.

The meeting broke up in complete disorder. The hour was unconscionably late, and the remainder of the long inspiriting programme had perforce to be omitted. Those of the audience who remained sang "God Save the Queen" in a rather distracted fashion and hurried away with the firm conviction that a patriotic concert was an exceedingly improper performance.

As the unhappy chairman and his confederate were leaving the scene of their disappointment Sim Basketful brushed violently past the Irish orator and confronted them. He informed them in a choking voice that if the Presbyterians were contemplating getting up any more such disgraceful performances, they would see that they were held in their own church, as the Methodists objected to having their place of worship turned into a den of thieves.

## XIV

### DONALD'S RETURN

In the rush of preparation for the concert the winter had slipped away, and by the time it was over the days had come when the sun was too ardent for the snow's white resistance, when the roads became soft and almost impassable, and spring began peeping at the wintry world in brilliant sunrises and sunsets.

When the young minister of Glenoro found that the long winter evenings, in which he had planned to accomplish so much, had gone, he could not help looking back over the past season of feverish activity with regret. One evening in early spring as he walked down the great stairway that led into Glenoro he was reviewing his winter's work with the feeling of self-dissatisfaction that was so common to him now. Every step he took seemed to lead him into greater depths of despondency.

The evening was one which might have raised the most discouraged soul. Before him lay the white valley overspread with the soft radiance of a late winter sunset. The gold of the hilltops where the sun's rays had full play, the soft rose, the delicate green and the faint lilac where the shadows of the valley met and mingled with the brightness, the deep purple-and-grey tones of the woods by the river made a picture such as only the magic of winter can paint. The air was motionless, and the smoke from the houses in the village rose in stately columns straight into the still atmosphere, colourless and ethereal in the shadow of the hills, but changing into pearl-white as they rose beyond their rim, and blossoming, where the sun's rays caught them, into gigantic frost-flowers of rose and amethyst and violet.

The noise of children playing on the millpond, the barking of a dog, the musical clang of Peter McNabb's anvil arose to the hills where the minister walked. Away across the valley a sleigh was moving slowly down the winding road; he could hear the clear tinkle of the bells as though they were at his side.

But the young man was too absorbed in his own sad reflections to notice his surroundings. He was asking himself what progress he had made in Glenoro with his tremendous activity and his multiplicity of meetings? What had he accomplished in the past winter? He thought with disgust of the Canadian Patriotic Society. He had given up the revival services for the concert and Mr. Watson's romantic nonsense, with the result that it had brought upon him both ridicule and discredit. He could not help wondering, now that he was on such intimate terms with all the young people of the congregation, what was to be the result. Were the pleasant relations he had established to be the means to a better end or was this all? Was he really going to be their pastor in the true sense of the word, or merely an agreeable companion?

He sighed deeply over these perplexing and haunting questions. He did not confess, even to himself, however, that their burden was augmented greatly by another problem that had vexed him all winter. It had assumed a graver aspect that very day, owing to a piece of news he had heard at the dinner-table.

Peter McNabb, Junior, whose tongue was the McNabb's family skeleton, had started the meal with, "Say, folks, Don Neil's comin' home to-morrow. Neil told me to-day."

"Indeed," said the blacksmith as he heaped Mr. Egerton's plate with fried pork and potatoes, "he's home early this spring."

"He's jist comin' for the Easter holidays; Sandy sent for him to come an' help with the logs. He's goin' back again after. Sandy an' all his gang are at the camp back o' the lake there waitin' for the ice to break, an' I seen Jimmy Archie Red yisterday, an' he says they're havin' a whale o' a time, drinkin' an' cuttin' up like sin."

"Aye, aye," said Peter, Senior, shaking his head sadly, "poor Sandy's goin' like his father, Ah'm afraid; Neil More was too fond o' the drink. Duncan Polite'll be feelin' terrible, if he hears it."

"Mebby Don'll straighten them up when he comes," suggested Flora, who secretly admired the handsome young student.

"Indeed," broke in her mother, busy with the tea-cups, "I'm just afraid Donald's not much better. He seemed to be a steady boy once, but I guess he's got his head turned in the city. They say he's just filled with infidel notions."

"I've heard that he don't go to church, since him an' Jessie Hamilton split up last fall," declared Peter, Junior, injudiciously. He turned to his sister a face of indignant reproach. "What on earth are you jabbin' your feet into me for, Flo? It's true, every word. Mack Fraser says Allan wrote home——"

"Pass Mr. Egerton the pickles, Peter," said Mrs. McNabb, with a warning wink from behind the tea-pot. And Peter shoved the cucumbers across the table in sulky silence, wondering why on earth it was that he could never be allowed to speak at the table without some mysterious interruption.

But John Egerton understood perfectly, and this evening, as he walked down the hillside, his conscience was once more asking troublesome questions. Was he responsible for Donald's changed conduct? This man who had saved his life, had he really come between him and Jessie? Then there were those wild young men at the lumber camp; he knew most of them personally. As their pastor, should he not go to them? That would be rather difficult with Donald there. And then, he asked himself bitterly, what good would he do if he did go? He had always been a good fellow among the boys, but what more? His conscience forbade a satisfactory answer, and his spirits sank to a very low ebb.

He was aroused from his melancholy heart-searchings by the sight of Duncan Polite's little shanty by the roadside, with the sunset glow reflected in flame from the window panes. He must call and see if the old man's cold were better. He was not at all remiss in his duties of this sort and was so kind and sympathetic in time of sickness that he was always welcome. But he had not visited Duncan Polite very often, though the old man had been ill all winter. Ever since the night John Egerton had heard him wrestling in prayer, and had guessed dimly at what manner of man the silent old hermit was, he had felt uncomfortable in his presence. But to-night he realised that he should not pass without dropping in just a moment to see how he was progressing.

Duncan Polite answered his knock. He had an old plaid of the McDonald tartan over his shoulders, his face was white and emaciated, and a cough frequently interrupted his utterance. But his eyes were as bright as ever, and his face full of kindness. He welcomed his young pastor warmly.

"Eh, Mr. Egerton," he cried, smiling brightly at this young man who was breaking his heart. "Indeed it would be kind to come and see an old man, and the roads breaking up, whatever. Come away in, come away;" he drew up his best chair to the fire, and set his guest into it, bustling around and in every way he could ministering to his comfort.

The young man put his feet upon the damper of the stove, and tilted his chair back in the free and easy manner which had charmed Glenoro. "And how's that troublesome cough to-day, Mr. McDonald? better, I hope?"

"Oh jist, jist! It will be nearly gone, indeed. Betsey will be giving me drugs; but hoots, toots, the weemen must be potterin' about a body. I will not be sick at all, oh no indeed."

The minister knew that he ought to ask after Donald, but he could not bring himself to do so. Instead, he said, "I hear your nephew has a fine quantity of logs to bring down to the mill."

"Oh that would be Sandy." Duncan's face grew suddenly grave. "Yes, he will be a great lumberman, and Donald will be coming home to-morrow to help him"—he paused and looked at his guest. A great resolution seized him. "Mr. Egerton," he said suddenly.

The young man looked up in some surprise. Duncan was leaning forward, his thin hands trembling, his face aglow with eagerness.

"Yes?" inquired the visitor encouragingly.

Duncan's humility was almost overmastering him, but he struggled on. "I will be very bold, to be asking you," he faltered. "It would be about Sandy and the lads. They would be good lads, but jist a wee bit careless, and I would be thinking they would be listening to the minister——"

He had spoken the very thought which had been troubling the young man on the road. "You mean you would

like me to visit the camp?" he asked kindly.

Duncan's eyes were burning with hope. "Yes, oh yes! An' jist to be saying a word, you will be knowing best what."

He stopped, for his guest had started suddenly and was gazing eagerly out at the window. Duncan did not know that his eye had caught a bewitching glimpse of a blue velvet cap, with a wealth of golden brown curls nestling beneath. Jessie was walking into the village alone! The young man rose to his feet. He had scarcely had an opportunity to see the girl or speak to her for nearly a month. Surely there would be no harm in his taking this happy chance of a walk with her.

Donald would be home the next day, and it would be the last time.

"I am sorry I cannot stay and talk this matter over with you, Mr. McDonald," he said kindly; "it is almost dark and I should have been home much earlier. But if I have a moment to spare I shall run up to the camp and see the boys. Good-night." He hurried to the door, Duncan following him. "I hope your cough will soon be better," he called over his shoulder as he strode down the path, "Good-night!"—and then he was away through the gate and down the dusky road.

Duncan sat for a long time after he had left with his head bowed and his face buried in his thin, trembling hands. A racking cough shook his frame occasionally, but he did not rise to mend the dying fire. The room grew chilly, and at last Collie rose and went to his master.

The old man arose slowly at the gentle touch of a cold nose against his face. He replenished the fire, and moved listlessly about the room, preparing his supper. His face looked whiter and thinner than before the minister's visit, and his movements were painfully slow. There was something more serious than a persistent cough undermining Duncan Polite's health.

But there was no word or look of complaint from him. He went about his work as usual, tidying the room, and stirring the pot of oatmeal porridge which was cooking for his supper. His habits were of the simplest; a bowl of oatmeal, or pease brose, and a pitcher of milk sufficed for his supper as well as for his breakfast. He set the frugal meal upon the bare pine table, then lit his one small lamp, which had been well trimmed and polished, and pulled down the green paper window blinds. He noticed there was still a brightness over the eastern heavens, though the colours of the sunset had faded. Duncan shut out the world and sat down to his lonely meal. Collie lay quietly at his feet, waiting his turn, giving an occasional thump of his tail upon the floor, to remind his master that he was hungry; but when Duncan bowed his head over the repast for a few moments, the dog lay motionless until he raised it again. The dancing light from the wide damper of the old stove and the rays of the little lamp could not penetrate to the corners of the room, but they lit up Duncan's white, patient face and his silver hair, and shone on the glass doors of his cupboard, revealing the rows of shining dishes, and threw into relief the bare dark rafters of the ceiling.

Duncan stirred his porridge absently. His appetite had been poor all winter, and to-night he could not eat. He sat staring ahead of him with sad, unseeing eyes. Suddenly Collie raised his head and sniffed suspiciously. A quick bounding footstep was crunching the snow on the little pathway to the gate. The dog leaped up with a joyous bark and the next instant the door flew open, and a young man burst into the room.

Duncan arose, speechless with joy and surprise at the sight of the stalwart figure and handsome face. "Donal!" was all he could say.

"Hello, Uncle!" the boy cried in his old ringing tones, catching the old man's hand and shaking it violently; then he put a hand upon his uncle's shoulder and stepped back from him. "Why, you never told me you were sick!" he cried sharply.

"Hoots, toots!" exclaimed Duncan, laughing from sheer joy. "It will be jist a bit of a cold. Eh, eh, and we would not be expecting you till to-morrow, and your mother would be telling the lads they must meet you. And would you be walking all the way from the station?"

"Oh, no, only it would have been better than driving. I came scratching along with Mack Fraser. How is

mother?"

"Oh, your poor mother will be jist fine indeed, and the lads. Eh, and you will be getting to be a great man, Donal'; I will be thinking you will be a boy no more."

Donald laughed. "It's surely time. Why didn't Sandy tell me you were sick?"

"Hoots, that would be jist foolishness, for there would be nothing wrong, whatever."

"But there has been," said Donald, looking at him steadily. He hung his coat and cap in their accustomed place behind the stove, and turned to the old man again. His heart smote him as he took in the changes on the beloved face. He wondered if his refusal to enter the ministry had had anything to do with their cause.

But Duncan was bustling about the room in aimless delight. "Dear, dear, you must be having your supper, lad!" he cried; "you will be hungry."

"I should think I am. I felt the Glenoro air and the Glenoro appetite strike me at the same instant. Here, sit down and let me get it."

"Indeed, perhaps your poor mother will be saying I should not be keeping you."

"I'll get home all the sooner if I'm fortified inside. Oatmeal porridge!" he continued joyfully, as he lifted the lid from the pot and seized the wooden ladle. "I say, Uncle Dunc, this is royal!"

"Indeed it will be jist common fare for such a great city man as you will be getting to be." Duncan regarded him with tender pride.

Donald laughed derisively as he tumbled the contents of the porridge pot into a bowl. "And buttermilk, too, by all that's fortunate! And a festival like this on top of six months' boarding house hash!"

He seated himself at the table and attacked the homely fare with a country boy's hearty appetite. Duncan forgot his own supper in the joy of watching him.

"Well, how's things? as Coonie says. You said mother is well, and the boys?"

"Yes, she will be fine indeed, and Weil and wee Archie, too. They will be growing up to be fine lads. And Sandy will be at the camp waiting for you." He looked at Donald yearningly, as though he would fain tell him more about Sandy, but could not.

"I'm just in time, then. And Wee Andra and—all the rest?"

The old man gave him as full an account as he was able of the doings of the neighbourhood, but Duncan Polite lived in a world apart, and Donald missed the information he was seeking.

Then it was Donald's turn to be catechised. He had to satisfy his uncle in regard to his work at college, his coming examinations, his professors, his friends, his sports and all other college lore.

Duncan sat listening to the recital in silent delight, thinking much more of the speaker than of the words he uttered. But as he rattled on the old man became conscious of a vague fear entering his heart. He could not define its cause, but somehow Donald seemed changed. There was a recklessness in his manner and an occasional irreverence in his speech which struck his foster-father painfully. He tried several times to lead the conversation to questions regarding Donald's spiritual welfare.

"Mr. Egerton was here jist a few minutes before you came," he said by way of commencement. If he had known that Donald had met him and Jessie Hamilton walking into the Glen together he might have refrained from mentioning the young minister, and would perhaps have understood his nephew's reckless demeanour.

"That's so?" Donald's answer was rather sharp, and he added sarcastically, "It's a great pity I missed the

beneficial influence of his pastoral visitation."

"Why is it you would never be liking him, Donal?" inquired the old man remorsefully. "He would be speaking very highly of you last Christmas, and I feel he will be trying to do the Lord's work."

Donald laughed scornfully. "Perhaps he is. But if that's so, I'm sorry for the Lord's work; it seems to be a mighty mean business sometimes."

Duncan winced as if with acute pain. "Donal," he said gravely, "it will not be right to be speaking this way of God's minister. I am thinking you would not be doing it before you went away, lad."

Donald was smitten with remorse. He looked across the table at the old man's gentle, white face, and a lump rose in his throat. "I don't mean to say anything disparaging of the ministry, Uncle," he said contritely, "but I know Mr. Egerton better than anyone thinks, and,—well, he's not a gentleman, that's all."

"It is only the Lord who can judge a man, Donal," said Duncan Polite, after a moment's pained silence. "Mr. Egerton will be the Lord's servant and his Master will know all his work better than we will."

But Donald had almost finished his second year at college and was very confident of himself. "Well, here's something I don't understand, Uncle. There's a fellow in my year, who makes no profession of Christianity, who doesn't believe one-half the Bible, in fact, and yet I know he does twice the good in the world that Mr. Egerton does."

"Ah, but the Father will be all-kind, Donal," said Duncan Polite gently but firmly, "and He will be accepting the service of His followers no matter how poor and mean it would be. But what would the Judge be saying of the man who would not own His only begotten Son?"

Donald arose from the table and walked up and down the bare little room. Duncan watched him with a look of yearning. "Would this young man be a friend of yours, Donal?" he inquired tremulously.

Donald paused and looked down into the dancing flames, his hands dug into his pockets, his brow drawn together in perplexity. "He's my roommate," he answered. "You used to wish I could be intimate with Mr. Egerton, Uncle, but I tell you honestly he can't be compared to Mark Seymour. He's the soul of honour, as fine a man as you could wish to know, and I'd rather accept his creed than that of a man who spends his time praying for sinners better than himself."

Duncan's face was white. "I will not be quite understanding you, Donal," he said steadily. "Is it that you would be leaving the Saviour out of your life, my lad?"

Donald turned; the look in the old man's face brought him to his side. He laid his hands on Duncan Polite's shoulders. "I would rather do anything than hurt you, Uncle," he cried. "But you always taught me, above all things, never to deceive you, and I must tell you, honestly, I cannot see that religion has much to do with a man's life. But there is another thing I can say truthfully," he looked the old man straight in the eyes, "I have never done anything I should be ashamed to tell you!"

For an instant a wave of joy and pride swept away the despair that was clutching Duncan's heart. He arose and patted the boy on the back as he used to do in his childhood, murmuring Gaelic expressions of endearment. "Oh, indeed, indeed, I will be knowing that, laddie!" he cried, his eyes moist. "Yes, indeed, and that would be a blessing to my very soul. But, eh, my child, my child, if you would be losing your hold on Christ, I would be fearing for you, Donal! There is no other name under Heaven whereby we may be saved; it will be the Word of Omnipotence, Donal, and any man who would be trying another way would be failing. And if I would be losing you, Donal!—" he stopped overcome.

Donald turned away; he felt guilty of the worst brutality. He put on his overcoat silently, and then came back to the old armchair. "I've been nothing but a burden and a trouble to you all my life," he said bitterly.

"Wheesh, wheesht, laddie!" cried Duncan Polite. "What would my life be without you? You must not be saying such things, child, for you would be a credit to us all, indeed. And I will jist be praying that the Shepherd will be



leading you to the fold."

Donald went away, humble and heart-sore. His home-coming had been a double grief to him. His faint hopes of a reconciliation with Jessie had been crushed, and now he was wounding most cruelly his best friend. He took no thought of another Friend, still kinder, whom he was wounding. And indeed had Donald been able, by an effort of his will, to be at that moment all his uncle desired, he would have done so. But he had cast away his anchor, in a moment of self-sufficiency and it would be hard to find it again. He could not know that a season was coming swiftly upon him, a season of storm and stress, when that discarded anchor would be his only stay, and the nearness with which he came to missing his hold upon it forever changed his whole future life.

## XV

### THE SACRIFICE

If Donald could have guessed that someone in Glenoro was watching and waiting for him in alternate hope and fear, he might not have been in such haste to get away. But he remained only one day at home, and then, without even visiting the village, set off to join Sandy at the camp.

He found the men ensconced in a rough shanty in the woods north of Lake Oro. A large belt of timber in that region belonged to the Neil boys and Sandy had taken the contract of supplying the Glenoro mill with logs for the coming season. But he found that commanding such an enterprise was no easy task, and he handed over the responsibility with much relief to Donald. The cutting and hauling had been almost completed, and now all that was needed was an open lake to float the logs across to the river and thence down to the village. The Oro was already free of ice, rushing along, high and swollen with the melting snow. A few days more of sun and wind would clear the lake also, and send its winter fetters crashing up on the shore.

So when Donald arrived the camp was not very busy, though it was exceedingly lively. The men had plenty of leisure, and they spent it and their winter's wages at a little old tavern, a remnant of earlier and rougher days, which stood where the river left Lake Oro. Under any other circumstances Donald would have exercised a restraining influence upon Sandy and the boys of his acquaintance, but just now his heart was angry and reckless. So the wild revelry suffered no abatement because of his presence.

Duncan Polite waited anxiously for the boys' return, the dread of impending disaster hanging over his spirit. The weather changed to sudden warmth, however, and brought to the old man a renewal of strength and the hope that Donald would soon be with him. He was well enough to go to church the next Sabbath, the first time in many months. Andrew Johnstone was so pleased to have his old friend with him again that his stick never moved from its peaceful position in the rear, and he even forbore to make any caustic remarks about the minister.

His spirits were only in keeping with the day. Spring had descended upon the world with a sudden dazzling rush. The air was clear and intoxicatingly fresh; blinding white clouds raced joyously across the radiant blue. As Duncan passed through the gate an early robin, swinging in the tall elm, poured out his ecstatic little heart in hysterical song. Everywhere was water, water, rushing down the hills in a thousand mad rivulets, flashing in the sunlight like chains of diamonds and filling the air with their song of wild freedom. And through the valley came the river, a monster now, roaring down its narrow channel and swirling out past the church as if it would carry away the village.

As the two old men walked slowly up the hill on the way home they heard the news for which Duncan had been anxiously waiting: the ice on the lake had broken, and the boys intended to bring down their lumber on the morrow.

The next day passed, warm and sunshiny, but Donald Neil's logs did not appear in the Glenoro millpond. Duncan sat at his window in the dusk of the evening, expecting every moment to see Donald coming up the path to tell him their work was finished. But the night was descending, and Donald had not come. A great dread had taken hold of the old man's heart, a dread he could not explain. He knew that both Donald and Sandy were expert river drivers, but he could not reason himself out of the fear that the crisis had come. This sacrifice towards which he had been looking for so many months, was it near? And what would it be?

He had set his door open, owing to the warmth of the night, and through it came the sound of ceaseless pouring of water. Sitting with his face pressed against the pane, thinking of his high hopes of just one year ago, he mournfully shook his head.

"The sacrifice," he murmured, "it must come, but, oh, my Father, must it be Donald? 'Bind ye the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar.' Ah, it would be a message, a message—and will it be Donald? must I give him up, oh, my Father?" His hands clasped and unclasped, his face stood out from the darkness of the room, white with pain.

He had not noticed a little figure making its way rapidly down the road; but his eye caught it as it entered the

gate. His heart stood still as he saw Archie, his sister's youngest boy, come running up the path. "What will you be wanting, laddie?" he asked, almost in a whisper, as the little fellow paused in the doorway.

"Oh, are you there, Uncle Duncan!" cried the child, groping his way across the room. "It's so awful dark here. Jimmie Archie's folks is sugarin' off to-night in the bush down alongside the river, and I want to go over, an' mother she wouldn't let me go alone. Now, ain't that mean, Uncle Duncan?"

Duncan breathed a great sigh of relief. "Will the boys not be down with the logs yet?"

"Nop; Jimmie Archie said all the fellows Sandy and Don had was drunk at the tavern to-day, an' the logs was all ready to bring out into the river, mind ye, an' Crummie Bailey—it was at school, you know—an' Crummie said he'd bet Don an' Sandy was drunker than 'em all; an' I thumped him good, you bet, uncle, an' he's eleven an' I'm only ten an' a half!"

Duncan put his hand upon the child's head with a feeling of helpless woe. "Yes, yes, laddie," he said absently.

"Mother said I couldn't go to the sugar bush without somebody with me," Archie broke out again. "Aw, shucks, I ain't a kid!" The dignity of ten years and a half was being sadly ruffled. He leaned upon the arm of Duncan's chair and looked up coaxingly.

"I guess I'll have to stay away, 'cause there's nobody to go with me, an' mother said I wasn't to ask you, 'cause it would make your cold worse."

He sighed prodigiously over this self-denial, and with his characteristic self-forgetfulness Duncan put aside his own trouble. "Oh, indeed it is a great man you will be some day," he said. "But what if I would be going with you?"

"Oh, man! but I wish you could! Only I ain't such a baby as to have somebody luggin' me 'round."

Duncan patted his head lovingly. "Hoots, toots, but you surely won't leave a poor old man like your uncle to find his way alone," he said, with great tact. "I will not be at Jimmie Archie's sugar bush for many a year, and you will jist be showing me the road."

Archie's pride was somewhat mollified by this aspect of the case, and being further soothed by a huge slab of bread and jam, he set off with his uncle in high glee. Duncan put on his bonnet and plaid and with Collie bounding in front, half mad with joy at this unexpected excursion, they stepped out upon the road. The moon was shining, but its rays were obscured by the mild night mists. A soft, suffused light shrouded the landscape, giving an unreal and weird appearance to all objects. A rising wind shifted the ghostly clouds here and there; it was a strangely uncanny night.

Jimmie Archie McDonald's farm lay up the river, next to Andrew Johnstone's. But the belt of maples with the sugar camp was quite near. So when Duncan Polite and the child had gone a short distance up the road they climbed a fence and crossed the soft, yielding fields until they reached the line of timber that bordered the stream.

"There's a path jist along by the river that goes straight to Jimmie Archie's bush," explained Archie importantly, strutting ahead. "Ain't you glad I called for you, Uncle Duncan?" He dashed into the woods whooping and yelling, with Collie circling about him in noisy delight, and darted back again at short intervals to ask a dozen unanswerable questions. "What made the moon look so queer? And what was the moon made of, anyhow? Sandy said it was made of green cheese; but Don said if that was true they must have got a chunk of the moon to make Sandy's head. And Don ought to know, since he'd been to college. And what made the moon shine? The master told the Fourth Class that the moon didn't have any light of its own. And Crummie Bailey said that was a howlin' lie, 'cause any fool could see it. And the master heard him saying it at recess, and he licked Crummie good for it, too. And was the shadow on the moon really a man?"

Duncan replied at random. Ordinarily he was Archie's most interesting chum, but to-night he was silent and absent. The boy concluded it was because his uncle had been sick all winter. He was too excited over the prospect of a visit to the sugar bush and unlimited taffy to care very much, however, and went dancing along over the ghostly patches of snow and through the weird, shifting mists, his tongue keeping pace with his feet.

"Don't you wish there was taggers and lions in the bush here, Uncle? I bet I'd shoot them if there was. Sandy says there's lions down in the river bed, but I bet he jist said that to see if I'd get scared. He can't scare me, though. What kind of a noise does a lion make. Uncle Dune? Listen, do you hear that funny noise ahead?" He drew closer to his uncle. "Is that the kind of a noise a lion makes?"

"It will jist be the river you hear, child," said Duncan reassuringly.

"No, I don't mean that squashy noise; it's that bangin' sound," he insisted anxiously. "Listen!"

They stood still, the child holding the man's fingers, and above the sighing of the bare treetops and the rushing of the river there came the sound of dull, booming thuds.

"We will jist see," said Duncan, striving to hide his apprehension. They hurried through the underbrush towards the river, where a few cedar clumps overhung its edge. Duncan seized one and, leaning over, looked down into the dark ravine. The pale moonlight touched the water and revealed the cause of the unusual sounds. Strange dark forms were hurrying along its glinting surface. Down the foaming tide they came, shooting past, swift and stealthy. As far up the river as Duncan's eye could pierce still they appeared, whirling silently forward. But farther down was a sight that made the old man's heart stand still. A few yards below him, and just at the turn in the river above the village were the "Narrows," where the most careful navigation of logs was necessary to prevent a jam. And there, wedged in the narrow channel, hurled together into fantastic shapes and augmented each moment by the oncoming logs which struck the heap with a resounding boom, was piled a wild jumbled mass of timber!

Like most of the early settlers of Glenoro, Duncan was an experienced river-driver, and instantly realised the gravity of the situation. If the jam of logs were permitted long to impede the progress of the river in its high, swollen condition, there would be a disastrous flood in the village. In a flash there passed before his mind a picture of the havoc it would cause,—death and destruction swift and certain upon the unwarned inhabitants, men and women hurried into Eternity unprepared! And Donald,—Donald would be held responsible! This jam must have resulted through his carelessness. Before the world he would be disgraced; before his Maker—the thought struck the old man with a paralysing fear. He stood for a moment motionless, watching the shifting, heaving, rumbling mass,—and then life seemed suddenly to return.

"Run to the Glen, Archie!" he cried to the frightened boy. "Run, laddie, and tell the folk at Peter McNabb's shop there will be a jam at the Narrows!"

Archie was off down a cross track like a hare, Collie after him. Duncan stooped down, feeling among the underbrush, and caught up a stout pole. Grasping it he made his way hurriedly down the bank and along the water's edge to the quaking, seething mass. Cautiously he climbed out upon it, the water hissing about him in angry, spurting jets. He could feel the pile rising beneath him with fearful rapidity. A swift examination convinced Duncan of two startling truths—first, the jam must be broken immediately, or it would be too late, and second, he might break it, even with the small pole he held, but he was neither young enough nor nimble enough to do it and save his own life.

And then, of a sudden, a thought struck him, as if a great light had broken over his soul, an illumination which chased away all the dark, weary shadows and fears of the past months. *The Sacrifice!* The trial he had been dreading! Was this it? Merely the giving of a poor, worn-out life, and the promised blessing would descend? He had failed to save Donald and his father's home from sin and worldliness; but now if he gave his life to save his boy from life-long regret and despair, and his friends from sudden death, would not the Father accept this and send the reward? A sense of overwhelming joy and hope seized the old man. He grasped his pole tightly and went resolutely forward.

With the skilled eye of an old river-driver he soon discovered the "key." Right beneath him lay the log that could unlock the huge, groaning gateway, and let the impeded tide sweep safely down the valley. Duncan leaned forward and pried at it with his pole, putting into the work a strange strength he had not felt for many a year. The mass creaked ominously. A gust of wind caught his old Scotch bonnet, sending it whirling away into the darkness and tossing his white hair. He struggled on, throwing his whole weight upon the pole with a desperate energy, and praying with all the passion of his soul that the High Priest would accept his humble sacrifice. The great hope that perhaps he would be considered worthy to imitate, even in the feeblest manner, the atonement that his Master had

made was filling him and lending his arm an unnatural strength. Behind him the waters surged and the piling logs boomed threateningly. But to Duncan there was no menace in the sound. It brought to his mind the words of his favourite psalm, as Peter McNabb sang it in the little church by the river,

"The Lord's voice on the waters is;  
The God of Majesty  
Doth thunder—"

"Oh, my Father, my Father!" he was praying with passionate fervour, as he struggled with the stubborn beam, "accept this poor sacrifice, and may Donal' and my father's Glen be saved!"

The answer came in a thunderous roar. Like a wild animal let loose, the wall of lumber leaped up and hurled itself forward. It caught the old man as if he had been a feather and flung him away into the whirling blackness. For an instant his white hair shone out like a snowflake on the dark river, for an instant only, and then the great billow of liberated water came roaring forward and swept over him on its way down the valley.

## XVI

### THE COVENANT RENEWED

The party from the village which arrived at the Narrows, armed with lanterns, cant-hooks and poles, only to find the jam broken, searched all night for the man who had saved their lives at the sacrifice of his own. The news of the heroic act and the averted disaster spread swiftly, and all night long lights wandered up and down and shout answered shout across the dark water.

There were many very sorrowful hearts among the searchers, but none so heavy as was borne by an old man who kept apart from the crowd. He stumbled along in a bewildered fashion over rocks and underbrush, his cap gone, his grey hair dishevelled by the wind. He paused often to peer over the swollen waters, and Peter McNabb's heart was smitten with pity as he passed him once and heard him whisper, "Duncan, lad, whaur are ye?"

And it was Andrew Johnstone who found him. Just as the first grey light of the morning stole in at the eastern doorway of the valley he came upon him, lying peacefully beneath the overhanging willows, beside the churchyard. It seemed fitting that Duncan Polite should have found a harbour in the shelter of his Zion, the place that had been the centre of all his hopes.

They covered the quiet, peaceful face and carried him very tenderly,—Peter McNabb and Andrew Johnstone and some of his other lifelong friends,—into John Hamilton's house.

They laid him in the darkened sitting-room, and Mrs. Fraser, in her never failing kindness of heart, went to tell his bereaved sister, while Wee Andra drove off to Lake Oro to find Donald and Sandy.

All day the neighbours came in, silently and sorrowfully, to see the man who had saved the village and to speak of the brave deed he had done at such cost.

But none of all the crowd guessed at the meaning of the sacrifice, except one man. He did not weep nor lament nor speak one word of sorrow. But his shoulders were bent from their accustomed straightness, and his eyes lacked their steady gleam. He sat by the side of his friend all that day and through the next night, refusing to eat or take rest, and motionless, except when he stooped to pat the dog that lay at his feet and that raised his head occasionally with a mournful whine. Andrew Johnstone made no complaint nor did he say anything when his friends came to sympathise with him. But Mrs. Fraser, who had visited the room in company with Duncan's stricken sister, heard Splinterin' Andra whisper softly as they left the place, "Ma hert is very sair for thee, Jonathan, ma brother!"

The roads were in such an impassable condition that by nine o'clock at night Wee Andra had not returned, and Duncan Polite had been laid in his coffin, ready for his long rest. One dim lamp burned near the head of the bier, and at its foot sat old Andrew, his head bowed, his face in his hands. Across the hall the sorrowing neighbours had gathered in the dining-room, where some of Duncan Polite's friends were leading in prayer for the bereaved relatives. Peter McNabb had asked the minister to open the service, but had accepted his refusal in silent sympathy, wondering somewhat at the young man's grief-stricken face. Mr. Ansdell's gentle voice was raised in a petition that the brave deed might be a lesson to all, and the house was very still, when the front door opened softly and a man glided into the parlour. He crossed the room silently and stood gazing down at the figure in the coffin. At the sight of him, the dog lying by old Andrew's side arose and, crossing to where he stood, crouched at his feet, whining pitifully as though begging for help.

Aroused by the movement the old man raised his head.

"Donald!" he cried aloud, startled by the sight of the young man's ghastly face and wild eyes.

But Donald did not seem to be aware of his presence. He looked around the room as if dazed.

"It's true, then!" he cried in a harsh whisper, "it's true."

His eyes were fixed unmeaningly on the elder.

"He was more than a father to me; and I murdered him," he added distinctly.

Andrew Johnstone rose stiffly and came over to where the boy stood. "Wheesht, Donald!" he whispered in alarm. "Wheesht, lad, it is the Lord's will!"

Donald stared at him stupefied. Even half-crazed as he was, there came to his tossed soul a kind of vague wonder that Splinterin' Andra did not scourge him with a pitiless condemnation. "I did it," he repeated, clinging to the one thought he was capable of comprehending. "We were at the tavern when the boom broke—I murdered him!"

"Come awa', lad, an' sit ye doon here, till Ah tell ye"—Andrew Johnstone took hold of the boy's shoulder gently. A wonderful change seemed to have come over the stern old man during the vigil by his dead; the mantle of Duncan Polite seemed to have fallen upon him. "Come awa'," he whispered.

But Donald flung off the hand fiercely. He turned again to look at his uncle, and the fire slowly died from his eyes as he gazed at the beloved face. His strength seemed to suddenly leave him. Andrew Johnstone stepped towards him fearing he would fall, but with one more glance at the dead Donald turned and groped his way to the door like one blind.

The prayers were still going on in the dining-room. Peter McNabb's deep, resonant voice could now be heard, and Jessie, who had come in from the kitchen, was standing in a dark corner of the hall waiting to enter. She was weeping silently, not only for the loss of the old man, who was very dear to her, but for the grief and the blame it must bring upon the one she loved the most. She raised her eyes at the sound of the front door opening and caught a glimpse of his ghastly face and desperate eyes as Donald slipped out. There was the depth of despair in his look. All the girl's heart went out to him in love and pity winged by a terrible fear. He looked like one who might do himself harm. She forgot their estrangement, forgot that he might love another, everything but that Donald was in dire distress. She darted noiselessly to the door. "Don!" she whispered eagerly into the darkness. A figure was passing out of the gate and turning down towards the river. A wild terror seized the girl. She flew down the path and caught his arm. "Don, Don," she cried, "where are you going?"

He turned and looked down at her dully. Just then he was capable of realising only that she was striving to turn him from his purpose. "Let go!" he said savagely. "I killed him, I tell you!"

But Jessie clung to his arm desperately.

"Oh, Don," she sobbed, "come back to the house with me, please do come!"

The sight of her tears seemed to affect him. He stared at her as if a gleam of comprehension had come to him. "Why do you want to stop me?" he asked sullenly. "You don't care!"

The girl realised that this desperate situation was no time for false pride. "Oh, Don," she whispered softly, "how can you say that, how can you think it? You know I care, more than anyone!"

He ceased his resistance and stood a moment as if trying to understand. Jessie was praying with all her heart for strength and wisdom to meet and grapple with the despair that was driving him to destruction. She turned and gently led him back to the gate, and as they went she spoke to him as Jessie Hamilton could never have spoken had she not learned through Duncan Polite's help the true meaning of all sorrow and happiness, spoke to him of his mother, of his duty, of his God. It was the hour of Donald's weakness and trial, when Satan desired to sift him as wheat, an hour in which he might have fared ill had the woman who loved him not stood by with her new strength. But it passed in victory, and when at last he laid his head down upon the top of the gate where they stood and convulsive sobs shook his frame, she knew that he was saved.

The day was one of promising spring when they laid Duncan Polite beside Mr. Cameron under the elms. The hepaticas were peeping out around his covenant stone on the hilltop, the river was gay and smiling and all the world seemed glad. And it was well, for an eternal springtime had dawned for the old watchman of Glenoro.

When they carried him into the church for his last service the place was packed to the doors. Everyone had come to do honour to the man who had done so much for them. Even Coonie was there. He had hurried into Glenoro, early, for the first time in his life. His shoulders drooped more than ever, his wrinkled brown face was even

unusually sullen, and his small green eyes were filled with a fierce sorrow. Mr. Ansdell preached the funeral sermon. To the wonder of all, Andrew Johnstone desired it, and everyone felt he must yield a deference to his wishes. As for John Egerton, he was relieved. Remembering his last interview with Duncan Polite and how he might have averted this catastrophe had he been faithful to his duty, he felt he could not bear the ordeal.

The minister's text was a strange one for a funeral sermon, but that, too, was Andrew Johnstone's choice. "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman." The old clergyman was the very one for his task. He spent no time in eulogising the dead; but he told simply and tenderly the story of Duncan Polite's covenant, how he had striven to keep it, giving at length his all, even his life, to serve the people of his Glen.

There was not a person in the congregation who did not take the lesson to heart. The story of the old man's unselfish interest in the spiritual life of the place took a firm hold upon the listeners and roused them to better and nobler aims. But there was one to whom the sermon was a fiery ordeal. For even Donald, well-nigh crushed with the weight of his grief and the knowledge of all he had missed, was no more torn by the old clergyman's words than the young minister who sat reviewing his past self-satisfied year in Glenoro in the light of Duncan Polite's hopes.

The May days had come, and Glenoro was all pink and white in a burst of apple blossoms when Donald next returned from college. On the evening after his arrival he walked down the village street with mingled feelings of joy and pain. Jessie was waiting for him at the gate; he almost fancied he could detect her white dress through the trees even at this distance, but he had just passed an old house on the hilltop, a house at which he had always stopped in the past, and now it was silent and empty. As he turned from behind the elms and came in full view of the village, he suddenly paused. The minister was just emerging from Peter McNabb's gate; he turned up the hill and he and Donald came face to face.

The two young men stood for an instant, and then, with a common impulse, stretched out their hands. John Egerton grasped the hand of Duncan Polite's nephew with a pang of regret. If he had done this long before, what a different turn affairs might have taken.

Donald was the first to speak. "This is very kind of you, Mr. Egerton," he said with his accustomed frankness. "I have misjudged you so often——"

"Don't say anything about what is past, Mr. McDonald," said the other hastily; "I can never forget what I owe you, and it would be the deepest of my many regrets in leaving Glenoro if you and I could not part friends."

"There need be no doubt of that," said Donald simply; "I am sorry you are leaving."

John Egerton's face was overcast. "I must. I came here not knowing what was required of me. In fact, I never realised what was required of my calling until I had a glimpse into a life of real Christian consecration. I am going to another field, to do better work, I hope."

Donald was touched by the honest confession. This did not seem the gay, self-sufficient young man he had met on former occasions. "I cannot pretend to criticise another man's life, knowing my own," he answered humbly. "I am sure I wish you all success in your new place."

"Thank you. Success does not mean quite the same to me now as it did a few months ago. There is one thing I would like to say to you before I go, Mr. McDonald"—he hesitated—"I believe your uncle wished you to enter the ministry?"

Donald made a motion of assent. That was a subject upon which, as yet, he could not trust himself to speak.

"I thought so. And part of his hope was that I should help you to it," he added bitterly. "But I have hoped and prayed every day since that God would lead you to it. Have you decided yet?"

Donald's voice was not quite steady. "I have. A man surely does not need a second lesson such as I have had to show him the way."

John Egerton held out his hand again. "I am very, very glad," he said earnestly. "Do not make my mistake. There is no sting like the sting of regret; you and I both know that."



Donald was silent. He was not given to much speaking at any time, and now the depth of his feeling closed his lips. But he took his pastor's hand with a heart-warming grip, and without another word the two parted in mutual understanding and sympathy.

But at the sight of Jessie leaning over the gate between the oaks all other thoughts fled from Donald's mind. She wore a soft white dress, with a blue ribbon, his favourite colour, at her throat. Her uncovered head, with its wealth of golden brown curls, was poised like a flower on a slender stem. Her deep eyes were aglow with welcome. "I saw you talking to Mr. Egerton," she said, when Donald had opened the gate for her and they were passing down the village street.

"Yes, he's an honest man, Jessie; I never understood him before."

"He's changed, too," said the girl gravely. "I am sure he will do much good in his new charge."

When they had walked down the leafy street and reached the little churchyard gate a silence fell between them. They had planned this walk before Donald's return, and their thoughts were serious. Together they passed around the old white building. The grass beneath their feet was an intense emerald, and the young, fresh leaves of the woodbine covering the church walls glistened in the light of the fading sunset.

They paused before a new white stone under a tall elm. Donald caught his breath as he stooped to read the lettering in the gathering dusk: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

He gazed at it so long that Jessie put out her hand and touched his sleeve in silent sympathy.

"Here is the other one, Don," she whispered. He started and turned. "Wee Andra and Sandy brought it down this morning. Mr. Johnstone wanted it."

Donald put his hand upon the rough stone that had been Duncan Polite's Bethel. "It was kind of him," he said softly.

They were shut out from the village by the church; the soft grass of the graveyard was under their feet, the elms with their small, green, fairy-like leaves hung over them, and the river murmured softly at their side. He took her hands in his. "Can't we renew that covenant here, you and I, Jessie, for his sake?" Donald whispered.

"And for the sake of One who suffered more than he did, Don," added the girl gently. And standing together by Duncan Polite's covenant stone they gave their young lives anew to the work that had been his life's aim.

The vow which Donald and Jessie took that day has been fulfilled in the little glen and the memory of Duncan Polite is cherished and his influence abides in many a home of humble piety and simple happiness. So the Watchman accomplished by his death that which had been denied him in life, and as all knowledge and peace are his, he must surely see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

THE END

[The end of Duncan Polite: The Watchman of Glenoro by MacGregor, Mary Esther Miller]