SHODDY

DAN BRUMMITT

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SHODDY

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by

DAN BRUMMITT

"Shoddy is dead wool"

Willett, Clark & Colby
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M, H, Apr. 11-24.

The people of this story are types; no character is the portrait of an actual individual.

D. B.

CHAPTER I

I

For the moment, an aspect of peace rested on all Methodism. The next General Conference was not yet near enough to be within the range of practical politics. The legislation of the preceding supreme council of the church had all been made operative, with such significant modifications as the elder statesmen had agreed were necessary, knowing as they did that a General Conference, like Congress, sometimes inserts stultifying rather than enacting clauses into its legislation.

It had been months since the American Labor and Capital Council had "launched a broadside" in the general direction of Bishop Eberle; and though in public that astute and independent cleric had nothing to say, to his friends he voiced his wonder at this long immunity. He was using the days of truce to gather new stores of the explosive sort of fact he delights in.

The *Western Wesleyan* had become mixed up in a violent dispute which raged around the preaching of a famous heretic of the Dutch Reformed Church, temporarily supplying the pulpit of the President's church in Washington. So it had suspended for the time its denunciations of the doctrinal unfaithfulness which the Board of Missions permitted among its "employees," as the *Wesleyan* urbanely tagged the church's missionaries.

For the first time since the war the sloganeers were silent. They seemed to have lost confidence in their wares. The outworn tags of the Centenary were not being replaced by new-coined mottoes such as those which, in the more spacious easy money days, would have been counted on to stimulate successive crowd-minded spasms of sacrifice among the rank and file.

Here and there a modest local "drive" was on; in the denomination at large, none at all. A huge unpopularity had befallen the word and the thing it stood for.

In an excess of zeal an amateur census taker had announced that the Methodists, North and South, could claim as co-religionists by far the largest if not the shrewdest group in Congress. Thereby he had much embarrassed some of the church's untiring propagandists. In the face of the figures, and with the Methodists' own proven abilities as politician-baiters, the horrendous warnings of these one-idea'd brethren against the possible machinations of other religious groups in public affairs evoked gusts of ribald laughter among the knowing ones of the Capitol.

College presidents were busy with the collection of somewhat reluctant long-term subscriptions; pledges which had been made in haste and were being repented of, as well as being paid, at distressingly deliberate leisure.

And, from Boston to Los Angeles, for weeks on end, the newspapers had been unable to produce a front-page story of student revolt or student orgy in any Methodist institution of higher learning.

It was the luck of the Methodists that in such a time of dearth Bishop Bartelmy Bonafede, the church's symbol of shrewdness and poise, should crumple up on a college platform into strengthless, wordless terror, right in the midst of so unexciting a performance as a Baccalaureate Sunday sermon.

Instantly the editors, with Monday's yawning columns to fill, recognized the event as, for them providential. The resulting story was promptly spread in front-page frankness before all the world, and read avidly by that great multitude which tends to be gleeful when the Methodists "get theirs."

In these pages is presented the whole Bonafede story, which the newspapers could not know, nor would have printed if they had found it out. Its marrow is the marrow of ecclesiasticism in the bones of Methodism.

Whether you like Methodists or not—and, of course, you do or you don't; there's no middle position—you must admit that they have what amounts to an instinct for the spotlight. At times they enjoy it, when they shouldn't; at other times they dodge it, when its revelations might be wholesome. But, for better or worse, there they are; endless good copy for the reporter who tries to know his business.

It is their inescapable legacy from John Wesley.

II

"So Bonafede had a field day?" remarked Colonel Burlington. "He would. Always does, when it can be arranged. And he usually knows how to arrange it, or did, before this crash I was telling you about. What sort of recovery he will make, of course nobody can tell. If he's not physically broken, he'll come back. I know Bishop Bonafede."

It was the end of a London summer. Two Americans sat in the lounge of the National Liberal Club, around the corner from Whitehall. They had been guests of a Methodist knight at a luncheon in that Victorian sanctuary. Much of the table talk dealt with the place of worship sometimes pridefully called the "Cathedral of Methodism," but, more simply and accurately, "Wesley's Chapel," in the City Road.

One of the two men, Professor Athelstan Dailey, head of the history department in a Middle-West college, found it variously profitable to cross the Atlantic as often as professional means would allow. His companion, a fellow-Methodist, and more recently arrived, had no more than the tourist's excuse for being in England. They were old friends, and, as expatriates will, found peculiar solace in each other's company. The Colonel had been bringing his friend down to date in the matter of news from home.

"What you say about Bishop Bonafede's breakdown at the Calder commencement is disturbing," said the professor, "even though I'm not enamored of the bishop. I was thinking, while Sir Charles was talking about Wesley's Chapel, of the time, a couple of years ago, when Bishop Bonafede preached there. Did you ever hear the story?"

"Why, no," said Colonel Burlington. "An American Methodist bishop in John Wesley's pulpit is not so unusual as to make a story, I should think."

Professor Dailey, with his half-conscious and slightly awkward approach to the English manner, said, "Quite. But there were circumstances. The bishop is English-born, you know; comes from the heavy woolen district of Yorkshire. He had let it be known in the West Riding that he was to occupy the City Road pulpit, and an excursion of Bonafedes and their connections to the fourth remove descended on London for the occasion. The fortunes of the Bonafedes—some of them—have been looking up since the bishop's family emigrated. They say it was a strange and motley company that swelled the City Road congregation—prosperous mill-owners and their families, a couple of Sir Thomas Liptons in miniature, and even the mayor of a thriving little borough near Huddersfield, together with many cousins of lesser degree. The City Road sidesmen were greatly impressed, and the story is on the way to becoming a minor legend in London Methodism,—a sort of Methodist combination of Benjamin Franklin, Dick Whittington, and P. T. Barnum."

"Hadn't heard of it," said Colonel Burlington. "You've evidently been specializing in Bonafede antiquities this trip. What else have you discovered?"

"Well, I've learned that Bonafede had a hard start," the professor answered. "And that, if it were known, might make a difference when the brethren at home assume to sit in judgment on him. You see, I was down in the bishop's native haunts last month."

"On the Bonafede trail?" the Colonel suggested.

"No, not exactly. Though you might almost think so. But the town where the bishop was born has a rather romantic ruined abbey, with its reminders of Henry VIII and Oliver Cromwell. That was my first interest in the place. Once there, it was not difficult to discover that the district was one of the first homes of the shoddy trade, and that the town is still a shoddy center."

"Shoddy!" Colonel Burlington laughed. "What's shoddy, or the abbey either, got to do with Bartelmy Bonafede?"

"Don't laugh. I told you he had a hard start. Let me sketch for you the background of his childhood, as I saw it. Balaklava Terrace is a drab little street of this drab little town called Thornlea, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. In that part of the country, where woolens are woven for the whole earth, shoddy is anything but comic. It has both business and social standing. My economist colleagues on the campus at home recognize shoddy in their treatises as a laudable example of the utilization of what otherwise would be waste material.

Thornlea exists to illustrate that thesis. Shoddy is the breath of its life.

"But with all its admitted usefulness, shoddy is shoddy; and I suppose a town which specializes in it cannot help being subdued to the fibers it works in. So Thornlea was, and is; and our own Bishop Bartelmy Bonafede, authentic child of Balaklava Terrace, Thornlea—how could he escape?

"Do you know much about shoddy, by the way, Colonel? No? Neither did I. But I found out a lot about it in Thornlea, where it is very much at home. Shoddy, as everybody should know, but doesn't, begins by being worsted or woolen rags; just rags. But there are vast differences in rags. They may have been royal raiment, in fact or merely figuratively, as having been worn for virtue's sake.

"Battlefields have always been rich in rag deposits, though if the uniforms of those who fell there were shoddy in the first place, as millions of them were, the profits of the second gathering and processing are discounted somewhat. Rags come from next door, and from far places of the earth. No famine or pestilence or earthquake-smitten area of the Orient is so remote that it has not sent dead men's rags to Thornlea."

"You're not serious when you say that, of course," the Colonel interjected. "Not dead men's rags, at any rate. There are limits to my credulity, you know."

"My dear Colonel, I assure you it is precisely as I say. The rag merchant is no respecter of the amenities, or of places. Battlefields, back alleys, my lady's boudoir, are all the same to him. But don't think he is a befouler of his customers. He has processes which take out the dirt, the blood, the mud, the germs, and all that sort of thing, and leave nothing but thoroughly aseptic fibers. They're *more* than sanitary when they start to become cloth once again.

"The special value of all this raw material is that, not being really raw, but having paid for itself once, it is therefore a sort of salvage, and salvage-cheap. It is a short-cut to new cloth. Shoddy has various forms, and names to match—mungo, extracted wool, flocks, noils. I was told by a Thornlea philosopher that Thornlea can manage to use anything which once grew on a sheep's back and is still long enough to have two ends.

"Shoddy must have had a lot to do with the bishop's early training. He was just in his teens when his father gave up his business in Thornlea, and decided on America as his only hope. Indeed, I have a theory that you can explain much about Bishop Bonafede if you remember that he was out of the sixth grade before he was out of the atmosphere of shoddy."

"I wonder," said Colonel Burlington. "It depends on what you think there is to explain. Remember the talk we had on your front porch when I stopped off in May for the Leyton Center dedication? You believe Bonafede has made a mess of life. I believe he's made a go of it, even if this collapse means he's through. I'm a man of ideas; you're an idealist. That's why we differ. And now, since the rain seems to have quit, if you don't mind I'll stroll along the Embankment. Remember, you're dining with me tonight at the Victoria. I'm asking a new Englishman to meet us; one of those Ministry of Information men who helped Northcliffe to win the war. He knows young Bonafede,—says he gave him his start as a war correspondent."

CHAPTER II

I

Professor Athelstan Dailey was more nearly right than so casual an observer deserves to be. Shoddy and Thornlea had left their mark on Bishop Bartelmy Bonafede. The place ground into his soul both the taint and the terror of shoddy. It made him an easy picker-up of borrowed and re-worked ideas; and it put into his heart the perpetual dread of being discovered for other than he seemed.

His father, while not directly in shoddy, was affected, like all Thornlea folk, by the vicissitudes of the trade. He was a master carpenter in a small way.

In the late sixties and early seventies of the last century, this town of Thornlea enjoyed its customary ups and downs. Its chief trade languished or flourished, affected by causes which few in the town clearly understood, and no one could control. And the ups and downs of shoddy were necessarily the ups and downs of the little shop in the Cliff Road, and, by consequence, of the little four-room-and-scullery cottage in Balaklava Terrace, just on the wrong side of the line between Lower and Upper Thornlea.

Into the varying fortunes of this cottage and this shop came Bartelmy, first-born of Luke and Hannah Bonafede, at the slack period between the ending of the Civil War in America and the beginning of Napoleon the Little's grandiose adventure which finished so flatly at Sedan.

When little Bartelmy was ready for dame school, Thornlea began to have one of its flush intervals. The Franco-Prussian War gave Bartelmy a dame-school education.

Then came the debacle of Sedan, the siege of Paris, the triumphal entry of the Prussian king, on his way to become, at Versailles, the German Emperor. Then the Commune. And the bottom dropped out of the shoddy market.

As shoddy orders fell off, the carpenter jobs which depended on them became fewer in number and more difficult to get themselves paid for. Luke Bonafede in spirit was gentle and sensitive, and when the slack days came, he had more worries than the lack of work. Even in good times he managed badly the simple bookkeeping which his shop required, but in dull times his troubles began with the first entries in cash book and journal, and progressed by increasing distresses to the agonies of collection.

As Bartlemy came to be ten years old or so, the bad trade had become, if anything, worse. And his father practiced a weak man's evasion by using the boy for the more distasteful collection errands.

On a Saturday night in the black time, therefore, he gave Bartelmy a note to deliver.

"Wash thisen a bit, an' tak' that to Mr. Jessop, on Abbey Ridge," he said. "Happen 'e'll pay it this time; it's little enough, an' 'e's made plenty a' promises. If 'e does pay it, we'll 'ave a roast pork supper when tha' comes back. Careful tha' duzent lose a penny, nah!"

Bartelmy's mother was at her knitting. The knitting must go on, be the fortunes of the family for the moment good or bady. She knit all the children's stockings, and Luke's as well. As for darning, Luke sometimes said that he never really enjoyed wearing his stockings until Hannah had darned them a bit.

Hannah Bonafede looked up from her needles, without stopping her work; a slender, once comely woman, and still not unpleasant to the eye. Her friends said she had married beneath her. Certainly her accent and manner had touches of a world beyond Balaklava Terrace, and she scorned to use the accent of her neighbors, though she had more than a trace of the local idiom.

"Nay, Luke, why forever send the lad? A great big man like you—what's to hinder you going yourself?"

But Luke Bonafede, well aware, were he to undertake the errand up Abbey Ridge, that Mr. Jessop would be certain to find some new excuse for putting him off, shrank from the encounter as if it were some physical torment. He had no shame for this weakness, any more than for his trick of relapsing, in spite of his wife's tutelage in proper speech, into the broad Yorkshire of the shop and the mill.

"Tha' knaws, Hannah," he told his wife, mildly, "ony man can manage me. They mak' silly excuses, an' Ah knaw they're silly, but Ah allus find misen ahtside t'door, wi' no brass; an' all Ah can remember is the way Ah axed ther' pardon for worritin' me betters. Bartelmy cannot do waur, an' 'e isn't so easy shamed."

"Yes, father," Hannah said, "I know how you feel. But you don't consider the lad. He *is* 'shamed. He has no better stomach for this sort of thing than you have. If you would just make up your mind not to be put upon, you could make Jessop pay, and all the lot."

"Well, that's reight enough;" admitted Luke, "but Ah just can't, and theer's an end. If Bartelmy's not to fetch t' money, then we mun mak' shift wi'out it."

"Make shift, you may well say," Mrs. Bonafede repeated, acidly. "I know what that means. Isn't there even a few shillings left from the shop takings this week?"

Luke sighed. "Nay, how could ther' be? Ther' was nobbut ten shillin' for Sylvester, an' 'e grumbled rarely ovver that. Sed 'e wor good enough joiner to deserve a paand. But ther' were nowt more in the till."

"Well," said his wife, with a touch of bitterness as she echoed his words, "I've 'nowt more' in the house, either. Even if we got any money now, there's no chance for a Sunday joint, though I nearly forgotten what a decent bit of beef tastes like. There's some bread in the piggin, and we've enough tea and rhubarb for our breakfast in the morning, and a bit of oatmeal for the children's porridge. And that's all, Luke, my man. You ought to know by now what I have to do with. There's bound to be an end of contriving, sometime."

With the smell of soap still on him, his neck-scarf tied under his chin and the ends tucked into his coat, Bartelmy set out obediently but forlornly enough, carrying the Jessop bill and a respectfully appealing note addressed to "Samuel Jessop, Esq."

Like other Thornlea worthies, literally of the shoddy aristocracy,—the Tanners, the Issots, the Savilles,—Samuel Jessop had laid the foundation of his fortune in the days, then not long past, of the Franco-Prussian war.

A Thornlea man he was through and through; illiterate, canny; with a streak of nearness all his own. He was still so close to his days of struggle that their more obvious marks were not yet worn away. The very house toward which Bartelmy clumped in his clogs on this raw autumn night was a shameless revelation of the Jessop preference for expensive and ostentatious ugliness.

The fame of his "elegant modern villa-mansion" was no mere local repute. It had reached to London itself, and had been immortalized in the sacred pages of *Punch*. As *Punch* got the story, Sam Jessop, then rapidly becoming rich, and struggling mightily to become the "Samuel Jessop, Esq." of Luke Bonafede's note, bought an eligible site on Abbey Ridge, in later days referred to always by Thornlea cynics as Shoddy Hill, and gave an unlucky architect the commission and those successive instructions in design and ornament which had resulted in this ornate monstrosity.

In one of the early consultations, the architect, with bland and flattering deference, inquired, "And what sort of an aspect had you thought the house should have, Mr. Jessop?"

"Haspect?" that worthy climber had repeated, as nearly as the unfamiliar word and his own untempered tongue allowed, "haspect? Wot's that? Does it go wi' a right mansion? 'As Walter Tanner's new 'ouse got one? 'Cos if it 'as, let's 'ave one just like 'is, on'y bigger!"

II

It was to this "Norfolk Lodge" and its bigger "haspect" that Bartelmy had come on his unwanted and dubious errand. He knew his place, and went to the back entrance, which the cook opened at his timid knock. Cook, almost at the last of her Saturday work, was fairly cheerful in the prospect of early bed and late getting up the next morning. Besides, in her heart she liked boys, as good cooks do.

"Sit yo' daan, lad," she said, friendly enough. "Sit yo' daan o' that chair, while I take yore letter to Mester Jessop in t' libr'y."

So here sat Bartelmy, from his straight-backed chair surveying the kitchen of what was to him a great house. It was evidence, to his awed eyes, not of mere money, but of limitless wealth.

He gazed at the rows of gleaming utensils hanging on the walls. His mother had two or three iron cooking vessels. His eye measured the wide and deep range. The kitchen at Balaklava Terrace had the usual little open fire, with a tiny oven on one side and an iron water-box on the other. Different as its appurtenances were from the equipment of his mother's kitchen, the Jessop display was not exactly a mystery. It was merely unbelievably lavish and rich; scaled to proportions far outside what ordinary humans could need or even use.

To Bartelmy it had an authentic eloquence. It spoke of feasting, not of meals. It suggested the glorious opulences of a perpetual Christmas. He could well imagine this kitchen as a shrine where geese and fowls and turkeys became glorified burnt offerings; or an exposition hall to which vegetable marrow, and pineapples, and kidney potatoes, and huge roasts of beef, and legs of mutton, and meat pies, and deep dishes of fruit overlaid with delectable brown crusts, and sponge cakes, and pastries, and Stilton cheese, came and went in profuse and endless richness.

That he had begun the day with bread and dripping and tea, and that his noonday meal had been dry bread and a rind of cheese and more tea, and that his supper, if Mr. Jessop proved in complaisant mood, would be a slice of roast pork, bought ready cooked from the pork butcher's, or, if his errand proved futile, just nothing at all—this did not prevent him from conjuring up visions of the feasts which this mighty kitchen must regularly produce, not as a magician produces marvels from his hat. His child's imagination was quickened by the certainty that for him any supper whatever must depend on the word which would presently issue from the library.

And, of course, the word was—no supper. The commercial aspect of the unpaid bill meant little to Bartelmy, but when the kindly cook brought her message, gently enough, he would have died before he would have told her what bitterness of meaning her words held for him and the Bonafedes who awaited his return. There it was; no supper. Also, as he could not forget, no Sunday dinner. His mother had made that clear.

"Mester says," so cook reported, with the air of one reciting a formula, "he thinks the bill ought not to 'ave been brought so late in the day, and a Saturday, too. He 'asn't enough money in the 'ouse to pay it now, because 'e's paid out all he thought to bring 'ome. Says he'll send in and pay it some day next week."

Cook, discerning the child's utter dejection, suddenly dropped her messenger's tone and accent.

"Nay, but tha's hungry, bairn. Ah can see that, plain. Here, let me cut thee a slice o' bread an' butter. Tha' can eyt it as tha' gooas hooam."

Swiftly and expertly she cut, not one slice, but two, and spread the butter royally, scorning resort to Thornlea's thrifty trick of scraping most of it off again. In a generous excess of pity she turned out the last third of a jar of Dundee marmalade, and smeared that ambrosia thickly over the butter.

"Nah," she said, in purest Thornlea, "tha's gotten summat to stay thi stummick for an 'aar or two;" and turned away from Bartelmy's confused thanks.

The boy who plodded slowly and, despite the good bread he munched, unhappily down Abbey Ridge Road had not yet learned, if he ever did, to analyze his feelings. But he knew he was the center of a black and impotent misery. His frequent hunger was the acute part of it, but back of the hunger was the old desperate fear that he would always be hungry, the fear that had been with him all his childhood. Hunger might be the proper and necessary thing for people like him and his; he didn't know. Proper or not, he hated the Jessops and all their sort, not for being rich, but for keeping him from his slice of roast pork.

The windows of the houses, gas-lit and cheery, into which he looked on the way home added to his dull, resentful distress. For in some of them he could see, through the Nottingham curtains, the familiar signs of Saturday night supper impending. It was a little early for the full flavor of that rite, but an occasional housewife relished the observance the more, since she knew it for a sort of spendthrift joy, and must needs set the table while yet her family lingered among the shops and stalls of the High Street. The late supper of Saturday night is an ancient institution; it holds a flavor of secular license which the Sunday dinner, climax of the week's provisioning though it may be, is unable, by reason of the day's austerities, to offer.

His mother, inured as she was to respectable Christian poverty and orthodox Christian resignation, would have been shocked if she had guessed the wickedness of her little boy's thoughts. For a ten-year-old boy, who lived in a four-room cottage and went to the Wesleyan Chapel, to think as he did about a gentleman like Mr. Jessop, who lived in a mansion and went to Church, just because that gentleman did not find it convenient, late on Saturday night, to pay a tradesman's trifling bill, was very naughty indeed. And this Bartelmy could have found out, not only at home, but at his Sunday School on Spring Wood Hill, if he had ever asked. But asking for information on the boundaries of ethics was something little Wesleyan boys took special pains never to do. They were told enough, as it was.

When he got home the younger children were in bed. Their mother had told them, with a choke in her throat, that if Bart had good luck she would waken them when he came back, and they could come down to supper. She was not greatly surprised, nor, to be sure, was his father, when the boy came home with nothing but Mr. Jessop's cheap excuse and easy promise, and half the bread and marmalade.

"We'll save that for the little 'uns in the morning," said his mother shortly.

He slid into bed beside his two smaller brothers, and fell asleep by and by, exhausted by hunger, silent tears, and by his wishes that manifold disaster might come upon all who owed his father money and would not pay.

III

Next morning's breakfast was a dreary thing. Mrs. Bonafede got it over as quickly as possible. Then she put on a shawl over her house dress, which was quite the correct mode at so early an hour, but which would have scandalized Thornlea if seen two hours later, and went out by the back door. All the Bonafedes knew where she was going, and her word as she let go the door-snek was addressed to nobody in particular. "I'm going over to grandfather's," she said. Grandfather's was a retreat always open, but not to be used save in extremity.

Luke Bonafede sat in the "room," aimlessly picking out tunes from "Hymns Ancient and Modern" on the squeaky little harmonium, as was his Sunday morning habit, observed more faithfully, if anything, in bad times than in good.

Soon Mrs. Bonafede was back. "We're to go to grandfather's for dinner," she said to Bartelmy, who was wiping out the clumsy panshon, after washing up the breakfast things. "Tell your father."

There was no need. All hands knew. In the room father was running his great stumpy fingers over the keys, and singing, in rather pleasant tenor, one of his favorite minor tunes from the old book.

"We're to go to grandfather's for dinner, father," Bartelmy said, not as a news bringer, but merely because he had been told to say it. And Luke Bonafede scarcely interrupted his singing to answer, "I thowt as much. All reight."

So everything might have gone on to the end of the Thornlea chapter, with no beginning of any other. But a Christmas came which was unlike other Christmases. Instead of a little work; none. Instead of an occasional dinner at Grandfather Oldroyd's many meals there; and increasing gloominess at home.

It was Betsey Bennett, grandfather's old housekeeper, who set in motion the machinery of change. One day when the Bonafedes had gone back to Balkalava Terrace after Betsey had given them their tea (a knife-and fork affair it was, too—no mere formality of thin tea, thinner bread and vanishing butter), she came in from the kitchen, giving her wrinkled hands a final wipe on her apron.

Betsey, for all her grimness, had a heart. And she was a woman with more privileges than she usually cared to exercise. Just now she intended to speak plainly to her employer, and she knew he would not rebuke her.

"Mester," she said, as she stood before his chair, "Yo' knawed when Luke Bonafede wed Hannah that it wor a chancy match."

Jonas Oldroyd nodded. "I knew that, Betsey," he said, "but they cared for each other, and do yet, for aught I know. But happen something's wrong; is there?"

"Nowt wrang," Betsey admitted; "they get on as weel as ony, an' better nor some. But everybody knaws 'at trade's bad. Luke's out o'work. When he'll get summat to do, noabody knaws. You're feeding him an' his ommost all t' time, an' a body can see he dusna like it. Noa honest man wod."

The old man was puzzled. He knew Betsey was driving at something; but what?

"Wumman," he said, in mock severity, "you have something on your mind. I can see that. Come now; out with it."

"Well, Mester," said Betsey with a frosty smile, "if yo're offended, yo'll just ha' to be offended. But it's in ma mind to ax you', wi' yo're wife long deead, and not no other childer, what yo' meean to do for Hannah in t' long run?"

"Why, Betsey, what are you thinking about? Do you mean what do I intend to leave her when I die?"

"Ah, that's it," and Betsey looked grim again, though inside she was as soft as butter, and Grandfather Oldroyd knew it.

So he said, "That's a bit of a question, Betsey. To tell you the truth, there won't be as much as I could wish, but whatever it is will be for Hannah and her children."

Betsey spread her hands wide. "Then why not let 'em 'ave some on it nah an' saave 'em eytin' t'bread o' charity?"

"My bread is not the bread of charity," he said with a suspicion of resentment; "they're my flesh and blood, and if I choose to do my duty by them, who's to say me nay?"

"Noaboddy but Luke himself," Betsey countered. "He's nooan o' yo'r flesh an' blood, if t' others are, an' he's got his proper feelin's. But, Mester," and her pleading heart crept into her voice, "yo' can do yo'r duty better nor this way. Couldn't yo' lay yo'r hands on a hundred paand, if yo' thowt it wod set Luke on another rooad, an' mak' him t' upstandin' joiner he used to be?"

"I could, of course, with a little contriving," Grandfather Oldroyd admitted. "But what lasting good would it do? It would soon be spent."

Betsey unlimbered her biggest gun, knowing that it would shake his foundations, but sure that nothing less would do.

"Mester Oldroyd," she said slowly, "Hannah's allus been my favorite, iver sin' she wor a little 'un, an' it stands to natur' yo' care for her more nor I do. An' Ah'm fond of t' childer, too. Soa it's nowt as Ah want to say; but if Luke Bonafede could get to America wi' his wife an' bairns he could mak' a new beginnin'. He'll niver do it i' Thornlea."

The old man was shaken. But not so much as Betsey had feared. She did not know that the same idea had occurred to him more than once.

After a few moments, he asked her, "Betsey, what makes you so sure about America?"

"Why, that scapegrace nevvy o' mine in a place they call Philadelphia. He worn't much here, but he writes that he's drawin' gooid money theer, an' 'e says men wi' trades can allus get a job."

"Well, Betsey, I'll admit I've thought sometimes that America might be the best way out for Luke. I know he must be troubled, more than his need will let him say, about what little we do for them. The one thing that has held me back is that if they go, we shall be more alone than ever, you and I, in this old house."

"That's reight, Mester", Betsey conceded, "an' it's been a worry i' ma mind, too. But we're owd, us two. Ah can't serve yo' many more years, an' yo'r awn work is ommost done. P'raps t' wisest thing we can do in aar owd age is to help these young 'uns get a new start. An' Ah believe they'd rather have one big help nah an' be done wi' it than get all these meals, 'at reminds 'em iv'ry day abaht ha' poor they are."

"I suppose," said Grandfather Oldroyd, "that we must't think of our own feelings. And no doubt Hannah would rather get a little money from me now than think she could get it only by my death. We'll look into this America idea of yours, at any rate."

And that was the beginning of the end of Thornlea for the Bonafedes. The "America idea" was looked into, by Grandfather Oldroyd, by Luke and his wife, and, by Bartelmy also, although nobody had asked him to consider it. He studied the big atlases in the Free Library. He spent hours with the *Scientific American* and the two great American magazines which the library boasted, *Harper's* and *The Century.*

The investigations by the others were not more fascinating, but they produced more immediate results. A passage was booked for Luke Bonafede in February. He was to go first, and to Philadelphia. Then, as soon as he found a steady job, he was to send for the rest of the family.

February came, and Luke Bonafede vanished into the west. After four long weeks of waiting for it, the letter arrived announcing his safe arrival. Betsey's nephew had met him, and he had found work almost the first day, but he was not sure how long it would last.

It lasted only a month, and Luke wrote that he had been told New York was a better field for his special sort of skill. So he was going to New York at once.

That proved a good move. He found a job, and fair wages, and a good prospect of steady employment. After a few weeks the prospect became a practical certainty, and the waiting

Bonafedes greeted joyfully his welcome message, "Come as soon as you can."

The end of May found them on the swiftest ship of her time, the "Alaska" of the Guion Line, and, on a lovely morning of early June, Bartelmy, hanging over the rail as the ship came up the North River, and scanning the crowd on the dock-end, said to everybody, "I see father!"

IV

Bartelmy's days in New York were not many, but while they lasted they set forward his education far beyond Thornlea's imaginings.

He got a job; at fifteen he was looking back at school as part of the old world. Here all things had become new. Who would go to school, when three dollars a week—twelve shillings, no less—could be had at the start in June, rising to four dollars by January?

Ostensibly office boy to a firm of Broadway lawyers, Bartelmy found himself a much more useful functionary. He was the daily joy of half a dozen law-students, who appraised his perfect British quality at its full. They chortled over his clothes, his "boots", his mop of unbarbered hair, but most of all over the richly-flavored Yorkshire of his speech. They were New Yorkers of the keenest; and here was something deliciously different. He was the unconscious evoker of a wealth of salty humor whose discovery made these law clerks think themselves as good as Bill Nye.

Bartelmy was yet far from knowing how to meet that sort of public attention. He knew that it was not flattering, and he didn't like it. So he sought the shortest way to end it.

The shortest way, of course, as always, was conformity. So he forced himself to hobnob with other office boys, in spite of their quite obvious delight in "de greenhorn." He lunched at street stands, sharing three-cent lemonade and two-cent sinkers with chance acquaintances among newsboys. He learned to hop the tail of a truck, greasy with commerce from the docks and William Street, whereby he was able to study the vernacular at the source. From the cashier he borrowed money for a new suit, bought in the showiest clothing store on the Bowery, and therefore shoddy enough to feel natural. He endured the embarrassing ministrations of a Park Row tonsorial parlor, whose high priest celebrated over his head such mystic rites as Thornlea's barber, Toshy Bishop, would have thought sheer swank, if not superstition. And he read the *Evening Journal* of that day, a new venture whose four pages of flippant froth seemed to Bartelmy the essence of all wit and wisdom.

But things were not going well on East Eighty-first street. The dark rooms, the uncomprehending neighbors, the smells, and those drear unoccupied hours which afforded no antidote for the immigrant's deadly homesickness, were slowly breaking Hannah Bonafede's fine courage.

It was something distinctly to her credit that she complained only when she must. One day she said to her man, "Luke, lad, this surely isn't America. They told us it was such a big place. But here we are in far poorer rooms than our old house at Thornlea, and I've nowhere to go when I get outside 'em. I'm afraid, Luke; afraid I'll give up, and that's something neither of us can afford. What's to be done?"

Luke had guessed, before Hannah spoke, how nearly spent she was. He knew that she would not speak as long as she could fight her battle with any sort of hope.

"What think yo', lass?" His question was at once recognition of the problem and confession of dismay. "What *is* to be done?"

"Nay, Luke, I cannot say. But something. There's the children with no chance, too. They won't go to school; everybody's at 'em. And I'm not fit to take their part. If we stay here, we'll soon be getting to be fair heathen. We can't seem to get used to the churches, an' when you come home you've just your pipe and the paper and bed. Happen your pipe is some comfort, but you know I can't smoke. Oh, Luke," and deep yearning spoke in her voice, "we came to America for a better chance. Let's get away from this place. New York isn't America; it can't be. Don't you think we might begin to look for the America they told us about?"

"Well, lass, it's a bit queer that tha' should ask that. Theer's a chap where I work 'as been talkin' to me the very same way. He's 'eard of a lot of building 'at's goin' on sumwheer up t' country at a place called Nepperhan, an' he says yo' can live in reight houses, wi' grass an' a tree or two abaht.

Ah've well nigh promised him to go an' look it ovver next Sunda'. Let's booath try it; it's nooan so far, he says."

They tried it; the whole family of them. The boys walked the endless blocks down Third Avenue to Forty-second Street and the Grand Central Depot, and all took train for Nepperhan. Almost before they had fairly found themselves, in the strange, long coaches, the train thundered out of the tunnel and swung round the curves of Spuyten Duyvil, and their amazed eyes feasted on the lordly Hudson and the towering Palisades. After a few miles of that glorious panorama, they came to Nepperhan. Up beyond the business center were green things a-growing, and "reight" houses. Sure enough, there were buildings in process, and Luke felt confident he could get taken on.

"But what about Bartelmy?" asked Hannah, as homeward bound, they were dreading the grim tenement after their day of unaccustomed brightness.

And Bartelmy spoke up with—for him—a new confidence which almost alarmed his mother. He had not fellowshiped in vain with New York's office boys. "Never mind about me. I can get a job anywhere," he said, and, within a week after they moved to Nepperhan, proceeded to do so. His resignation from the Broadway law office had been without regret on either side.

In those days Nepperhan had a dock or two, and a steamboat service to New York. The boat, "Katie Mylius", daily carried down river a few score passengers and much freight from the riverside factories; and brought back all sorts of raw materials for the factories and produce for the suburban stores. And one evening Bartelmy came home and reported himself possessed of a job; four dollars a week as shipping and receiving clerk on the Mylius dock. "Got it because I write a good hand," he explained.

V

It was a short and inglorious career. While Luke Bonafede worked faithfully on commuters' new houses, and the other Bonafedes were happy in a five-room cottage far up the hill, within walking distance of his work, Bartelmy, from his shanty office at the dock-end, contrived each day a worse confusion than the last. He had found himself in one place whose law perforce was accuracy; its goal, completeness. When he failed to notice three rolls of carpet or two crates of cabbage, so that they were missing from his tally sheets, the office asked caustic questions, and seemed to expect civil answers.

One Saturday night, when he stopped for his pay envelope at the office near the dock's landward end, the head clerk broke the news to him as gently as he could, for he had been drawn to Bartelmy because of the sheer friendliness of the boy.

"Cap'n Frank Mylius says to tell you you'd better look for another job, Bartelmy. He says your handwriting is better than most, but you don't seem to know how to count and check. And counting and checking isn't just a catch-as-catch-can business; it makes you or breaks you, when you're supposed to be handling stuff that has to be paid for."

Bartelmy's heart began to thump. Then you could lose your job, even in America! Something he thought the Bonafedes had left behind in Yorkshire had followed him—he was out of work! Not that he liked work, or had any interest in its meaning, but the terror of being jobless was in his marrow, and he had thought America a place which would make that terror impotent. It did not occur to him to ask why his job was gone. Jobs came and went. That was the way with jobs, in England. Evidently in America, too.

Already he was too big a boy to cry before men, but Bookkeeper Onderdonk saw the fear in his eyes, and thought to allay it.

"I'll tell you what to do, Bartelmy. You need country air. That hole of an office on the dock is no place for a boy like you—and gaslight is bad for your eyes. My wife's brother has a dairy farm up the Putnam line a ways; and he told me the other day he wanted a boy. How would you like farm life?"

Bartelmy didn't know. He had never tried it, and knew less than nothing about it. But try it he would, if it was a job. He would try anything. Without thought, without effort, his whole concern was centered on getting rid of the terror.

In New York he had taken the first work that offered. In Nepperhan likewise. And he would do it again. He had no desire to wait, to compare one job with another, to think what sort of future one or the other might offer. Blindly he grasped at Onderdonk's suggestion.

Bartelmy went homeward up the hill that night with more than the usual weariness of the long day to subdue him. He sobbed out his story at his mother's knee; and after the first moment of dismay she comforted him as mothers must; but he knew she did it all the easier because he had prospects. Farm meant no more to her than to her child; only a job. Father Luke was sympathetic, but, as usual, neither resourceful nor communicative.

VI

Monday morning found Bartelmy exploring the wilds of the Putnam Division. Following Onderdonk's directions, he left the train at North Prospect, and struck out under the August sun.

He had been walking for perhaps an hour when the buildings just ahead of him seemed to fit the description Onderdonk had given him of Uncle Joseph Van Tassel's place. A low house stood on a hillside giving down on the little river; a house overshadowed by century-old trees, with farm buildings beyond, and what even Bartelmy could guess was an orchard on the upper side of the road.

Now Bartelmy had his manners with him, in spite of his bewilderment away from town streets and buildings, so Mrs. Van Tassel, washing the milk things on the back stoop, was quite taken with her first impression of this lad of evidently alien speech, standing before her with cap in hand.

"So you want to work for us, do you? Well, you look as if you needed feeding, too. You'll find Mr. Van Tassel down in the pickle field yonder." And she pointed to a square plot of green and brown two hundred yards away, where Bartelmy could see a sort of shelter, and figures moving among the green rows.

Joseph Van Tassel, spare and harried-looking, was one of those Yankee-Dutch blends in whom the traditional marks of his ancestry had almost cancelled each other out. Because he was not thrifty as the Dutch are thrifty, nor shrewd as repute has made the Connecticut Yankee shrewd, he had not greatly prospered. Indeed, he had the disposition of a frustrated soul. The farm—a scant sixty acres of stony ground—had been in the family since Washington's time, and its owner was the only son of his father. So he must needs work the farm.

At the moment of Bartelmy's advent, Van Tassel, his three daughters and Jacob Betz, the hired man, not long over from a Suabian village, were "picking pickles". A fourth girl was helping a little, and talking more. Bartelmy assumed, of course, that every American farm grew these things called "pickles", but really it was a rather specialized business, undertaken because the three-inch cucumbers, which were not yet pickles but destined so to be, were a cash crop when delivered at the salting station two miles away.

"So Abe sent you up, did he?" Bartelmy understood him to mean Bookkeeper Abram Onderdonk, and said Yes; Mr. Onderdonk had told him that Mr. Van Tassel wanted a boy.

"Well, so I do," admitted that individual, "but I do' know as I want you. You look pretty peaked. What have you been doin'?"

Bartelmy told him about the dock shanty.

"On the Mylius' dock, eh? Well, you show it. That's not much of a place for a youngster. Do you know anything about farming?"

Bartelmy said he didn't, but his prospective employer could not possibly fathom the depth of the ignorance which that truthful word connoted. Before the day was over he had more hints of it. Bartelmy also; and through a long, blistered and muscle-tortured month the evidence appeared daily in fresh and painful abundance.

For the brief moment that Van Tassel hesitated, Bartelmy's heart was cold with dread. He would be told he did not seem likely to suit, and he would have to go home with nothing to show for this weary journey into farthest America.

But the farmer was thinking of his dark morning drives to Tarrytown with the milk, and of the steps his last boy had saved him in making deliveries, and of the consequent earlier return to the day's work of the farm, and of much beside.

So he said, to Bartelmy's glad surprise—it was the gladness of an illimitable ignorance—"When can you come?"

And Bartelmy said simply, "Now!" He added that he would need to go home for his things when the day's work should be over, but he was ready for his job on the spot.

"All right," said the farmer, "you might as well climb over the fence now and begin on these pickles. They're getting ahead of us, and it lacks an hour to dinner time."

Whereupon Bartelmy, shedding his coat, began what proved a six-weeks' torment among the cucumber vines. For when these vines begin to bear, they must be picked every day. Even a Sunday's interval makes Monday's picking a double torture. The first hour seemed interminable; when it did end he wondered how he could ever again get a straight back.

Dinner cheered him, though. It was abundant, and rich past all his experience. Grandfather Oldroyd's table was poverty, to this. Great slices of ham, with gravy that kings might gloat over; a mountain of mashed potatoes, smooth and rich with milk and butter; new bread, all the more delicious that at home new bread was forbidden as unhealthy; jellies and apple butter, and fairly intoxicating coffee; and at the last a noble confection which they called a pie, but which Bartelmy would have called a tart if it hadn't been so huge.

After the first few minutes at the table, he found courage to sort out the family and distinguish its components. There were three daughters, a tall one, a slimly graceful one, and a little, leggy one. As for the visitor, everybody was calling her "Effie". Bartelmy thought she must be about his own age. Her ease and lightness of manner seemed to him simply wonderful; he had never known a girl so self-possessed and so lively. And she, greatly to his confusion, asked the other girls if they didn't think his accent too cute for words. He had flattered himself that by his New York efforts he had effaced the mark of Thornlea.

At supper, there was actually meat again! As he rode with Jake Betz in the buckboard to the station, he rehearsed to himself the day's pains and marvels, that he might not forget anything of them when he came to sit by his mother and the others and tell the story of the crowded hours.

The next morning, by arrangement, he met Joseph Van Tassel in Tarrytown, and rode back to the farm to the tune of the rattling empty milk cans in the front of the wagon.

VII

The complete story of Bartelmy Bonafede's farm days in the shadow of the Buttermilk Hills would be a moving tale of discoveries, follies, accidents, labors unceasing, new muscles, new interests.

He quite won the heart of the Dutch Reformed pastor at

Westchester Center, by cataloging the Sunday School library for him—Farmer Van Tassel consenting—on two consecutive rainy Saturdays, and good Mr. Kuypers sounded him out about the possibility of school, with college to follow, and the seminary at New Brunswick to crown it all.

But Bartelmy knew nothing of American schools, and he had put school behind him when the family left Thornlea. As to college and seminary, Pastor Kuypers might have been talking about seats of learning in Siberia or New Zealand. Nevertheless, Bartelmy did let himself be taken into the church. One Sunday he was called up before the consistory, and made his confession of faith, with little emotion and less understanding.

The event took on added significance when he saw that the only other candidate for church membership was that same Effie Bailey, who, on his first day at the farm, had thought his accent too cute for words.

She was demure enough before the consistory, but once outside she said, "Well, Bart, I hope you'll not forget who stood by you today."

By little and by little he found out from the Van Tassel girls about Effie. Her folks lived far up the road beyond Laurel, and the milk from their five cows supplemented the output of the Van Tassel herd. The total filled the three or four forty-quart cans of milk whose contents Bartelmy and his employer distributed every morning and twice on Saturday to their customers in Tarrytown.

So Effie was often at Sawmill River Farm. Sometimes she drove over alone, on a buckboard, with cans of milk strapped behind the seat. And always she brought a strange disquiet, not unpleasant, to the Van Tassel's hired boy, who found farming so full of esoteric knowledge.

Every Sunday afternoon, Bartelmy sought his own entertainment. He explored the attic through which he passed to and from the bedroom he shared with Jacob Betz. A couple of boxes piled with old papers supplied a miscellaneous literature through which he plowed steadily, Sunday by Sunday.

The stuff that he read most eagerly was a batch of Western railway booklets and advertisements, printed tokens of the period's feverish railroad building. They had been sent to Arthur Bailey, Effie's father, and by him passed on to the Van Tassels. Somewhere in the vague and wonderful West the

Baileys had kindred—in the Sawmill River Valley the "West" was anywhere on the far side of York State. And this "literature" left little to the imagination, except to wonder how so many and varied marvels could be included in one "West". He began to think he would like to go there. Farming seemed so easy, and the soil so prolific.

When he had been at the farm for seven or eight months, and spring with its harder work was coming, Mr. Van Tassel doubled his wages, so that he was drawing eight dollars a month. On his occasional Sundays at home, his mother had ready for him such clothes as she had been able to pick up in places he never heard of, and he gave her the few dollars of his pay. She was happy in her church work, for which she found much more time than in Thornlea, and she was making friends. Father Luke had his steady job and fifteen dollars a week; no more, no less; and the two younger boys were in school, so Bartelmy knew he could ask for no help at home, even if they should look with favor on his hope of getting to the West.

Effie Bailey and he talked about the West now and then. She had felt the lure of it, too.

"They need teachers out there," she told him, "and I'm going to be a teacher. Why shouldn't I teach where there's a chance to get ahead instead of here where every other old maid in the place is ready to take the first school that's vacant?"

"I don't know what they need," commented Bartelmy, "but that's the place for farm work. Why, in the Arkansas Valley they say a man could plow a straight furrow until noon, turn around, get back home at night, and never hit a stone. Last spring I took forty stone-boat loads off the rye field, and it'll have forty more to be picked up this fall. I believe someway the stones are all the time pushed up from under. The Van Tassels have been moving 'em off these fields every year since the Civil War."

"Yes," Effie countered, "I know. But farming is farming, everywhere. If it doesn't mean stones it means some other sort of hard work. But why don't you try to get out there, if you are so tired of this place?"

"Just because. It's a long way from here, and I don't know anybody out there. Suppose I couldn't get a job?"

"Jobs are easily found in the West, I guess," said Effie. "My cousins in Kansas say in their letters that things are awful cheap out there, but everybody seems to be busy. Why, they even burned corn, instead of wood, in their stoves last winter. Somebody had to cut it and husk it, though."

"There's another reason why I don't go," said Bartelmy. "How can I get enough money to go out West, on eight dollars a month?"

As Effie had no answer to that question, she turned the talk into an easier channel.

Bartelmy ventered to consult with his mother on his next Sunday at home. She shrank from the thought, but her heart leaped a little to know that he was even considering such a venture. Her first born was no great mystery to her. She knew that, like his father, he loved security, which to her was no unalloyed good. If this America was beginning to suggest other things to him, she would help and not hinder.

"If you really want to go," she told him, "your father and I will try to find a way. You've grown a lot since you went to the farm, and you're strong for your seventeen years. I know naught of this West you talk about, but happen you would do well there."

And Hannah Bonafede that night put away five dollars of the six Bartelmy had given her. It was not the first time she had hoarded some of his wages, and now there was a matter of seventeen dollars in the queer little tea-caddy she used as a bank.

A month later she sent Bartelmy a post card. "I think there may be a chance for you to go out West," she wrote; "come in the first Sunday you can, and we'll talk about it."

Bartelmy asked for the next Sunday off, and got it. Then he said, "I've been thinking of going out West, Mr. Van Tassel."

"You have, hey? Not going right away, are you?"

"Oh, no; I don't know when; and maybe I shan't go. I've just been thinking about it."

"You've been thinking about something this long while," said Mr. Van Tassel. "Seems' if you can't think and work at the same time, either, I've noticed. Let's be getting home"; and he gave Bartelmy the lines, while he himself opened up yesterday's *New York Sun*, regularly passed on to him, a day old, by a Tarrytown customer.

For a few days after that rebuke Bartelmy was worth far more than he cost, and the farmer knew it better than Bartelmy could. Then came Sunday, and the trip to Nepperhan after the morning chores were done.

Mrs. Bonafede's church work had brought her into various contact with local charities, and a chance reference to her boy's supposed longing for the West had reached the ears of a woman whose range of interests was wider than her own. It was this woman who had given Mrs. Bonafede the idea that had prompted the post card.

"In New York", Hannah explained to her son, "there's a great charity called the Children's Aid Society. It takes orphans and other homeless children to the West and finds homes for them. Mrs. Blatchford says that a big boy always goes with each party of little boys, to help the society's agent in caring for them on the trip. They try to find some boy who wants to go out West, and the society gives him half his railway fare for his work with the little boys."

"Half?" said Bartelmy. "But half isn't any good. The ticket would cost thirty or forty dollars, perhaps more; and where can I get half of that?"

Whereupon Hannah Bonafede, though afterwards she cried about it much in private, proudly told him, "I've been saving a bit now and then out of the wages you've given me. It's your money. I've nearly twenty dollars in the tea-caddy."

Bartelmy went weak in the legs. Adventure was actually calling, but it meant adventure into the unknown, and, after all, the unknown had more menace than charm for him.

"I should have to tell Mr. Van Tassel," he said inanely even for him.

"Yes, my lad, and you'd have to do some other things. But it's only a chance, yet. I'll find out when the next party is going, and then you can apply for the job of helping with the little boys."

So he went back to the farm, Father Luke walking with him to the station, smoking, and saying little, as usual.

Effie was down on Monday with the milk. Eagerly she questioned Bartelmy about the plan his mother had, for of course he had shown her the post card.

"Of course you're going," she said. "That is, if you can get the job with the boys."

"But I don't know anybody in the West," said Bartelmy. "It would be frightfully strange, you know."

"You know!" mocked scornful Effie. "Why can't you be American? And what if it is strange! Isn't it the West? Oh, Bartelmy, I'll tell you what! You know about my cousins, who live in Kansas? Why can't you plan to go to their place? And they'd be sure to know where you could get work. Even if you had to hunt a while, living's cheap in Kansas, and I'm sure my cousins would be awfully pleased to have visitors. Probably they don't get many."

"But they don't know me," Bartelmy objected. "Why should they let me visit them?"

"Stupid! Wouldn't you be straight from their folks here, and wouldn't they want to know all about how we are and what we are doing? Why, you'd be almost as welcome as we would. Anyway, I'm going to write them a letter and tell them all about it. Then if you go they'll be expecting you."

Bartelmy, who never refused help of any sort, saw no reason for protesting against the letter, which Effie wrote that same night, while the mood was on her.

The next week came another post card from home. His mother wrote: "A Children's Aid party is going to Missouri early in January. You will have to go to New York to apply for the job of helper, but I can get some letters from people here. I hope you can spend Christmas with us."

And so one mid-December day he said goodbye to the Van Tassels, and Effie drove him and the little tin box containing all his worldly goods to the station.

"Now, don't you forget about going to Kansas," she enjoined. "It is the next state to Missouri, so it can't be much out of your way. Here's a letter to my uncle. I don't think you'll need it. And you mustn't be surprised if I turn up out there myself before long."

With their carefully matter-of-fact farewells over, and with the train vanished around the curve, Effie took stock of her feelings. "I don't know why I should bother so about that boy. He certainly does have to be shoved along. If only something could happen to him when he gets out there!"

VIII

Behold Bartelmy Bonafede, then, one slushy January day in the early eighties, standing cold and forlorn and wholly miserable in the Erie ferry house at Twenty-third Street, New York. The equipment for his Western expedition included one small roped trunk, containing almost everything he owned in the world, and one round tin box with a handle, containing all the rest except what was on his person. And that might easily be inventoried. To-wit: A much-worn gray suit, a second-hand overcoat, a checked shirt, thin underwear, home-knitted stockings, rubber boots to which an inventive Nepperhan cobbler had affixed leather soles, a celluloid collar, a made tie fastened to the collar button by a bit of elastic, and knitted mittens for his chapped hands.

His ticket read to "Odessa, Kansas." The man at the Children's Aid Society had asked him if he had any special place in mind out West. The only place whose name he knew was the place near where Effie had said her relatives lived, so he named it.

The clerk said, "Well, our party leaves the main line of the Missouri Pacific just this side of Kansas City, but if Mr. Walker is willing to go the rest of the way alone you can travel straight on to Odessa."

By nightfall the party was settled in an ancient Erie coach, rumbling out through Northern New Jersey. Mr. Walker and Bartelmy fed the twenty-five hungry little lads who constituted the "shipment." It was a simple enough meal—milk and doughnuts and an apple apiece. Bartelmy had his own provisions—Hannah Bonafede's parting gift to her big boy. She had put a lot of love into that pasteboard box, together with the currant cake and the marmalade sandwiches and the hard boiled eggs. Perhaps that was why the food held out so well. There was still one good meal left in it—pretty dry—when the long journey ended.

On the third morning the little boys' canvas beds were folded up for the last time, and soon after breakfast Bartelmy and the others separated. The Children's Aid group turned southwest at Pleasant Hill on the way to Nevada and Pittsburg; he kept on to Kansas City.

On the train, once out of Pleasant Hill, he had moments of something very like panic. He was alone; much more than a thousand miles from anybody who knew or cared for him, and his destination no more than a name to him.

At Kansas City he had a two-hour wait, and in the late afternoon the train stopped at the junction which marked Bartelmy's last change of cars. Here he was to take a branch line for the final twenty miles of his journey.

An engine stood on the other track beyond the depot, and Bartelmy looked for the coaches. None were in sight. As the agent came back from picking up the mail thrown off the now-vanishing westbound train, Bartelmy, identifying him only by his peaked cap, since otherwise he was garbed in clothes of the same nondescript shapelessness as all the other men in sight, accosted him.

"What time does the train leave for Odessa?"

"Don't ask me, young feller," said the agent, not so brusquely as he sounded. "The train is stuck in the snow five miles out, and nobody knows when she'll get here. Not tonight, that's sure. And she can't leave till she arrives. There ain't but one." He laughed at his own feeble jest.

The boy had kept up fairly well, so far. But this had not been even in his vaguely considered scheme of things. If he had won through to Odessa, at least there was somebody there whose name he knew, and who also knew his name, since Effie Bailey had written about him.

But here at the Junction—why, he had no one, and nothing. He sat down in the grimy waiting room, as near to the red-hot cannon stove as he dared, and took account of stock.

First, he had his lunch box, now almost empty and altogether uninviting. It was food no more.

Second, he had a few pennies in his pocket. And one trade dollar.

The agent, replenishing the volcanic stove, noticed his anxiety. "What's the trouble, son?" he asked. "Are you busted?"

"Not quite," said Bartelmy, "but I will be before I get to Odessa, unless the train comes soon."

"Well, it won't come tonight, that's flat. You may as well settle down until morning."

"Where can I go?" Bartelmy wanted to know.

"There's a sort of a hotel across there," and the agent pointed to a house which Bartelmy disliked at sight. "You can get meals for a quarter apiece, and a bed at the same price."

Bartelmy's dollar, then, was good for three meals and a night's lodging. But he thought best to husband his resources. So he ate once more from the box his mother had packed. Then he deliberately threw the rest of his three-days-old lunch away. He took his tin box across to the ugly house, and asked for a bed. By this time it was dark, so very soon he turned in. It was the easiest way of passing the time.

Breakfast was warm; plenty, if coarse, and highly satisfying to his uncritical appetite, and he even felt better in his mind for it. The agent looked in and said, "That train will be through the drifts by ten o'clock, and she'll start right back."

Thus Bartelmy Bonafede came, at midday, to Odessa, county seat of Fairfield County, only to learn that the Fairchilds lived six miles out, on Wolf Creek. His informant, a young fellow at the depot, told him the shortest road was straight across Paint Creek and up the Warren ravine out on to the divide, and then straight east to Wolf Creek; but there was a better way, since the big snow, by going two miles up the track and crossing Paint Creek at Johnson's place.

Heartsick, hungry, but loath to part with the half-dollar left from his hotel bill, Bartelmy did not know what to do. And so, just to be doing something, desperately eager to get where he could find some sort of relief from his sense of utter isolation, he first made sure that his little trunk was in the baggage room, and then with his tin box set off up the track for the Johnson ford. He had been told just where to turn off from the track, and he watched for the indicated landmarks.

One of these was near to proving his undoing. "When you've crossed the long trestle, it's the next road; turn east, to the creek. It's frozen, and you can cross easily," were his instructions. But he hadn't been told how to cross the trestle.

What did he know of trestles? After nearly an hour's walking, for he made slow progress, here it was—a hundred feet of wooden bridge without superstructure, spanning a deep, straight-sided gully. There was no way to cross save by stepping from tie to tie, easy enough to the initiate, but pure torture to Bartelmy, even if there had been no snow and ice to make this footing uncertain.

He crossed, somehow. Four or five times he stopped, set down his tin box and knelt in abject terror on the snow-crusted ties. One fear was spared him; the train had gone on, and he had learned yesterday that it was the only train the branch line could boast. So he did not need to worry about being trapped. And, at long last, sweating in spite of the cold and his none too heavy clothing, he found himself clean across. Just ahead must be the road to Johnson's ford; he stepped over the cattle-guard and turned eastward towards the timber which marked the course of Paint Creek.

Five minutes later the Middleton dogs saw him, and gave tongue.

CHAPTER III

I

Kansas, when the last third of the nineteenth century began, was getting itself ready to be the experiment station of American democracy.

For twelve or fifteen years the Kansas scene had been persistently turbulent. John Brown had come, and had left his mark on the state forever, before he set out for the gallows and glory by way of Harpers Ferry. Quantrell's guerrillas had sacked Lawrence. Kansas had been admitted to the Union as a free state. The Santa Fe Trail was luring its thousands further into the Golden West. The Central Pacific Railroad was stretching out towards the Rockies and beyond, to meet the line working eastward from California. Young veterans of the Civil War—the "Rebellion," they called it—were taking up homesteads or buying land from the Indians at anything from ten dollars an acre down to one or less. A few church schools, with unreasonably prophetic optimism calling themselves universities, were struggling to keep their starved professors and their crudely ambitious students together.

Henry Ward Beecher and other like-minded lovers of liberty were sending practical aid to the colonies they had helped to outfit and establish. Germans of the '48 were coming in, many of them by way of New Orleans and St. Louis. They had followed the lead of Carl Schurz, though he had established himself in Missouri, while they pushed on into Kansas.

Peter Middleton was six years old in grasshopper year. The farm where the grasshoppers had undone in a week the work of toilsome years was a quarter-section which straddled Paint Creek, in Kinne County. Here Heinrich Mittelstadt became "Henry Middleton" to all the county, which already knew him for his strong and all-including honesty, and here he dug himself in. He built one of these square, solid, unimaginative and uncomfortable limestone houses of the place and period.

Mother Middleton had slight time or inclination for interest outside her family, her house and its immediate setting. She had been an unsuccessful Yankee schoolma'am when Heinrich Mittelstadt had met and married her. They understood each other perfectly.

The boys did the milking. They fed the hogs. They chopped the firewood. They were beginning to do the farm work, led by Jim Oliver from Tennessee, a shrewd and competent black man who had come to Kansas in the Exodus. Father Middleton planned the work, but he was aging before his time, and by the middle eighties was almost past active labor himself. He spent his days in reading, widely and with discrimination. He kept much to the house, coatless and slippered, forever smoking his old German pipe. But nothing escaped him. He was one of those young men who had come out of Germany in the days following the uprising of '48, bringing with him both a fierce spirit of independence and a prideful atheism.

You would not have thought him German. In the early part of his career in America he had been associated with a few Americans, men who had brought a persistent intellectualism to the West with them. Being in those days highly impressionable, and young enough to change, he had taken on almost the accent and entirely the vocabulary of his first American intimates.

II

In the early afternoon of the day when Bartelmy set out from Odessa, Father Middleton had been talking to Jim Oliver about the fodder supply. The stack yard had not hay enough to last until the steers could be turned out on to the range. So it was decided to begin feeding out of the north forty, and go easy on the hay. Jim and Peter Middleton hitched a team to the hayrack, and took a couple of axes, for the shocks were frozen into the drifted snow around them, and must be chopped out. Father Middleton went back to his *Um die Welt* and the St. Louis *Post Dispatch*. The two smaller Middleton boys were at school; Mother Middleton, in the workroom back of the kitchen, busied herself with mysterious rites touching the stock of head cheese and coffee cake. And into this routine of a Kansas farm's winter day came Bartelmy Bonafede.

Bartelmy had stopped, irresolutely, where a narrower road branched off at right angles from the plain way to the creek. It was only a sort of lane, and yet it showed evidence of much more use than the creek road. He had no real idea of the distance he had yet to cover. Here were signs of traffic, and therefore of people. So he turned into the lane.

At the same moment Jim Oliver and Peter Middleton were driving into the yard from the north, with a hayrack load of stalks for the afternoon feeding in the timber along the creek. If they had come three minutes earlier, the wagon would have met Bartelmy on the open road, with the slightest exchange of greetings as they passed, for the dogs would have been less demonstrative. They knew the bounds of the farm. As it was, they saw Bartelmy first, and dashed off to attack the intruder. Then Peter caught sight of him, and was down from the wagon in one jump. You never knew what those dogs might do.

He shouted to the deep-voiced Tige and the yelping Hector; and he shouted also to the figure down the lane, "Don't run. Stand where you are. You Tige; you Heck! Come here!"

When Bartelmy heard the dogs, his heart pounded with surprise and fright. He had always feared dogs. Most earnestly did he want to run. But Peter's shout checked that desire, and he stood his ground. The dogs paused, to see what he would do, and in that moment Peter rushed up.

"They won't touch you now," said Peter, who saw that the stranger's fears were subsiding but slowly.

"Thank you," Bartelmy responded, with uncertain hold on his voice, "I'm not very sure about strange dogs. I was coming to the house to ask my way. You can tell me, perhaps, whether I'm anywhere near the right road to a Mr. Fairchild's? They said at Odessa I should have to go east to the creek, but this road seemed to be much more used."

"It is," Peter assented, "because we do a good deal of hauling. But it ends here. To get to Fairchild's, you go straight on to the creek, past where you turned into our lane."

All the time Peter was inspecting the other boy. He saw a slender youth of something under his own age, but evidently a stranger, and not a stranger to Paint Creek merely. This boy must have come a long way.

So he said, "If you're not sure of the road I wouldn't try for Fairchild's tonight if I were you. It's going to be dark long before you can get there, and with this snow, you could easy get lost on the other side of the divide." He wondered, without saying so, why anybody should want to get to Fairchild's, anyhow.

"But I must," Bartelmy protested, though weakly. "I don't know anybody else in this country."

"Are you visiting them, then?" Peter asked, with a little less interest. Maybe this stranger was a Fairchild himself, and, if so, to be dealt with cautiously.

Bartelmy hesitated. His excuse for this journey had seemed to him slimmer and more fantastic every hour since yesterday. How much less sensible must it appear to this matter-of-fact chap, who naturally couldn't appreciate its original urge.

"Yes," he said at last, "I'm visiting them, in a way. At least, I've never seen them, but I have a letter to Mr. Fairchild from a friend in the East who is related to him."

"No Fairchild, then," thought Peter, and his interest revived, while curiosity made him more than hospitable. Boys from the East did not come up the lane every day.

"I'll tell you what," he said eagerly, "come on in to the house and meet the folks. They'll be glad to have you stay here tonight. There's an extra cot in our room."

Peter saw that his invitation was not spurned, and so took consent for granted. He answered Jim's impatient hail with fine unconcern. "I'm going into the house with this boy," he said. "You drive on down to the timber and I'll cut across the clover field to meet you."

Mrs. Middleton did not fail her son; food and shelter could not be denied a wayfarer, and Peter's prompt adoption of the strange boy as his own guest helped Bartelmy over his first embarrassment. He could see that Peter's mother was used to boys.

When Bartelmy had put his overcoat and his little bundle on the cot in Peter's room, Peter took him to Father Middleton. This was the final ordeal.

"Dad," he said, "this is a boy who's going over to Fairchild's on Wolf Creek. He's no kin to them, though. I want him to stay here tonight, Mother says he can."

"What's his name?" asked Father Middleton. Peter hadn't asked that, so Bartelmy gave it; and added, "My home is in a place called Nepperhan, on the Hudson River near New York."

And Father Middleton said, "All right. Take good care of him, Peter. He's your guest."

At supper Bartelmy met the two younger boys, Oscar and Fred. Also he met the pride of the family, Margaretha, who had spent one year at Standish College after her high school career, which had been crowned with the salutatorian's glory at Commencement. For some reason she was home from Standish for a few days.

In the morning, Bartelmy helped Pater with the milking, and showed himself the better milker. Dairy-farm experience told as against the cruder methods of the West. He spent ten minutes making a milking stool; the first ever seen on the Middleton place. Peter enjoyed his new friend's proof of skill and said, "How'd you like to stay here, instead of going on to Fairchild's? There isn't much fun with them—just the two of them, and no near neighbors."

To Bartelmy the invitation was a most welcome word. Of course Peter was only a boy, and his father might have different views. So he said to Peter, "I'd like to. You know the Fairchilds don't mean anything to me. A girl I knew in the East told me about them, and she said she would write to them and tell them I was coming West. I just stopped at Odessa because they were the only people out here that I'd ever heard about. But there's no hurry, and if I could get work here I'd like it."

Peter said, "Let's go see Father. He may keep you."

Father Middleton did not warm to the idea. He asked questions until he discovered that Bartelmy's only farm experience had been on a few acres of stony eastern soil.

"You're not strong enough to run the lister," he said. "And you've never driven a cultivator; hoed corn by hand, I suppose. Nice job that would be on our fifty-acre corn fields. You don't know range cattle, of course. Can you ride?"

Bartelmy couldn't, and didn't dare say yes.

"There's all sorts of riding on this place, and the horses are not like your Eastern horses."

As the farmer talked Bartelmy began to understand that farming on Paint Creek meant, according to the season, such things as running a lister, driving a reaper, pitching wheat to the stackers, riding range, feeding the cattle in the timber along the creek, watching out for buckeye in the early spring, breaking colts, running a drill, and a dozen other operations he hadn't so much as heard of. Vague memories of the Santa Fe land booklets were the best knowledge he could muster.

"But, Father," Peter broke in at length, "he can milk better than I can, or Jim. And he showed me how to make this milking stool," which he held as he stood by Bartelmy at the edge of the porch.

Henry Middleton looked down at the boys over his long pipe.

"I guess Peter wants you more than I do," said Mr. Middleton. "What wages were you getting back East?"

"Eight dollars a month, sir."

"Eight dollars? Is that all? Well, it's a fact there's work enough around here, and Peter seems to like you. So I guess we can pay you that. Stay with us until spring opens anyway. Then we'll see."

III

So simply it was that he became the Middleton hired boy. And thus, with none to warn Bartelmy of all it would mean, were set in motion forces and influences which were not to stop until they had made him a Methodist bishop. And not then.

The farmhouse dining room served after supper as living room for everybody save Father and Mother Middleton. Even Miss Hamilton, the teacher of District 44, and Margaretha, when she was at home, were not above it, though Jim Oliver and the boys displayed too little interest in the niceties of deportment to suit Retha's college-formed taste.

Said Retha one early spring night at supper, "There's a visitor from the East at Fairchild's—a girl."

Bartelmy's knife dropped to the floor. Of course, the girl was Effie. But he waited until Peter asked, carelessly, "What's her name? And where's she from?"

"Lizzie Albright met Mrs. Fairchild and the girl in the store at Fairdale this afternoon; her name's Bailey, I think she said."

"That must be Effie Bailey," said Bartelmy at last, "the girl I knew back East." And he wondered what the Fairchild's had told her about his failure to present himself at their home, in accordance with Effie's letter.

"You did? And never told us? Tell us now; all about her," Retha demanded.

"I'll bet she's your girl," said Jim Oliver.

Bartelmy laughed uneasily. "Not that exactly; but she's all right. She knows her way about, Effie does. You'll all like her. She's come out here to teach, I suppose."

The friends met, inevitably, at singing school. Effie came with Lizzie Albright, since the north line of the Albrights' was the south line of the Fairchild's.

What had been told her Bartelmy did not know, and he was not anxious to find out. But he was sure she would lose no time in asking him for the facts. Effie Bailey was like that.

And so, while they greeted each other warmly, Effie saying, "You see, I've done just what I said I should," and Bartelmy asking, Paint Creek fashion, "What do you think of the West, so far?" he was casting about for an explanation which would be as near the truth as possible without offending her.

During the recess he busied himself in an effort to separate Effie from the young people of the Albright neighborhood. And then he suddenly found that there was no need of explanation.

"O, Bart," Effie said when they were for a moment by themselves, "they've told me about you at Uncle Fairchild's, how you must be too proud to visit them, and all that. But they are so queer; not a bit as I expected to find them. I don't blame you for not going."

"That's what Peter hinted," admitted Bart. "And I was a stranger to them, so they would have no reason for being anything but queer to me. Peter hasn't said much, but I know he thinks they are close-fisted, and always trying to get the best of everybody. Other folks talk the same way. So I didn't go."

"I'm not surprised," said Effie. "They are stingy and sour; and they live like poor folks, though they've got a good farm and lots of stock. I shan't stay a day longer than I can help."

"Do you mean you'll go back East?" Bartelmy asked, his relief at his own release from apprehension tempered by her evident distress and the possibility of her leaving.

"No, indeed. Daddy had a chance to sell his place, all of a sudden, and he's gone to work at the Tarrytown boatyard. So I'm not needed at home."

"And you really mean to stay out here?" the boy demanded; "you've come West for good?"

"Of course, silly. Didn't I tell you last summer I would come if I ever got the chance? Well, I'm here."

"You still think you'll be a teacher? Will you have to get more schooling?" Bartelmy could not help showing the bewilderment he felt. Here was a girl who had come out from the East with no more prospects than his own, but her spirit seemed to welcome the adventure, while his—

"Certainly I shall teach," Effie declared. "And I don't need much more schooling to make a start. I've been pumping Lizzie Albright about the school systems out here, and she says I can get a certificate easily, if I attend the Institute at Odessa this summer. About all I need extra is to read up on one or two of the special Kansas textbooks."

"But you'll be living at the Fairchilds all spring, then?" Bartelmy asked dejectedly, feeling that Effie might as well have stayed in Westchester County, for any pleasure he was likely to get out of her society.

"But I won't," Effie said scornfully. "I've got enough of them already. They may be my kinfolks, but they're not the sort of people I expected to find out west, and they're not the sort I'm used to, either. So, it's about settled that I'm to stay at Albright's. I can work, you know."

Whereupon Bartelmy felt better, and, hailing Peter Middleton, tried out the queer local formula which he had first heard only a few weeks before; "Miss Bailey, I'd like to make you acquainted with my friend, Peter Middleton."

And Peter said, also in strict conformity to the conventions, "Pleased to meet you, Miss Bailey."

IV

In Fairdale's little Methodist church, services were held every other Sunday night, the church being part of the Walnut Hill circuit, whose pastor had one other out-appointment in addition to the "head of the circuit," the sprawling ranch town of Walnut Hill.

What proved to be the last of the cold weather was on when Brother Fenwick announced a protracted meeting at Fairdale, and all the country side came out to the services.

You couldn't say they came entirely from religious interest. Much of it was that, as it has always been. But some people came for the social values of the meeting. They had always taken their neighborhood fellowship mixed with religion, and had no thought of anything different. Some came out of sheer gregariousness. Fairdale and its surrounding farms had few distractions, and, unless one had unusual resources in himself, life could be unbearably drab to those whose circumstances left them any leisure at all.

The revival proved more resultful than anybody had expected. It is not certain what helped young Fenwick to succeed where others had failed, but the steady attendance of the young people from the Middleton and Albright farms had something to do with it. Effie and Bartelmy, known as church members at the outset, and therefore drawn into the little band of helpers, found themselves forced by social pressure to "do personal work."

Before the end of the first week, conversions began to occur. Bartelmy remembered enough of the methods used by the "Primitives" in Thornlea to make himself useful without dealing directly with the kneeling penitents at the mourners' bench. Effie, lacking his familiarity with revival routine, brought to the work a sober sincerity which was far more effective than it seemed. She could not be effusive, but she could talk to young people in their own speech, and she brought down to earth and literalness much of Brother Fenwick's high-flown and second-hand evangelistic appeal.

Bartelmy met no serious difficulties until he attempted to talk to Peter. He had held off two or three nights, restrained by an embarrassment he did not even try to define. At last, urged on by Fenwick, who guessed something of what stuff was in Peter, he made the venture.

And Peter confounded him, utterly and finally! He asked simple questions which Bartelmy could not answer save with formal, stereotyped phrases. Peter pointed out flaws in his reasoning. Without intending it, he made Bartelmy realize that he was repeating formulas, artificial and mechanical. Peter admitted he would like to know more about being a Christian, but he could not follow his friend's lead in traversing the successive zones on the way to conversion.

And then, when it seemed no one could break through to Peter's real difficulty, Effie Bailey managed it, or he managed it himself as much as was necessary, with her to help.

She and Peter had become great friends, with no nonsense about their friendship, as she liked to say. To him she was a constant, secret delight. In every commonplace incident where she was involved, he had learned to expect always a touch of insight, some discerning and practical word.

Peter took her home one night, in his own new buggy, bought with the proceeds of a six months' experiment in hogs which his father had permitted and even guided. They talked about the night's meeting and its incidents.

"That song they sang tonight," said Peter, "is one I never heard before."

"Which one?" Effie asked.

"The one with the queer chorus, 'I will arise and go to Jesus.' The chorus didn't seem to belong to the other words, and the tune was too much for me."

"Oh, yes." Effie recalled the song. "I never heard it before, either. It sounds like a home-made tune, if there is such a thing. I heard the Jubilee singers once, and it reminds me of some of their 'spirituals'."

Peter had meant to lead up to a question. So he began again. "There's a good deal said in these meetings that I don't get on to. You know my father doesn't believe in religion,—any religion. I think he's mistaken, myself. But of course he's influenced me. Now, you're a Christian. Can you give me any idea of what it means to 'go to Jesus'? Don't tell me what the preacher means by it, or the church. Bartelmy says he's told me that, and I can't see it. But it must mean something, and surely you know what it is."

Effie kept silence for a little. She would not have said she was praying, but she was.

Then she spoke, with many hesitations. "You know a good deal about Jesus, of course? Well, I think when they say 'go to Jesus,' or 'come to Jesus,' what it means isn't—just being sorry for having done wrong, or wanting to find some way of escaping punishment, or even 'getting right with God.' I think it means that we've got to have a leader, or we won't get much out of life, and there just isn't any other leader worth following but Jesus. You see—"

"That's all right," Peter broke in, "there isn't. I've seen that for a long time. But, Effie, they say so much about Jesus that I don't get hold of at all. They say he is God, and yet man. They call him the Son of God and put him far away. Do I have to believe everything they say about him before I can take him for my leader? I know as well as anybody that I want some sort of center for my life, and if it could be a person such as I think Jesus was, all the better. But they tell me to believe so much more than I can take in."

"I know," said Effie; "and I wonder if anybody can take it all in. I know I can't begin to. I just feel that Jesus is more than the best any of us know, and, if he *is* alive now, in some such way as he said he would be, do you think there could be anything more wonderful in our life than to risk everything on taking him for granted in *our* lives? I mean like the old knights took their king, or like Garibaldi's men took Garibaldi, only with the world of difference there is between Christ and any other hero."

"Yes," said Peter, "that's the only place where I think I could get hold of religion. Just taking Jesus for granted, especially if in some strange way he really *is* more than the carpenter who was crucified in Palestine so long ago."

"But, Peter," Effie suggested, with a brave little trembling in her voice, "taking Jesus for granted isn't so easy. He is a fact, of course. And I believe he is more than the crucified carpenter. But if he is, he is the greatest fact in the world. Taking him for granted ought to mean taking him as Master—in earnest, don't you think?"

"In earnest? Maybe you mean that a fellow's got to put all he has into it, and take all the chances on what he gets out of it?" Peter asked, with a premonition of discovery in his question.

"Yes; I think that must be it," said Effie; and Peter said, "I know it is. I've known it all along, but I didn't see it, I mean. You're exactly right. And, Effie,—" for the moment he forgot everything else about Effie except that he wanted her to be the first to hear him say it,—"Effie, that's just what I'm going to do, from now on."

"But that's conversion," Effie said in a whisper that seemed to her as though she had shouted her joy.

"Is it? It isn't what Bart means by conversion, I guess. Maybe not what Brother Fenwick means. I don't really know what Jesus was—or is. But, whatever this is, you've shown me a peep into myself. Do you suppose it is what they mean by saying 'I will arise and go to Jesus'?"

"What else in the world could it be?"

"And I'm converted, then?"

"Yes, if you're sorry for your sins and want Jesus for your Saviour from sin. That's the promise in the Bible, you know."

"I'm sorry and ashamed enough for all the cheap and rotten things I've ever done wrong, if that's it. It seems now so horribly disloyal to what he stood for—stands for. And as for wanting Jesus for my Saviour, I can't say. I'd like to take him every way I know, that's all."

"And will you say this in the meeting?"

"Why not? Or anywhere else? The hardest thing will be to say it to dad, I guess. But I almost think he'll understand. He's kept so close to *his* ideals all these years."

As he spoke, they were turning in at the Albright gate, and Effie had just time to say, "I hope he will not only understand, but be proud. If he isn't—"

"Let's not think of that. I don't want to think of anything yet, except how you've helped me tonight. I'll never forget it."

"I don't think I shall, either," said Effie, in a voice she tried vainly to steady. And Peter, with a new estimate of this girl from the East, pretended not to notice that she trembled as he helped her from the buggy.

As he drove the rest of the way home, Peter tried to pull himself together. With his sudden, if poorly defined, discovery of a Leader, there was coming another discovery,—he needed a scheme of things in his life. Maybe it would be to make of himself the best farmer he could, for he knew that in time the home place would almost certainly come to him. But it might be something else. And he would never know what it really was unless he got where he could make a beginning of fitting himself for it. Not for the first time or the fiftieth, but now with a new directness, he thought of college. High school had hardly seemed enough, even when he took practical facts into account. He had always wished he could see further into the world of men and books, of life and truth. At college he might even find something which would satisfy his new curiosity about Jesus of Nazareth.

In the short two miles between Albrights' and home, he found time to make a new decision. Of course, in the morning he would tell his father what had happened to him; and then he would propose college for next fall. Though times were not good, Peter knew there was money enough, if his father were willing.

V

The morning after a religious crisis is a time which can discount many of its meanings, if anything can do it. And Peter was dimly aware, as he followed Henry Middleton upstairs to his room after breakfast, that talking to Effie Bailey on the way home from meeting was considerably easier than explaining himself in the full light of day to the unsympathetic rationalist who happened to be his father.

Still, he got the story told, somehow. And then he waited, for in the other's face he read a grim disapproval. Into the silence a cheap alarm clock on the bureau thrust its noisy ticking, with all a clock's indifference to storm warnings.

To Henry Middleton there was storm enough in this moment. Here was something had caught him unawares. He had lived so long in the rightness of his opinions that the possibility of another view of life being held by any member of his family had not entered his head. He had taken for granted that all the Middletons accepted his views on religion. And now he realized that he should have done more, far more. He could have taught Peter much truth, if the need of teaching had ever occurred to him. Maybe it wasn't too late yet; but now the method would need to be different. First, he must get this emotional foolishness out of the boy's head.

"I'm surprised at you, Peter," he said. "I thought you knew better than to take this revival business seriously. You certainly knew what I think about it."

"Yes, Father, I knew that. But you've never interfered, and

I thought you wanted me to think things out for myself, just as you had done."

"I did. Though I'm not saying I should. You are too young to know what to believe. And I can't have you carried away by a lot of canting nonsense. It's all right for Jim; when he gets happy he works all the better for it, and the rest of the time he keeps that colored church in Odessa from getting too foolish. But you've got a mind. You can learn, and you must. First of all, you must learn to stay clear of superstition. Young as you are, you're old enough to start looking into some of my books with me. What do you say?"

Peter hadn't much to say, except that though he would be glad to do some reading with his father, he meant to be a Christian, somehow, as fast as he could find out what being a Christian meant.

"I know what it means," said old Henry, angrily. "It means lazy preachers who don't understand half of what they preach, and don't believe the rest. It means churches always begging to be supported. It means sending badly-trained missionaries to all sorts of places where they're not wanted, and where the people have religions older and more deeply rooted than Christianity. It means being associated with hypocrites and weak-minded women. I'd hate to think of a son of mine being a Christian."

"But, Father, can't it mean something else, something better than that? Can't it mean having some of the same interest in all sorts of people that Jesus had; and living so as to be of use to them rather than just to get ahead?"

"It might, but it doesn't, that's all. I have all respect for what Jesus was, and no respect at all for the churches that make so free with his name. They don't stand for what he wanted; they are interested most of all in keeping themselves alive. Look at Odessa, with five churches, and with the name of being the toughest town in the county."

"All the same," said Peter, "it doesn't have to be like that, and I'd like to find out if it is as bad as it looks. If it is, all the more need for young folks who want to see the ideals of Jesus given a chance in the world."

"Does that mean you really intend to join the church?"

"Why, yes, if the church'll have me. And, Father, I want a chance to make more of myself. I've been thinking maybe you'd be willing to let me go to college next fall."

Two emotions contended for mastery in Henry Middleton. To see a son of his preparing for such a life as he had longed for but had never been able to realize,—that was something which fitted perfectly into his desires. But to have Peter in college as a Christian, giving the lie to his father's lifelong rejection of religion,—that revolted his pride.

And he said, "I've no objection to college for you, as far as that goes. But if you go, you've got to go without any crazy ideas about religion. I want you to find out how little there is to it, and you can't do that if you tie yourself up to the church to begin with. I'll make you a proposition. Drop this talk about being a Christian, and you can start in at the State University next fall."

Peter had been so little exposed to instruction concerning any but the grossest forms of temptation that he did not think of this as a temptation at all.

"You wouldn't want me to do that, would you, Father? You stick to your own convictions too much to ask me to let go of mine."

"If they were convictions," said Henry Middleton. "But convictions come slowly. How long have you been thinking about all this?"

"Not very long, and I saw it with a little clearness only last night. But it's just as real as if I'd known it always. If that is getting religion, I'm getting it."

"And you won't drop something you have felt less than a day when I tell you that it is all based on superstition or tradition, which is much the same thing?"

"I can't, Father. For me it's real, though I don't know much about it yet. I'm going to know more. And I don't want to go to the State University, at least not at first."

"Well, Peter," said his father, who could be politic more easily than he could be affectionate, "you and I won't quarrel. I'm too old, and you're too young. But you'll not expect me to encourage what I think is absolute foolishness. Look at these books," and he pointed to his one crowded shelf of treasures; "if you'd read those, and try to understand them, you would understand me. But if you must go your own way, why you must go. You'll soon be your own man, anyhow, and I won't interfere. But I haven't a dollar for you if you go in for religion. That's all."

VI

And so it was. After that morning, neither Peter nor his father mentioned the subject again. There were days when the older man went to town, where he had an interest in a store, and a few shares in the bank. During these absences, Peter contrived once or twice to look over some of his father's books. Those which were in German he could make little of. But there were several books in English,—these he read more carefully. They did not disturb him. Some were denunciations of conventional religion; some based themselves on Hume and Voltaire, and one was "The Age of Reason."

Peter's religious interest had little relation to formal theology. He had been attracted by the man Jesus; to that strong and misunderstood life he turned in a growing hero-worship which made all argument against creeds and churches seem irrelevant and remote.

Every now and then, as the two boys worked together, college came up for discussion. Peter held to his purpose, and, without resentment on his part or open disapproval from his father, he made his preparations for Calder College. No other had been seriously considered. Brother Fenwick was a Calder student, and naturally had talked much of its advantages, which as colleges went, weren't so great, if the truth must be told.

The State University, besides being his father's choice, which had stirred up a certain perverseness in Peter, was reckoned more expensive than Calder. And Peter well knew he would have to provide his own funds. Besides, there was the religious aspect of education, necessarily omitted from the university program.

The favor which Bartelmy had found in the eyes of Maude Hamilton, the teacher, produced in him a growing feeling that he was wasting his time in farm work. Miss Hamilton had questioned him about his schooling. To his surprise quite as much as hers, his Thornlea board-school training seemed to be valuable.

Before the school term ended, she gave him a pretty fair outline of what was required in a country school teacher. Where the work touched the subjects Thornlea had covered, he had nothing to fear. Of American history he was wholly innocent. He had small stock of formal grammar, and his book arithmetic had dealt much in pounds, shillings, and pence, and not at all in dollars and cents. He had a real love of reading, could spell any word he met if he were allowed to write it, and had a fair idea of geography, outside the United States.

His summer wages stood at ten dollars a month. The least experienced teacher, even with no more than a third-grade certificate, counted on getting thirty or thirty-five dollars. Board could be had in almost any farm home for eight dollars a month. When he thought of earning more than twice the pay, for six hours' work five days a week, with no chores and no exposure to the weather, he felt sure that he was cut out for a teacher.

Effie Bailey, of course, had been involved in his desire to change. She expected to get a school in the fall, and while he couldn't hope to start even with her, it seemed to him she would think more of him if he were trying to make something of himself.

Peter's determination to go to Calder had its influence, too. As always, Bartelmy dreaded change; particularly he had no stomach for solitary adventure. And *college*, to an English working-class boy; could it be possible? If there were only some way for him to go with Peter.

One Sunday afternoon they were riding home from salting the cattle, out on the range. As their horses slowed down to a walk through the timber east of Paint Creek, Bartelmy bluntly put the question.

"Peter, how do you expect to get through Calder if your father sticks to his word?" For in the household Henry Middleton's terms were no secret.

Peter laughed a little. "I'm not expecting it will be easy. I have a few dollars saved up, probably enough to last me a couple of months. By the time that's gone some job or other will turn up. Brother Fenwick says plenty of the boys work their way."

"Do you think I could make it, too, Peter?" asked Bartelmy, to whom the question seemed far more crammed with meaning than it did to Peter. "And do you suppose they have classes that would give me the branches I've never had?"

"Yes," said Peter. "Yes to both of your questions. If other boys work, you can. And they must have classes in the preparatory department that would get you ready for the teachers' examination."

Bartelmy's eagerness betrayed him into a suggestion which six months earlier would have seemed the wildest of dreams. "What would you think, Peter, about us two going to school together? You're ahead of me, but you're going to work for your living, and so am I. We'd be company for one another. I don't want to go to Normal School, or the Agricultural College; I should have to go there all by myself."

Peter laughed once more. "I knew that was on your mind all the time. Why not? Why not make Calder College richer by two ambitious young geniuses from Paint Creek?"

Which was all the arrangement or agreement they needed; they came to the creek itself as Peter spoke, and their horses' feet, splashing over its gravelly bed, stopped their talk just at the right time to make it seem final.

Soon the plan was generally taken for granted. When most of the heavy work was out of the way, Peter was to go to Calder. Bartelmy, by efforts he himself could hardly explain, had not quite twenty-five dollars saved, and he wanted to add all of September's earnings to his capital. So he would not get to Calder until the first of October.

VII

Peter and Effie had not seen much of each other during the later spring. He had been over at the Albright place several times, ostensibly on business with Carl Albright, but really to talk with Effie. And it had chanced each time that she was away.

But Bartelmy had tried to feel that Effie and he were not a little interested in each other. Anyway it irked him as he saw that Peter sought her out. He had known Effie first. He liked her, he told himself. She had an effect on him. When he could talk things over with her, purposes grew clear, and ambitions began to stir within him. In many ways, he needed her. But if she began to think too much of Peter,—

One day he enlarged to Peter on what friends Effie and he had been in the East. The story itself was not new to Peter.

He remembered that when Bartelmy had come to the neighborhood he had a letter from Effie to the Fairchilds. But now Bartelmy saw an opportunity to embellish the affair with a touch of romance.

"Of course, we were too young to think of anything serious, and we are yet, for that matter. But we understand each other pretty well. You know it was at her suggestion I came West. There wasn't much chance if I stayed on the farm there, and I felt sure something would turn up if I could once get away from the Sawmill River country. We've got a long time to wait, even as it is, but anyway we have something to look forward to, and we're going to get an education, just as you are. And then,—"

Peter listened without comment. In the revival, Effie had done him a service which he could not forget. Not only did he intend to remember, but he would have liked to follow up the indications of interest which he felt he had in common with this girl from New York. He was as far as ever from being satisfied about the meanings and values of formal religion, but he had in nowise abated his expressed purpose "to take Jesus in every way I know."

This pledge, if it was a pledge, had been made to Effie, and to no other. The fact that she and he had shared such an experience was a sort of secret bond. But he felt that Bartelmy, in hinting at the existence of another relationship, meant to suggest something in which his friend could have no part. The hint was far from pleasant.

But he said nothing, except to ask, "Does Effie look at it the way you do?"

And Bartelmy embellished the facts once more. "That's why I'm telling you. You are a friend of us both, and you have a right to know."

That was all. The conversation turned to other matters. Evidently Bartelmy had been as definite as he meant to be, and Peter had no thought of prying. But he observed Effie a little more closely when they met, and it seemed as though he saw confirmation of what Bartelmy had said. She was friendly enough, but with no hint that she remembered the intimate confidences of the revival time.

He did not know that Bartelmy had been talking to her, also, and on a like theme.

They were strolling homeward from Sunday School, Bartelmy and the girl. Since Effie was walking, the day being fair, and the Albright place no great distance from the church, Bartelmy walked his horse, bridle over arm.

"Peter's a great boy, isn't he?" he said. The remark called for no special answer, but Effie did not think of that. She was frankly enthusiastic about Peter, and, up to that moment, had no suspicion that she needed to hold her enthusiasm in check.

"Peter's more than a great boy," she said. "He's one of the best. I have a feeling that the day will come when we'll all be proud that we knew him when he was just a farmer's son."

Which was not exactly the direction Bartelmy had chosen for the conversation. Said he, "That's right. He's going to be a solid citizen. And don't you think he's showing good judgment in shining up to Lizzie Albright? The two farms join, you know, and Lizzie's the only child."

It was Effie's turn to wish the conversation might have taken another direction. But she could not help asking, "How do you know he's shining up to Lizzie, as you call it? She's never said anything—I mean, I think I should be likely to know about any such thing, seeing that I've been living there this spring."

"I supposed you did," said Bartelmy glibly, having had a little practice. "You know he's been over there several times lately. And that's a new thing for him."

Effie did know. Lizzie had told her that. And she remembered that Lizzie had taken pains to tell her how Peter had "asked after her." That might mean much or little. But what came to her with a sort of hurt was that suggestion about the farms. They joined, true enough; and the two places completed each other. What could be more natural than that Peter, who would get the Middleton home place some day, should think of those three Albright quarter-sections, with one of them including an undeveloped water power, and another having the best timber on Paint Creek?

So through the summer it happened that when Effie and Peter met, their attitude toward each other was careful enough; more careful than natural, though neither would have confessed to any sense of strain.

As August passed, Effie became too busy with her own affairs to think so much of what Bartelmy had told her. Fall was approaching, and she had not yet found a school. She went here and there making inquiries, but to no purpose, until one day word came that District 14, just across the line in Fayette County, was still looking for a teacher, but that the vacancy might be filled any moment now.

Though the threshers were coming to Albrights the next day, Effie felt that she must try for that school. So she borrowed the Albright buggy and the one old horse which was of little use in the threshing, and set out. It was eleven miles, a longish drive for the time between the finishing of the morning's kitchen work and supper time, and Mrs. Albright and Lizzie would need all possible assistance, so that Effie refused to be away for more than one meal.

Peter and Bartelmy came over to help with the threshing. The two farms always exchanged work, and few men could cut bands as deftly as Peter. Bartelmy was assigned to the straw pile, to take the straw as it came from the carrier, and keep it built up evenly. It was dirty work, and hot, and always given to the least skilled, but it took less out of a man than any other threshing-time job.

At dinner Peter missed Effie. He asked Lizzie, "Where's Effie today, of all days?" It was in the few moments of rest which everybody took just before starting up the long afternoon's operations, for the job had to be finished by dusk. The two had strolled to the fence at the east side of the yard, next to the young orchard, and as they talked they looked over at the distant slopes across the creek, where they could see Albright cattle and Middleton cattle, summer grazing on the open range.

Lizzie explained how Effie had heard about the school over in Fayette, and how she had to apply for it at once or chance finding that the place had been filled.

The threshing crew worked late, and finished clean. Before the men came up to the row of tin wash basins, on a bench in the yard, Effie was back from her long drive, and hard at work helping to put the final touches to the big supper which the threshers expected to be ready for them.

She had returned in triumph, her contract signed, and even in the midst of the bustle she managed to satisfy the more insistent demands of Lizzie's inquiring mind.

Yes; it was an eight months' school, with a long vacation between the fall and winter terms. Salary thirty-five a month. She could get board at the standard rate of eight dollars, with a family by the name of Heintz,—Pennsylvania Dutch, and so pretty sure to set a good table. About thirty or forty scholars, she thought.

After supper Peter hurried home, tired with the long day and his heavy-duty job. He had been taking more responsibility at home this summer, and his pride would not let him fail in any of it;—especially now.

Bartelmy lingered at Albright's after supper. He wanted to talk with Effie; to hear of her school, and, as always, to do what he might in his own behalf.

They went out to the front stoop, and sat there looking down into the stiff little garden which Lizzie and her mother had kept fenced off from the intrusions of their wide-ranging Plymouth Rocks.

When Effie had told her story of the day's adventure, Bartelemy became reminiscent. "Well," said he, "that means one of your dreams has come true, doesn't it? Remember how you said, back in Westchester, that you'd turn up in the West before long, and would become a school teacher, too? You did turn up; and now you have your school."

"It isn't much," Effie said, musingly. "A little frame schoolhouse at a cross roads, with not a tree on the grounds, and almost nothing inside to work with. But it's a beginning, and I'm going to make myself like it."

"Much or little," said Bartelmy, a touch of envy in his voice, "you've beaten me. I knew you would. You had a better start. But I'll be coming along. I've got to catch up with you. And you know why."

Effie parried, "How was the threshing today?"

"Never mind the threshing," Bartelmy said with poorly concealed irritation, "it was hot and dirty; but it's over, thank goodness. I was talking about you. Why can't we have some sort of an understanding, now that we're to be separated for a long time? An understanding"—as a little devil of an idea suggested itself—"something like Peter and Lizzie."

Once again, as when Bartelmy had linked these names before, Effie found herself asking a question and wishing that she didn't care what its answer might be. "What makes you think they have what you call an understanding?"

"How could anybody help thinking it?" he countered. "You'd have guessed it all right if you had seen them at noon. After dinner they were talking quite a while over at the east orchard fence, and pointed over to the creek where the long riffle is and to the big timber, and·to their cattle on the range. They seemed to be mightily interested."

If Effie had dared, she would have combatted all the implications of his words. But she could not be sure he was wrong. And why shouldn't they understand each other? She saw again the practical advantage of joining the two farms. Albright's had the best timber, and the place for developing water power, and Middleton's had the widest stretch of level, rich bottom land. If she forgot that Peter might be as little mercenary as herself, it was no more than many a maiden forgets when she thinks of the ways of errant lovers. But she was in no mood to listen to Bartelmy, and went indoors, saying she had had a long day, and was too tired to talk.

When he had gone, accepting for the moment his failure to secure an "understanding," and she and Lizzie were alone, Effie sought some way of approach to the subject uppermost in her mind. But there was none. Lizzie could have settled everything with a word, but Effie would not ask her to speak it. Indeed, Lizzie herself, by a most innocent remark, ended all chance of explanation.

"It was awful clear over east this noon, for such a hot day," she said. "Right after dinner Peter and I were looking across the creek, and we could see the cattle on the range just as plain; their Shorthorns and our Herefords, all grazing together, and some of them had gone clear to the top of Mount Tabor."

VIII

So when Peter sent word the next week that he was coming over on Wednesday evening to say goodby, Effie made an errand for herself, so that she might spend that night with her Aunt Fairchild. Peter had thought nothing of the other times when he had missed seeing her, but this was too plainly a purposed absence. He could think of no good reason why anybody should ever go to the Fairchild place. Certainly one day would have served her as well as another, for that, if she hadn't meant to keep out his way. He wouldn't have presumed, as she might have known. If she and Bartelmy were really anything to each other, he might surely have been trusted to keep that fact in mind.

Peter, hurt as much in his pride as in any feeling less easily defined, said to himself, "Very well," and made his farewells to the Albrights, with an omission of Effie's name so studied that Lizzie marvelled, though not openly. She was too well versed in Paint Creek etiquette for that.

Two days later he was off for Calder College. His final interview with his father had been hard, but not so hard as he had feared.

The old radical could not help a prickle of pride in this sturdy-willed son of his. It was youth rebelling again, as he well knew how youth could rebel. If only it had been an outbreak like his own in the '48! But because it was over such a delusion as religion, and especially such a religious delusion as Christianity, he hardened his heart.

"You'll go your own road, Peter," he had said, "and I shan't try to head you off. We must all learn our own way. But, as I told you before, there's no money of mine for your education so long as you make religion the reason for your choice of a school. Come home in the vacations, of course, if you stick it out that long. If you change your mind, I'm ready to foot all your bills at the State University."

To which Peter had responded, "Thank you, Father; that's fair enough, feeling as you do. I don't think my mind will change, but it's good to know that you leave the way open. And I'll try not to disgrace you, even if I can't see things as you do."

And so they parted manfully, shaking hands and even smiling a little.

It had been not at all the same with his mother. She understood both of her men better than either understood the other. In her own room she informed Peter that he wasn't to make any fuss about it, and needn't try to refuse it,—she had put a hundred dollars into the little flap pocket of his suitcase. Her savings had piled up lately, faster than she expected; maybe just for this. She had thought there would be no more than fifty dollars, but, when she had counted it all up, to her surprise it was just over a hundred. It was her own money, egg and butter money, mostly, she said, and he must take it. Take it he did, with no loss of his high pride and self-sufficiency. She was that sort of a mother. So she kissed him, and Jim drove him to Odessa to catch the noon train south.

CHAPTER IV

I

Peter Middleton was not long in finding himself, once he was at Calder. The school was made up of such boys and girls as he had known at home; most of them were in the academic department, which was the euphemism of the period for college preparatory. Less than a hundred students were able to take college work unvexed by prep conditions.

He got a room over a store, and furnished it with bits of second-hand stuff which had served several generations of students. Bartelmy and he had arranged to room together, wherefore he stocked the room for two. Even so it was sufficiently Spartan.

The class work was no great matter. He found he ranked in general somewhere about sub-freshman, for he had a mixed lot of credits from Odessa High School. And so he was just settling himself for the year when Bartelmy turned up at the beginning of October.

Bartelmy's standing, scholastically, was peculiar. He had had the equivalent of perhaps one year's high school work. But of course he had no formal credits. He was much too mature for the sub-prep classes. So Vice President Schroeder, who trusted much to his intuitions and was trusted implicitly by the President in these matters, decided to give Bart an oral examination not at all in accord with the formal terms of the catalog.

The upshot was that Professor Schroeder entered him as straight sub-freshman, and also gave him permission to take one study each term, as offered, with the freshman or the sophomore class.

He found himself able to manage the studies after his fashion. Soon he began to appear in minor assignments on the Hamiltonian Literary Society programs. He had a frothy sort of fluency which made him easier on his feet than most of the boys, and his reading had given him considerable literary capital; glittering, if not gold.

Calder College being about the only excuse for the existence of the town, the Methodist Church and the college had many things in common. The church depended on the college, and particularly on its rule of compulsory church attendance, for half or more of its Sunday congregation, and drew from the students an even larger proportion of Sunday School workers and members of the choir. The annual protracted meetings in the church were arranged only after full consultation with the President, all the more because in the main they were a direct effort in behalf of unconverted students. The students' home folks were supposed greatly to prefer a college revival, as compared, say, with close adherence to the schedule of academic studies. This was also the mind of the patronizing conference, which continually kept a weather eye out for any signs of diminished spirituality in students or faculty.

In late October the pastor began his preliminary sermons,—a time-honored method of awakening the faithful to the need of preparation for the coming harvest of souls. He told the people, as aforetime, that, if they really desired a revival, it must first spring up in the hearts of those now within the fold.

Then, early in November, the revival meetings themselves began. They were held every night, except Saturday, and the professors lightened all lesson assignments for the period of the meetings. Everybody was supposed to attend.

Peter and Bartelmy took their first college revival, each in his own way. Bartelmy answered the first call made for volunteers to form a choir. He saw that membership in the choir set one a little apart from and above the crowd, and so would provide a measure of public notice. Thornlea had seen to it that he could sing quite well enough to meet the not too exacting requirements of a Kansas revival. And, as he discovered when the "personal work" began, members of the choir were tacitly exempt from the general draft which sent every other professed Christian, the moment word was given, out into the audience to come to grips with sinners and coax them to "the altar."

To Peter the revival was almost pure misery. The preaching, direct and sincere as it undoubtedly was, took for granted a vast deal of theology and experience as to whose validity he was by no means convinced. The trouble, he told himself, must be that he had no church background. Revival methods, except for his brief and slight experience of them at Fairdale, were unfamiliar, and he confessed to himself, a trifle repellent. He foresaw that they might easily become embarrassing.

Because he had "brought his letter," he was naturally considered a Christian of the prevailing type, the more so because he had been greatly drawn to the pastor, and had been treated most cordially by him. So he knew it would be taken for granted that he would conform to the customs of the occasion.

Night after night, once the sermon was ended, the call would sound;—"Now let all who are burdened for souls go out in search of the lost among their friends, and bring them to Jesus!"

In the momentary confusion of the general response he would arise with the others, and would wander aimlessly down the aisle, seeking only not to be noticed more than could be helped. He almost envied the assured bearing of those workers who had no hesitation in approaching their fellow-students on what he felt to be the most delicate and personal of themes; though he soon learned that this, too, was a ritual. For himself, he was in deadly terror lest some sinner, all too willing to be won, should catch his eye.

One night, as the workers moved about among the reluctant, the recalcitrant and the penitent, the choir, with Bartelmy's baritone easily recognizable to Peter above the rest, sang with dash and spirit, "We have heard a joyful sound: Jesus saves!" Peter was well-nigh desperate. He had spoken to nobody, and felt sure that his obvious cowardice had been observed by all. His mood was not resentful, but bewildered. Certainly he had nothing to say to any of these students, many of them ahead of him in college. Yet he did honestly want to help, if he could, and to let people know that he did. But how?

At that moment he was abreast of the pews near the door, and in one of them he saw that the only occupant was a Negro boy of about his own age. Nobody else seemed to have noticed this boy, who glanced up with dull, lack-luster eyes. An impulse just strong enough to carry him into the pew stirred in Peter, and he slipped down beside the other. Quite without premeditation he said huskily, in an agony of shyness, "Does all this make you want to be a Christian?"

The boy said "Yes," as ill at ease as his questioner. He had not expected to be approached, and, in fact, but for Peter he would have been carefully left undisturbed. Then Peter lifted them both out of their embarrassment, because he knew no better than to do the natural thing. Said he, "I'm as ignorant about it all as anybody can be. Let's try to help each other. If you'll help me, I'll do as much for you, if I can." In his relief, the Negro smiled broadly.

For ten minutes they whispered; their heads bowed and close together,—the Negro giving ready assent to everything his friendly though amateur instructor said. Peter was outlining an honest but, if he had known, a highly unconventional plan of salvation.

Just as he had asked, and the boy had answered, the last question he could think of, there came over him the direful realization that the next thing to do was to lead his trophy to the altar, in the sight of all. To do him justice, he gave no thought to the color of his convert, if convert he was, but only to the gauntlet which the two of them must run between this rear pew and the distant chancel rail. Fortunately, no one—with a single exception—had noticed his adventure of desperation, and, while he was dreading the next move, with immense relief he heard the voice of President McBean pronouncing the benediction.

As the congregation moved toward the door, Miss Buckland, professor of English, German and History said to Peter, "That was a brave thing you did tonight. Don't let it trouble you." For she saw the quick embarrassment in his face.

II

By the end of the fall term Bartelmy's funds began to need attention. Rent was only a matter of two dollars a month apiece, and boarding club meals were a shade under ten cents a meal, say two dollars a week. But Bartelmy had only enough to carry him more than a few weeks into the winter term, since the fifteen dollars for tuition must be paid the first week. Peter was more opulent, but equally frugal.

Peter's interest in books, and Miss Buckland's encouragement, had made him a frequent visitor at the town's one book emporium,—it carried more side lines than a drug store,—but also it did a fair though conservative business in general literature. He began to discuss the stock with the young lady in charge, something of an authority in her way. The store's farmer-owner, Fletcher by name, would not trust his salesmanship in the higher reaches of the intellectual merchandise he stocked, but left that branch of the business to Miss Straker.

Now Miss Straker was to be married early in the year, and she and Peter had talked a little about the possibility of his becoming her successor in the store. A student could handle the job nicely, as to time, for the morning's trade in books and similar goods was negligible, and Mr. Fletcher felt entirely competent to show and vend such wall-paper, toys, and school supplies as his other customers might call for.

In the end, as Miss Straker casually told Bartelmy one morning, she had taken it on herself to mention Peter's name as a possible new clerk, and Mr. Fletcher seemed not inhospitable to the suggestion. Both Peter and Miss Straker were the more surprised therefore, not to say disturbed, when, the very next day, the old gentleman told her that he had decided to give the place to Bartelmy Bonafede.

"I can't understand it, Mr. Middleton," the young lady declared, when Peter dropped in that afternoon, "and I don't see why he did it. I never even knew that Mr. Bonafede had been thinking of the store."

"Nor I," said Peter shortly. He did his best to keep from suspecting Bartelmy, but it surely seemed queer.

It would not have seemed so queer if he had known of the interview between Bartelmy and Mr. Fletcher, the day before. Bartelmy's dwindling resources meant more than a hint of short commons. They spoke to him of the fear which struck always at such times as this. He had no sure knowledge where next month's living was to come from. Panic insecurity came down on him in all its ancient terror. Once more he felt that he had burned his bridges behind him, with no assurance as to the nature of the undiscovered country ahead. What a fool! He recalled Miss Straker's incidental reference to the opening, and grasped at it. Seeking the owner out at his home that night, he told him his story,—the story that in the emergency his hopes and fears had produced.

It was an adroit approach, and his bearing did full homage to the established forms.

"Peter would take the job, I think," he said to Mr. Fletcher, with disarming frankness, "and he would be as good a man as you could get. He and I are roommates, you know,—we came here together. Only there really isn't much reason for him to work. He's the son of one of the best-fixed farmers on Paint Creek. If you should decide not to give it to him, I'd be glad to have you consider me."

It was a shrewd instinct by which Bartelmy hit on this one sure appeal. Doubly a stranger,—to the West itself, and to its peculiar institution, the poverty-stricken, struggling church college, he had discovered the single string which could be counted on to vibrate to his touch.

In every college town, all through the West, everybody was in league to help indigent students. Where nobody was rich, there were yet varying levels of circumstances, and it was a point of honor that any poor boy who wanted an education should be helped to get it. He must needs work, certainly, and for small pay; but he must have his chance. The West had not been brought up for nothing on "The Hoosier Schoolmaster" and "From Tow-Path to White House." To support college students and the college itself was at once missionary and romantic—an irresistible combination.

Since Bartelmy obviously incarnated the educational orthodoxy of his time and place, and since it appeared that Peter's folks were well-to-do, Bartelmy had all the advantage. Mr. Fletcher reacted normally, and Bartelmy got the job, with its four dollars a week.

He was careful to make no explanation, and he felt rightly that Peter would ask for none. As for Mr. Fletcher, he had no idea that there was anything in the incident that needed explaining.

In a way, Bartelmy tried to set things straight with Peter, on the guess that Peter might suspect. Late the same afternoon, in the room, he brought up the subject and said, "Of course I wouldn't take the place if I thought you wanted it. Miss Straker just told me you were going to apply for it, but I didn't know that you had." Which was true, though the "just" was one of Bartelmy's easy little euphemisms. Peter hadn't applied. And, being too proud to say that if he had there was every reason to suppose he could have had the job, he merely observed quietly that it was all right with him, and hoped Bart would like the place.

The next day Peter made a contract to cut and split cord wood, at twelve cents an hour. This would give him what income he needed for the year to supplement his mother's gift.

III

Living from hand to mouth as the two boys had done, the end of the school year found them at the end also of their financial resources. Halfway into the spring term Bartelmy had begun to be anxious about the summer. What should he do? What could he do? Where could he go?

A few half-hearted inquiries among the students discovered nothing more hopeful than the offer of a photographic view company, whose sales manager was drumming up agents to canvass in the small towns and the open country for its justly famous stereoscopes and their accompanying "views."

But Bartelmy was not drawn to this sort of labor. It meant a different—and most uncertain—stopping place every night. It meant risk, initiative, the unknown.

One day he said to Peter, "What's your plan for the summer, Peter? Does your father expect you to work at home?"

And Peter said, "Oh, yes; Dad told me last fall to come home whenever I got ready, and he has repeated the invitation several times since. He'd be glad to have me show up any time, but I guess he doesn't really expect me till school is out. There'll be plenty of work. Always is. And he means to pay me, from now on. He's said so. Dad may be stubborn, but he's sure to be fair, and a little more."

The spark of hope glowed brighter in Bartelmy's heart. "Do you suppose there might be work enough for me, too?" he asked. "I'd rather be there on the farm than do anything else I've heard of. It would give me something to do until I found whether I could get a school."

"So you've decided to teach next year?" asked Peter, inwardly out of humor with himself, that he could not rise as cordially as he should to Bart's suggestion about the farm. Well, he had been saying that his father was a just man; he would try to be no less fair himself.

And when Bart said, "I think I'll try to get a certificate at the Institute, if I can make enough beforehand to pay my expenses;" Peter met his first query squarely.

"Why yes," he said, "I'm sure there will be something. I was expecting to break away at harvest, after our own stuff is in, and go with the thrashers up to the end of vacation. There's more money in that."

His desire to make atonement for his unspoken coldness prompted him still further, he added, "I'll tell you what; let me write to Dad about it. If you are willing to work around, as I expect to do, after the heavy work at home is over, I'm pretty sure Dad will take you on for the rest of the time."

IV

Within a few days Father Middleton had been heard from, and once more Bartelmy felt he had escaped the thing which most he feared,—out of a job and nowhere to go.

Institute greatly interested Bart. It thought to initiate him into the mysteries of cramming for an examination, but he remembered from Thornlea days the coming of the school inspector, and the desperate two weeks before each visit; so he was not afraid of what this mild approximation of the reality might bring.

Then, while Peter slipped easily into the work of the farm, Bart set out in search of a school. Just before his aching legs refused to carry him on another day's wanderings, he closed with the three trustees of Signal Hill School, so called because a tall tower of the United States Geodetic Survey overlooked the upland valley in which the district lay.

By the end of the summer, Peter had almost made his peace with his father. Not entirely. That old revolutionary was less than frank with his son, being more interested in the working out of the boy's purpose than he would admit. He relented so far as to make Peter's course easier, in all ways except financial. At that point he remained obdurant, though secretly he knew that the reason for his firmness had changed. Now he saw not only that Peter meant to go through with the venture, but that, whatever its other results, it would not harm the essential man in him. So, unless an emergency arose, he would let Peter win through alone. And Peter, to his own surprise, found that he was not sorry.

If Bartelmy's Signal Hill pupils learned little, neither were they harried by a fretful and unsympathetic teacher. That he made their tasks light was no crime in their eyes, and the patrons, who knew nothing at all of the class work, looked on him as a prodigy of resourcefulness.

The social life of the neighborhood was at a low point. Bart, in his abundant leisure, began to see possibilities in the schoolhouse as a social center. Most of the farm homes were too small for the "parties" so dear to the young men and maidens of those days, and Bart, with the help of his older pupils, pulled off one or two "programs," as he called them, at the schoolhouse to which everybody, young and old, came with pathetic eagerness for escape from the daily dullness of the valley.

He drew on the resources of Calder, writing to some of his fellow Hamiltonians for the simple materials he needed. He made a crude copying device, and started a school paper,—an almost startling innovation for that day in rural Kansas. The Friday afternoon exercises became, once a month or so, Friday night programs. The people, starved for any sort of common recreation, responded in a way to flatter his sense of importance, and he extended himself to satisfy the demand his activities had created.

Effie, in her second school, was a dozen miles away, in Wilkinsville, the county seat of the next county. Bart managed to ride a borrowed horse into town every other Sunday or so. He quite understood that Effie, as a city teacher, out-ranked him, and it was not the lightest of his recommendations in her eyes that he never forgot it. Indeed, he had always deferred to Effie.

One Sunday afternoon in the Spring they walked the long road eastward, and climbed the hill to the reservoir. Here they sat to rest on the coping of the great storage basin. They talked of the summer and its plans. Bart had an offer from Storekeeper Fletcher, who had struggled through a difficult season without an assistant, to spend the summer in the bookstore, and give it the first real stock-taking for many years. Effie would visit a little at Albright's, though she felt no great pleasure in the prospect. Then she would come back to Wilkinsville for the rest of the summer, as companion and helper to the one literary lady the town could boast. This lady had two remarkably leggy girls in Effie's room at school, and since she had biographies of many Fayette citizens to write, which a great publishing house expected to incorporate in the Fayette

County edition of its monumental History of Kansas—affectionately called, by the younger Kansas editors of the period, the “Herd Book”—she would need help with the housework and the girls.

Housework was nothing to lose caste over; caste in the Kansas of these days dealt with other matters; and the pay would help to keep her savings intact for college.

As they sat on the reservoir’s edge the talk became reminiscent; then personal. Suddenly Bart said, ‘Effie, we’re a year older, now, than when I tried to speak of this before, and life is opening up to us maybe better than we expected, then. You know I love you. You know I’m planning to be a preacher. Will you wait for me, and let us take up life in the ministry together?”

He drew her awkwardly to him and she did not resist. Why should she? Scarce to herself would she admit that Peter Middleton had ever held any place in her thought, and, anyhow, that was all past. Besides, she had always cared for Bart. If her feeling was not ardent enough to be the young love of the novelists, it was at least affectionate, and at times protective and mothering. From the beginning she had known that Bart needed the sort of help she could give. And she was not displeased at the prospect of being a preacher’s wife. Few serious-minded girls of her time were. So she looked into his face, and, as she lifted up her own for his kiss, she smiled. It was all very quiet, very sensible; no raptures, no ecstasies, no nonsense. “All right, Bart;” she said, “it’s a bargain. I’ll wait for you if you’ll wait for me. Only remember; wait is the word. We’re in for a good long time of waiting. I’m coming to Calder in the fall, to get ready for a better position. So no foolishness, young man.”

V

While Bartelmy was struggling with his Signal Hill School, Peter had plugged away at Calder, making no great record in his studies, but making a few fast friends, mainly among those students who had a certain independence of speech and purpose. His association with them made no bones of the accepted cleavages of the college groups, whether athletic or social or religious. He, a member of the Areopagus Literary Society, roomed with a leader of the Hamiltonians. He shared his Greek studies with one of the earliest of Calder's football stars, and of all his friends the choicest, Eugene Eberle, was a man who had no interest in sports.

Eberle, besides being older than Peter, had already found his vocation. Not yet an ordained minister, his local preacher's license permitted him to act as supply pastor of a small country church some five or six miles from Calder.

Eberle went to Peter one day with what Peter thought a queer request. An old preacher-friend of Eberle's had died, and the funeral service, to be held some forty miles away, was set for Sunday. Eberle made much of his wish to go, while lamenting to Peter that he could get nobody to take his morning appointment at Blue Oak.

By and by he said, "Peter, old man, *you* go to Blue Oak for me."

Peter flatly refused; and refused again when Eberle urged the proposal on him. But he could not stand out against his friend's desire to pay tribute to the old minister, and in the end he agreed to go, thinking not at all at the moment of what a promise to preach at Blue Oak might mean to a somewhat uncertain Christian young fellow who had never attempted to preach at all.

That came later. Whereupon he sought out Eberle and said, "See here, Eugene, I've been thinking about Blue Oak. How can I go? I've no right to go. You know I'm not even an exhorter, nor wanting to be. I forgot that I should have to pretend to know something. Where'd I get a sermon? And how do I know that the Blue Oak people will let me try to preach it if I *should* get one? I don't even know the order of service!"

Eberle laughed. "Don't you care about any of that," he said, "there's nothing High Church about Blue Oak. I'll give you all the coaching you need on the order of service. It won't take you five minutes to get it. And, as for a sermon, why preach at all? The folks would much rather have a straight talk on something that really interests you. Don't try to be preachery. You can't. Besides, they've been preached at and about and over so long that they are always thankful for a change. You'll make a hit; see if you don't."

Peter knew better, but in other respects things turned out very much as Eberle had said. Casting about for something to say, and taking for granted it must be Biblical, he chanced on a few paragraphs of illustrative stuff in his rhetoric textbook; part of a sermon by a minister named Milburn, whose double distinction was that he was blind and also chaplain to the United States Senate.

The sermon attracted Peter because, like many thoughtful young Christians, he had often wondered at the swiftness of early Christianity's spread. The blind preacher, taking the Great Commission as his text, had emphasized the marvel, that a handful of Galilean peasants, publicans and fishermen actually set themselves to the task of obeying Christ's "Go ye." Without money, without influence, without learning, speaking only a single language, and that a mere back-country patios, they had laid seige to the pagan world of their day—and in three centuries captured it!

Peter felt the appeal of this romantic history as though it had just been told for the first time. He made it his own theme, and something of the sense of its daring and devotion managed to pass from him to the people at Blue Oak on that Sunday morning.

Quite simply and frankly he wrote of it to his father. He felt, not knowing why, that Henry Middleton was becoming more tolerant, and as he put down on paper some of the ideas he had presented in his Blue Oak talk, they seemed to him, as indeed they seemed also to the old man, a few days later, to be much the same thoughts he had heard from his father's lips; thoughts which in the old days in Germany had stirred Heinrich Mittelstadt to revolt, and to new ventures in a new world.

VI

Bart took hold of his summer's job at Fletcher's bookstore. He knew he could make the inventory and its by-products last him until school opened, and the sooner he began the sooner he would be drawing his ten a week. On the way he spent half a day at the Middletons with Peter, just home from Calder. Bart found opportunity to tell Peter of his and Effie's engagement, and took some little secret satisfaction in seeing that the news was unwelcome, much as Peter tried to be unconcerned and congratulatory.

Peter knew that Effie was to visit at the Albrights, having had that piece of news from Lizzie. When he heard it, the news had been pleasant. But Bart had spoiled it beyond remedy. He would see Effie now only as Bart's betrothed; he had hoped against hope for a summer altogether different.

There was a party at the Albrights. Peter went, and behaved like a spoil-sport. If Effie noticed his aloofness she kept her thoughts to herself, and towards the end of the evening she had laughed him out of his rather moody heroics. She was a little surprised that he seemed to avoid Lizzie Albright, and wondered if something had happened to interfere with their interest in each other.

But just as the party was breaking up she had evidence which convinced her that Peter and Lizzie had an understanding, and was surprised that the discovery depressed her.

Peter had been over on the range the day before, and mentioned the fact to Lizzie and Effie as he was saying good night. He remembered that Mr. Albright had asked for some information about his Hereford yearlings, which were running with the Middleton herd.

"I forgot to tell your father about the cattle, Lizzie; will you tell him for me?"

And he drew her aside to give the innocent and quite uninteresting details; but Effie saw in the low-voiced talk another evidence that these two meant to combine romance with cattle and line fences.

When Calder's doors opened in the fall, Effie presented herself for enrolment in the Normal Department, and hoped to take some music. She had saved money enough for the year, and had no qualms about spending it. She knew how to get more.

Peter, too, came back with money in his purse. In his own way, Henry Middleton had capitulated, but he had capitulated.

He had called Peter into his room just before the wagon was ready to take the boy and his trunk to Odessa.

"Peter," said his father, "I haven't changed my mind about your stubbornness over this college business. But I don't want you to make a wreck of yourself, as well as a fool. If you cut wood at twelve cents an hour, you can't get the only education that's worth shucks, if any is. So I'm going to advance you enough to keep you going. You can call it a loan, but there won't be any interest on it, and you'll pay it back when you can."

Peter could not guess what his father was thinking, and the older man was secretly amazed at himself. It was disturbing, that he could contemplate such a future as he now saw becoming a possibility for his boy. It shook him as Peter's mere going to college had not done. Suppose Peter should actually become a preacher!

A year ago he would have thrust the thought angrily away. Now he was sore troubled, but he was not angry. He had tried to be, and had failed. Why? Why could he not call up his old contempt for preachers and preaching? Could it be only because Peter was his son; or were his lifelong opinions suffering a change?

One reflection gave him some little comfort. If Peter must be a preacher, it was certain he would not be one of those ranting windbags who made up in noise what they lacked in conviction. Peter had always thought his way through, and when he got through he wouldn't need to become violent about it. He had sense enough not to confuse assertion with assurance.

And, thought the old man, the churches could be glad to get such a recruit as Peter. He would have a career.

VII

Effie's coming to Calder was not without its awkward side. Peter felt it most, and wondered how he would be able to avoid anything that might betray him or annoy her. Bartelmy was not quite at ease in his mind, yet he was debarred not only from open admission but even from the secret facing of his disquiet. Effie had least reason for concern, but even she was not unaware that the situation had possibilities of embarrassment.

Bart and Peter did not room together this year. Bartelmy had found a new friend in the football coach—the first of his tribe at Calder—and was sharing a room with him. Peter roomed alone.

Just before the brief spring vacation, Eugene Eberle said to Peter one day, "Blue Oak calls you again, Peter. I need somebody to help me in a revival out there. The people liked you that time you preached for me; come on and try your hand at this other job."

To Peter no invitation could have been less welcome. The memory of the revival in sub-freshman year still hurt, as he saw himself again huddled in the rear pew with the Negro boy who was the one highly doubtful trophy of his "personal work."

"I can't do that sort of thing, Eberle," he protested. "I simply can't. It's got to be done, I know; but not by me. Get somebody who knows how and who likes it."

"Don't want 'em," Eberle growled. "I want you, just because you don't like it. If you go into the ministry, as I think you will, you'll have to do it. But you needn't be spoiled by going at it as some of the boys do. They call me a heretic, as you know. Well, I'm willing to be a heretic on revivals, anyhow, if they'll let me go after sinners my own way. And you have the stuff in you for the sort of evangelism that isn't popular yet. But it will be. So you come along, and put in a week with me at Blue Oak."

Peter did not cease from his objections, but in the end he went.

Eberle's revival method puzzled Peter at first. By the only tests Peter knew, the affair wasn't a revival at all. Of course his experience was limited, and yet Kansas revivals of that period had no uniqueness; they were but variations on a theme,— the theme being that any community had just two sorts of people, the saved and the unsaved; the one group was saved and knew it, and the other was unsaved and knew it; the transition from unsaved to saved came by an emotional climax at the mourners' bench,—which was beginning to be called, with the West's new concern for elegance and its old indifference to accuracy, "the altar."

Though Peter knew Eberle for an independent soul, it did not occur to him, despite the other's warning, that a revival could be anything other than the revivals he had known. So he was not prepared for the quiet and unchurchly atmosphere of his first evening at Blue Oak.

There was an opening song or two, and a prayer by Pastor Eberle; but even so early Peter felt the difference. The song was "Break thou the bread of life;" the prayer held to the same key—a seeking for guidance, knowledge, light. And the preacher took for his text Paul's steadying word; "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of love, and of power, and of a sound mind."

It was not a sermon; nothing more than a friendly talk, to a group of intent listeners, about the simple reasonableness of the Christian life.

By and by Eberle said, "Well, I've talked enough." He turned to a young man in a side seat and asked, "What do you think, Wilbur, of this idea about religion and a sound mind?"

The young fellow answered as simply and naturally as he had been asked, "It's the right idea, I see that; but how to do what you don't want to do, even if you know you should; that gets me."

"Me, too," said an older man; and one of the young women asked, "Isn't that where the new birth comes in?"

Peter's astonishment grew. Why, these people were talking as matter-of-factly about religion as they would about any other subject whatever! Still, he liked it. And he liked it better when Eberle said, "Yes, and Paul knew that. Just there conversion does come in. We see the right; we couldn't see it except for all sorts of guidance, now and long ago. We know we ought to do it, and that knowledge is another gift of God. But how? Why, doing as Jesus did; by using in the most positive way the power of will God has given us; by burning our ships behind us; by choosing as we would in any other great moment calling for decision, by betting one's life, as somebody has put it, that Christianity is true, and that it will work."

"But does conversion come in there, then?" asked a man whom Peter recognized as one of the leading members. "If it is all a matter of will, and human choice, where is repentance? How does conversion come in?"

"It comes in right there," Eberle affirmed. "We are sinners. God has said in a thousand ways, outside the Bible as well as in it, that forgiveness is not given or held back by caprice; it is ours already—for the taking. Some of us have more sense of sin than others; some more interest in finding a way of life that will satisfy us; some of us are more drawn by the thought of Christ as our Saviour. But God is not particular; remember how Jesus did it; he just said 'Come'. Whatever God shows us about ourselves and about himself which brings us to the great decision, don't you think that the moment of decision is a moment of conversion, of turning, the beginning of a new life? And, when we do choose, haven't we a right to feel a great sense of release, just because, as the hymn says, ' 'Tis done, the great transaction's done'?"

So it went on. There was nothing for Peter to do; whereat he was secretly relieved. No exhortation, no altar call, no "personal work".

On the third morning, Eberle said to Peter, "Tonight I want you to take the talk. I heard you at Y. M. C. A., last winter when you spoke on 'If ye offer the blind for sacrifice,'—that text in Malachi, you remember. Give us that; it's what I want a few of these young folks to have."

Since Peter could not deny his own work, he had no excuse. And the free friendliness of the queer revival made hesitation seem foolish. So he spent the afternoon recalling the points of his talk, and that night managed a respectable half-hour, with Eberle leading off in the discussion of God's equal right with the state to his people's unblemished loyalty.

The attendance kept up all week, and on Friday night, after Peter's second attempt at something not exactly preaching, Eberle said, "On Sunday we shall celebrate the Lord's Supper, and I'd be glad if those of you who have been making the great decision this week will take the Supper with us. Perhaps you'll wish to join the church on probation, too."

And Peter never forgot the glowing happiness of that Sunday morning, when he saw twenty-four people (they would have been "saved sinners," at Fairdale or anywhere else) come forward resolutely and with evident joy, both to the fellowship of the church and to the Supper.

The sacramental moments gave a keener edge to Peter's sense of discovery. There was something inexpressibly holy and intimate in the hour. For the first time he felt how one could come into real if mystic union with Jesus Christ through the sharing of a little bread and wine with his fellows. Only the time and the place and the people must be fit, as they were this morning.

And there came to him something which was more than a feeling that Eberle and he—though himself in so small a measure—had seen some positive gains from their work. He saw what nothing else thus far had revealed to him, that a man could be a minister of the Gospel without denying or smothering his convictions; without accepting the traditional pastoral pattern which seemed sufficient for most preachers.

VIII

His chance came sooner than he had expected. The student appointment at New Hartford fell vacant, and the Presiding Elder, having talked with Eberle, offered the place to Peter; he would make arrangements for getting him his local preacher's license at the next quarterly conference.

It wasn't much, financially; perhaps three hundred dollars or so. Nor was it otherwise promising. Less than a hundred members, in a poor suburb of a none too prosperous country town, a one-room church of native stone, a non-resident Sunday School superintendent, two rival Ladies' Aid Societies, and two other churches, equally poverty-smitten, within two blocks. But it would be a good preparation for his admission to conference on trial.

The very insignificance of the charge helped Peter to accept it. With all his self-distrust, he felt that failure here would be something less than fatal.

Bartelmy kept on at the store, his money worries all past. He made small but comfortable commissions, above his wages, by acting as selling agent for goods not to be found in the local stores. It was all quite regular, and some weeks his extra income was much as seven dollars.

Towards the end of the winter term, there was an inter-society oratorical contest; Bartelmy and two others from Hamilton, Peter and two others from Areopagus. Bartelmy had chosen a Civil War theme—it was in the days when "waving the bloody shirt" expressed in the slang of the period the partisanship of those who refused to forget the War of the Rebellion," as the North called it, then only twenty years in the past.

Bartelmy guessed that his grades on thought and composition would be better than fair. He was more doubtful of what he might get on delivery. And, at the last moment, the failure of one of the appointed judges to appear resulted in the selection, as his substitute, of a professional "old soldier". Bartelmy knew the man well, and saw opportunity for making a special impression. Toward the close of his oration he abandoned his memorized lines, and plunged into several passionate paragraphs embodying what he knew were cherished prejudices of the substitute judge. As for Peter's speech, all that is remembered now is that he won second place.

Calder's public functions being the citizenry's sole source of entertainment, even an oratorical contest was not to be despised, and the townspeople to the number of two hundred or more were in the audience. A few visitors also might have been observed, for always at Calder whoever chanced to be in town when a college affair was on must inevitably be taken to the chapel.

Miss Viola Dimont, a music student from Kansas City, had come with her lawyer father, a man of affairs, though much better known in Kansas and Missouri politics than at the bar.

Miss Dimont held herself somewhat aloof from the things which interested other students, and the only previous notice she had taken of Bartelmy Bonafede was to utter a wholly baseless surmise, which for a time attained cruel currency, that his mother was probably supporting him by her needle. As to the contest, it bored her, a fact she made no effort to conceal.

Her father, however, having a sort of professional faith in public speech, found the affair mildly amusing. Just once a keener interest awoke in him. His practiced eye and ear instantly caught the change from memoriter to extempore in Bartelmy's delivery and he discerned that it was aimed directly at Major Curry, the substitute judge. For the lawyer recognized Major Curry as one of those old soldiers who in that decade made more or less political capital out of their war records, and so he paid to Bartelmy's calculated adroitness the compliment of an expert's approval.

Bartelmy won the major—and the medal—and, though Judge Dimont had his amused conviction, no one really knew that he had introduced new matter into his speech. No one, that, is, except Peter Middleton, who had heard the original rehearsed. He was only slightly surprised; for a long time he had not felt sure about Bart.

Still he had made up his mind, months ago, that he would not break with him if he could help it; but he could not quite help asking, the first time they met, "What made you change your oration, Bart?"

Bartelmy was not at a loss for an answer. He had expected the question, and had decided that frankness, up to a point, was his best reply.

So he said, with an offhand air, "Oh, it had occurred to me several times that after all there was something to be said for those who had fought the war, and Major Curry's appointment as one of the judges reminded me of it again."

"Evidently," said Peter, dryly.

"So I extemporized a bit. But you don't think it made any difference in the markings, do you?" Bartelmy asked.

"Well," said Peter, "since I was one of those you beat, that's no question for me to answer. Anyway, you know better than I do. Only I never heard before of a contestant changing his oration after it had been judged on thought and composition. You got grades on two speeches, not on one. That's your lookout. But you won, and I suppose you'd rather be congratulated than bother explaining how it happened."

But Bartelmy remembered, afterward, that Peter hadn't congratulated him, and as he thought it over there was an uncomfortable touch of double meaning that he didn't like in Peter's comment.

IX

In the beginning of the spring term a student left school, for reasons connected with the press of work on the farm, and the high price of hired help. His going made a vacancy in the choir, to which Professor Wolf invited Bartelmy. With a fairly pleasing baritone, and a facility in sight reading traceable to his early training in the Tonic Sol Fa, Bartelmy was good material for the crabbedly competent instruction of the head of the music department, and found the work and its associations alike congenial.

There was also a new soprano in the choir that spring, the same Miss Viola Dimont whose father had so shrewdly appraised Bartelmy's contest oration. This young lady was able to wear clothes of a quality and cut well above the Calder level; and her consciousness of being properly habited had something to do with her obviously metropolitan poise.

The rehearsals for commencement's formal public events, though not primarily social affairs, had their social side. And Bartelmy, with a boldness he could not account for, found himself in the intervals of practice engaged in light conversation with the proud Miss Dimont. If he did not know why she was easy to talk to, she did. She had the advantage of the inside position. It was one of the results of the local oratorical contest.

Escorting his daughter to her boarding house on that night, her father told her, "Young Bonafede is a man to watch. Did you see how he aimed one section of his oration straight at Major Curry? I wonder if he planned it in advance. Or it may have been coincidence. Anyway, it won him the prize. Coincidences of that sort are priceless—and so is the man who can make them happen."

Hitherto Viola Dimont had not given much thought to her father's reputed keenness as a judge of men, but now she remembered that he owed much of his influence with his railway clients to this very ability—it was particularly useful when state legislatures were in session, and in the quiet work that preceded a nominating convention.

If Andrew J. Dimont thought Bartelmy Bonafede a promising young man, then he was a promising young man. And as such he might be worth cultivating. Hence the graciousness of Andrew J. Dimont's daughter at choir rehearsals. Hence much else, in this year when Peter was a senior, Bartelmy a junior, and Effie somewhere in the uncharted country of the normal department.

The preacher of Commencement Sunday was perhaps Calder's most distinguished alumnus, pastor of a great church in Denver, which paid him what was in those days the almost fabulous salary of $7000. He was one of that little group of Methodist preachers who had gone to conspicuous pulpits in other denominations, men whom sect-conscious Methodists were beginning to point out as a part of their church's gift to Protestantism in general; and his reputation as an orator was already sufficient to make him a decided attraction on Lyceum circuits.

In the ordinary course, the sermon would have been forgotten by everybody, as is the fate of most sermons on great occasions. No doubt it was so forgotten by nearly everybody else. But Bartelmy Bonafede remembered some of it in later years; it was his undoing. And Peter;—he never forgot it.

The preacher found his text in a relatively unfamiliar Scripture; the story, in Second Kings, of the siege of Samaria. He read, by way of introduction, the highly dramatic story of the siege, and then he retold it. For some reason Bartelmy was keenly attentive. Years afterward, he could recall the main points of the outline—and did.

In a certain city, said Dr. Paxson, ringed around by enemies, and smitten with famine, are these significant people:

A king; weak, irresolute, petulant, impulsive, unthinking, first cousin to King Demos of the present time, weakest when most eagerly pretending to be strong; easily flattered; easily frightened; easily cajoled into courses sure to end in disaster; easily disheartened into a paralyzed impotence.

A captain of the king's army, on whom the king leans. He is of the official caste, and he becomes, in times of public commotion, the guardian of the city's peace and its supplies.

Two women who have been driven by the famine to the final denial of their motherhood, the willingness to live on the blood of their children. In one of them the mother-instinct tardily revolts; but she has herself benefited by the compact of death, and she seems even more unlovely than her fellow.

A prophet who is unpopular. He will not tell pleasant lies, nor bow to the ruling ideas of religious customs and public policy. As to his person he is fairly safe, because in times of extremity he is more resourceful and surer of himself than the professional religionists. He is not of the priestly order, though exercising religious functions in irregular fashion. He is looked upon by the priests and other ecclesiastics with a jealousy not unmixed with fear. They cannot understand why he does not conform; they are mystified by his lack of interest in priestly affairs.

Four lepers. They are not in the city, though of it; the city has cast them out, and they are huddled at the gate; neither city nor enemy gives them any heed. They have nothing to lose but life, and life to them presents its least desirable aspect. They have already lost most that makes life attractive, and are further removed from fear than from hope. But the lepers save the city.

All this, said the preacher, in our own civilization, has its parallel today. Beset by moral and spiritual famine and by many jealous enemies, is a church.

The people of the church think themselves fortunate; but in many ways they are an aimless, wandering multitude; irresolute, impulsive, unwilling to take and erratic and whimsical in bestowing responsibility.

They have their leaders; some being officials, and others prophets. In the good times the functionaries are in control;

the prophets are either disregarded or distrusted. In times of peril, though the captains never willingly let go, the people turn from them to the unofficial men who speak unpopular truth.

A part of the general population lives on the bloom of childhood, ignorantly or greedily sacrificing the future for the present. They are impelled to this partly by an unnatural avidity (itself a product of the time), and partly by a social blindness which keeps them from seeing the consequences of what they do.

Others buy and sell foul and repulsive merchandise which the moral famine drives the people to use—debauched art, decadent literature, filthy newspapers, rotten amusements,—and grow rich at their beastly traffic.

In every place there is a group of the disinherited, barely existing on the fringes of civilization, with no restraints except the fear of bodily pain, with no stake in the general scheme of things, no social bond, no possessions except a perpetual hunger, and no rights anybody needs to respect. Yet in them are capacities of unguessed value.

"There is no time," said the preacher, "to enlarge on the other aspects of the theme, though they clamor for discussion. I would have you see this little company of the miserable, with no urge to fellowship save their misery. They must not be ignored. You dare not ignore the outcasts of civilization. We who are more favored may be responsible for them. And, when even his church had disappointed him, the God who could deliver a city through four lepers has often delivered an age from mental or moral famine through disregarded and discarded folk. They who have nothing to lose may need only the stimulus of a great unsought, unexpected opportunity, to become pioneers, discoverers, deliverers, heroes, with nothing to gain.

"And if by lepers God can save a city, how much more by men and women like you! There is no virtue in handicaps, as such, but what an obligation in privilege! You are not lepers; who shall deny that some of you are to be prophets? God is always saving the world, either by outcasts or by visionaries, when practical men have failed."

Peter was deeply moved. As he listened his recent reading took on new values; he saw Jean Valjean and Sidney Carton and Smike and the Marchioness,—he saw the Corn Law sufferers of England, the Negroes of the South, outcasts all, who by their woes had helped to end old famines and old sieges. And then he saw the prophets; Bunyan and Wesley and Garrison and Wilberforce and John Brown of his own Kansas.

X

Peter took only a short vacation at home that summer, standing by New Hartford through most of the hot weather. He did some more thinking about the oratorical contest of the preceding year. It was not that he cared much about Bartelmy's stratagem; that was just Bartelmy. But he took stock of his own work. Though speaking did not come easy to him, he understood already that fluency was a mixed blessing. He took his oration to pieces; he sought his father's judgment—the new accord between these two was something beautiful to see—and he asked himself whether there was gain enough in public contests to justify going into them. When he had decided that there was, he began at once to block out a speech for the fall contest, which, important for its local signficance, was also a tryout for the state contest, whose winner would represent Kansas in the Interstate.

And Henry Middleton helped him!

The old man insisted that his own philosophy had not altered, but somehow he could not force himself into any conflict with Peter's by this time acknowledged vocation. He was not simply reconciled to the thought of Peter as a preacher; he had begun to be proud of it, and was mightily set up when his boy was asked to preach at the Sunday evening union service in the Odessa Park.

Odessa people stared; but in his hearing, none of them voiced their amaze. And Peter's sermon, avoiding controversial matters, was received with a respect and interest with whose genuineness the proudest father could have found no fault.

Effie took work as an assistant in a group of Teachers' Institutes in Central Kansas, and Bartelmy stuck by the store, which by this time seemed more his property than Fletcher's. No longer did he need to be anxious about a living; his income more than met his expenses.

Early in the fall, having let it be known that he would not enter the local contest, he was elected president of the oratorical association. So it was his job to work out, with the executive committee, the details; choosing the judges, arranging the program and such like.

And he told Peter, with something of the warmth of the days before Calder, "Old man, you know I've got to be neutral, officially, but I want you to win. If you do, we'll take such a crowd to the state contest as Calder never sent before, and Girdleville will know we're there."

All of which he honestly meant, and honestly carried out. For Peter did get first place on the home contest, and Bartelmy at once began preparations for the state event in the winter, to which eight colleges would send their winning orator to contend for the honor of representing Kansas. It was the big event of the winter term.

Bartelmy worked up an interest which produced his promised crowd of Middleton-and-Calder enthusiasts. The train which bore the Calder delegation to Girdleville began its journey a few stations to the eastward, at the seat of the State University. It stopped for Calder's contingent, and, twenty miles beyond, to take on the students from Judson College.

Sleepy Girdleville was awake for once. Eight colleges had poured in on the town a raving, yelling, irresponsible horde. There were two hours before the contest would begin, and the more timid of the townsfolk kept off the main street. But it was a harmless crowd, if a trifle noisy.

Bartelmy slipped away to the hotel. He knew he would have work enough later, if Peter won. So the present was time to husband one's resources. To Bartelmy that meant supper.

On the other side of the table was a gentleman who looked like a man of affairs. He seemed in a somewhat gloomy mood just now. While Bartelmy waited for his order, his neighbor looked up, and eyed him closely. Then the noise outside suggested a question.

"I've seen you before, I think," he said. "May I ask if you know anything of this rather unusual commotion that occupies the town?"

"Some," replied Bartelmy appreciatively. "I came with part of it."

"From Calder College, didn't you? I thought that was where I'd seen you. Then perhaps you would not mind explaining it?" The tone was wholly respectful, as from man to man.

"Not a bit," Bartelmy said. "Eight colleges of the state form an oratorical association, and each college will have its representative in a speechifying contest at the opera house tonight. These crowds are student delegations come to whoop it up for their orators, and of course they all think they'll be able to crow over all the rest when the decision is announced."

"You will excuse my curiosity, I hope," said the stranger, paying little heed to Bart's details of the contest. "How did the delegations come?"

"By special train, mostly. The State University, Judson College and Calder—that's my school, though I don't see how you knew—had a car apiece on one train. We go back the same way, after the contest."

"You do!" Bartelmy thought this quiet-spoken business man was becoming excited over a very ordinary remark. "What time do you start?" He asked the question with an emphasis that made Bartelmy stare.

"Well, I don't supose it will be much before one o'clock in the morning. That may be too late to interest you. You'd enjoy the contest, though, if you've never been to one. The crowd is the best part of the show."

The stranger had pulled out a couple of railway folders, and was studying them intently. "I suppose your specials don't take other passengers?"

"They might," said Bartelmy, "if there was a good reason."

"There's reason enough, my boy. Some pretty big things might depend on it. My name is Dimont, Andrew J. Dimont. I heard you win an oratorical contest at Calder last year. I think you know my daughter Viola. She's spoken of you."

"Why of course I know her," said Bartelmy, flattered. "We sing in the choir. We're pretty good friends, too, you might say; and it will be an added pleasure to do you this little favor. You see, I'm in charge of Calder's car, and the car-ticket doesn't say how many passengers we're to carry. Would a hard seat, if any, on the return trip be any accommodation to you?"

"Accommodation! Well, I should say it would. There's a man coming to see me on the Northwest branch tonight, at midnight, and if he and I could get through to Kansas City by morning it would mean something bigger than I dare mention. The last Kansas City train goes through here at nine-thirty tonight, and there's no other until ten tomorrow morning.

"Now, your special strikes the Sunset Line at Winnebago.

The Sunset's Kansas City Limited goes through there at six o'clock tomorrow morning, and gets into Kansas City at eight. Don't you see?"

Bartelmy saw. "That's easy," he said. "You and your friend go back with us as far as Winnebago. We'll be there pretty early in the morning, though."

"That's a trifle," said the other. "You're doing me a great favor. Some big interests of mine are at stake."

The Opera House was Babel and pandemonium and Bedlam, all three and all at once. Banners flaunted, fish-horns tooted, college yell clashed with college yell. One by one the orators went through their painful paces. Some were profound, others dramatic. One denounced Richard III. Another told the woes of the Armenians. One poised himself for a flight over the course of time, starting with Adam, and folding his wings just this side of the Millenium.

Peter was clear, direct, almost too easy for the occasion. A contest crowd wants action. Of course Calder's delegation yelled itself voiceless. The rest of the audience was not much impressed. How could it be? The contest was no more than a factional fight, lacking only the fisticuffs. The several orations were merely fifteen minute rests between rounds of tumult.

But the judges liked Peter, and gave him first place.

Although Calder's delegation, like every other, had gone to the contest vowing that it would bring back first honors or die, the actual attainment of the coveted distinction brought an intoxication with success that almost spoiled Bartelmy's promise to Mr. Dimont.

For Bartelmy, as crazy as the rest, had helped shoulder his old friend through the streets of Girdleville, and, in due time the crowd had made its way down to the train. The State University warriors, already at the station, were sleepy and savage. They had expected to capture the contest. Judson College, having expected nothing, was sleepy and serene. Calder alone was wide awake. The celebration moved en masse into the Calder car. The train gave a preliminary lurch.

Just in time, Bartelmy remembered Mr. Dimont. He made for the door of the car, and saw him and another man standing uncertainly on the platform.

"Here you are," said Bart, "hop aboard. I almost missed you, but we're all a little loony tonight," and he helped them on to the already moving train.

Babe McClusky stood in the doorway. "Babe," said Bart, "this is Mr. Dimont of Kansas City. He and his friend have to get to K. C. in the morning, and there's no other way except around by Winnebago. Help me see they get seats somewhere, will you?"

Babe would; and did. The car was crowded, but nobody cared to stick in the same place all night, so that two more passengers could be accommodated quite easily.

In the chill dawn of the February morning the special ran into Winnebago. Bartelmy hunted up his deadheads. "You'll have time for a cup of coffee across the street," he said to Dimont, "and if the Sunset Limited is on time you should be in Kansas City by eight."

Dimont was not boisterously demonstrative, but he held Bartelmy's hand with a grip that young man felt for a week.

"Bonafede, this is a service I can't easily reward, but I hope I can't forget it, either. You'll hear from me later. Goodby."

XI

No expectations of special reward disturbed Bartelmy's thoughts; he had long ago lost his belief in fairies, and his day dreams in the bookstore were of practical affairs.

He was genuinely surprised, therefore, when Viola Dimont sought him out one day and delivered a message from her father and mother, inviting him to spend the Easter week-end at their home in Kansas City. Viola made it quite clear that the invitation was wholly her father's doing.

"You know," she said, "Dad is terribly taken with you since the state contest; thinks you have initiative and resourcefulness and a lot of other business qualities that I never noticed in you. And yet he's only seen you twice. Father is funny; but he's not usually so romantic."

Bartelmy saw nothing romantic in the invitation; and, indeed, once he had accepted it, suffered a growing uneasiness which blurred his usual clear vision of personal profit. The adventure would open new worlds, certainly; worlds of which he had always known, but never from the inside. Could he rise to their demands? Not since the Thornlea days had he so much as seen the inside of a "gentleman's" house, and then he had gone by the back way, to the kitchen.

In the early stages of his Kansas City visit Mr. Dimont embarrassed Bartelmy. He told and retold the story of his midnight ride on the contest train from Girdleville. The family was plainly familiar with its every incident, but Bartelmy's presence in the house gave his host sufficient excuse for its repetition. The tale had a personal touch, too. "You did yourself a service that night, young man, as well as doing one for me. You didn't know it, but some day you will."

After his first confusions, Bartelmy found himself quite at ease in the Dimont establishment. None but Viola put on any airs, and he had learned at Calder how to discount that sort of thing. Her parents made no pretensions of any sort. In Thornlea Mrs. Dimont would have been described, wholly to her credit, as a "homely body"—one who had no concerns outside her home and her family. She managed her colored servants by sheer good humor, and indeed, strongly reminded Bartelmy of the kindly cook at Jessop's in Thornlea long ago, who one hungry night had given him bread and butter overspread with marmalade.

"Judge" Dimont had met snobbery at too close quarters to practice it himself. He was a railroad lawyer of the variety which had a few conspicuous examples in the Mississippi Valley before the days of the Interstate Commerce Commission. He attended to the political business of his employers. He made and unmade legislators. He saw to it that the right people in the right communities received passes and other favors. He had his lieutenants in Jefferson City and Topeka, and in every important county seat. Some of these were members of his well-organized secret service; others openly championed the railroads and their interests.

The Judge said no more about benefits to come. But he had said enough so that Bartelmy found himself wondering when his reward would arrive, and how.

He returned to Calder on an earlier train than Viola, for the bookstore would need him. And he continued to think of the Judge. He saw that this lawyer seemed to be something of a personage in Kansas City, as in truth he was, and not in Kansas City only, but in all the territory whose railroads converged there. Hence he was a man whose influence was to be accepted, and to be developed as opportunity offered.

Before Viola left home, a remark of her father's found her in more receptive mind than she realized.

"That Bonafede boy," he said at lunch, "is nobody's fool. The only times I've seen him in action he got results, and he got the results he was after. If he does go into the Methodist ministry, he'll not stop short of being a bishop. He tells me he's engaged. Well; the girl he marries is sure of sharing in a career of some sort. Do you know her?"

"Why, yes, I suppose I do," said Viola, "though not very well. She's a girl he knew before he came to Calder. She's a teacher, taking Normal; not much style to her. Never is, with those Normal girls. She certainly doesn't look cut out for a bishop's wife."

"Well," the Judge insisted, "that's where he's headed, though he doesn't know it yet; which maybe is just as well."

XII

Calder-bound that afternoon, Viola fell to thinking of the talk. "A bishop's wife;"—the phrase sounded important. What would being a bishop's wife mean? And how long did it take for a young preacher to become a bishop?

She decided to be a bit more approachable. If her father was right, as he so often was, she was the only girl at Calder who had any suspicion of Bartelmy's future; and that might be an advantage.

In the weeks before commencement she was cordial enough so that Bart found it increasingly easy to drop in at her boarding house; first to talk reminiscently of the Easter visit, and, later, with little concern over having any excuse whatever. As the spring advanced, a short stroll now and then was no more than natural, with longer ones by and by, in the longer twilights. At Calder walking had its conventions and its implications; it was a declaration of interest, with a code and customs well understood.

And, even if it had been meaningless, a student cannot be in two places at once. By as much as Bartelmy began to cultivate Viola, by so much he must seem to neglect Effie. Because of the code, and because of the narrow circle in which all Calder moved, the fact could not be hidden. First Effie knew; and kept her own counsel. Soon everybody knew, except perhaps Peter Middleton. Peter's charge forced him to concentrate on his studies through the week, and he was probably the last person of all to discover what was going on.

He met Effie between classes one morning, and said to her, "I've a letter from Retha I'd like to show you. Will you be visible to ordinary callers tonight, or is Bart coming?"

"Bart is not coming," she said. She dared not let him see the hurt in her eyes, and paused for a moment.

"Funny," he thought, "maybe she'd rather not have me come, anyway." And he spoke up; "Don't bother, Effie; if you've something else on I can come some other time."

But by this time she had regained her composure, and said—"like the Effie she used to be", he told himself—"Don't be foolish, Peter. Of course come on over; I'll be glad to see Retha's letter; and I've nothing else on. You keep yourself a lot too busy with that church of yours, and your friends ought to be glad of any chance to help you forget it once in a while. So come over tonight."

It was just a pleasant call, and Peter suspected nothing; but there was a reference in the letter he had brought which required a second talk with Effie. Again Bart was no hindrance; and this time Peter, with a touch of the old familiarity, wanted to know.

Effie was not the girl to tell him, but he found others who had no scruples. Their information made him more inquisitive than he had any business to be, but he told himself that this was an unusual affair.

Bart and Peter met but seldom; they saw each other now and then between class hours as they passed on the campus paths, but the comradeship of their first year had long ago ceased. So of course Peter would ask no questions of Bart.

Soon he had two facts that seemed to have some relation to each other; Bartelmy was noticeably attentive to Viola Dimont, and he had spent the Easter vacation as a guest in her home.

Peter had not been on the contest special, returning from the State contest. He had gone up to the farm over Sunday, taking an earlier train on the main line to the junction point for Odessa; the very junction, by the way, where Bartelmy had spent his first night in Kansas, before that winter day when he and Peter met in the Middleton barnyard.

But Peter had heard vague gossip about the two Kansas City men who had travelled in the Calder car from Girdleville to Winnebago. Bartelmy's Kansas City holiday suggested a possible connection, and surmise became certainty after he had sought out Babe McClusky, who had no reason on earth for not telling what he knew. Babe remembered the name of one of the strangers; "Dimont it was," he said. "I guess he must be some kin to Viola Dimont. She lives in Kansas City, you know."

The thing began to clear. In some way Bartelmy had struck up acquaintance with Judge Dimont; and now the Dimonts were taking him up.

Because he knew Bartelmy, Peter could almost reconstruct the sequence of events. He was torn between hope and disgust. In some moments he would gladly have given Bartelmy a thrashing; in the next, he told himself that Bartelmy would have his reward, and that his own fortunes might best be served by letting him alone.

Effie was a puzzle. In the last few months he had honestly tried to put her out of his life, and for his pains he had been rebuked, as soon as he began to call, for acting so unlike his old self.

And yet, she was finding him every day more like the Peter who had seemed so wonderful in her first Kansas days. She was deeply glad over their renewed association; it was good to have a friend, almost like a brother, in this time when Bartelmy was behaving so strangely.

Peter would not ask her again about Bartelmy, and she tried to hide whatever she felt by talking of him as freely as before. It was a poor pretense, though Peter felt forced to play up to it, and did, as long as he could. But the time came when he got out of bounds.

"What's Bart's plan for the summer?" he asked her quite casually one afternoon, as they met at the library door and walked away together.

Effie hesitated. Peter's quick sidewise glance caught a look of trouble, and her color had risen. At last she said, "I really don't know. I haven't—" and stopped.

"You haven't seen him in weeks?" he burst out. "I know you haven't. And I'd like to skin him alive. But Effie," and something suddenly cooled the anger in his voice, "do you care? If you do, I'll go to Bart and put the fear of the Lord into him. But if you really don't care whether he behaves like a skunk—"

She put her hand on his arm. "I can take it from you, Peter, because you're Peter; nobody else could talk to me like that, and it's a good deal to stand, even from you. Bartelmy is busy with many things, and if he is to have the fear of the Lord put into him, it will not be by you. It isn't your affair."

Peter stared. This was not the girl he had just caught blushing in shamed confusion because she had betrayed her hurt pride. But neither was it the Effie of the days before Calder, when she had been the friendliest girl of all the countryside.

"Well," he said, "maybe not. Anyway, I know what he's up to. He may be busy, but he has time to spare for Viola Dimont, and I know why."

"Do you?" Effie said in a thin, hard voice. "Do you?" She was trying to be dignified; but because, as she had said, Peter was Peter, the effort was not much of a success, and her voice lost all its hardness as she looked into his face and said, "Oh, Peter, I wish I did!"

The sight of her brave eyes, forbidden of her will to release the insistent tears, put an end to all Peter's discretion. Few people were on the campus, and none at all near by. He stopped and faced her. "Effie Bailey," he said, "apart from the fact that he's behaved to you like a cad, do you really in your heart care whether or not Bartelmy Bonafede goes where he thinks he can prosper his fortunes?"

Effie had recovered her wits, and with them her mood of sufficiency. "Why shouldn't I care, Peter? You are my friend, in spite of a shocking way you have of minding other people's business, and I can be frank with you. Bartelmy *is* a worry to me. He's his own worst enemy, too. But if he gives me no chance to tell him so,—I'm not sure I should if he did—well, I've a certain amount of self-respect, and a girl who takes that sort of treatment from the man she's supposed to be engaged to is in for a hard time. Of course I care."

Again Peter stared in wondering puzzlement. Effie was admitting that her pride had been touched, as well she might; but with all her frankness she had not said anything about any more serious hurt. Was there any? But before he could think of a way to make that question sound natural, Effie held out her hand.

"Peter, you're a dear, good, stupid boy," she said, "and I love you for what you mean, if not for what you do. But please let me go now. I have a good deal of work on hand." And she turned down a side path and hurried away.

Because Effie had virtually forbidden him to interfere, Peter in the next few days was more careful than usual to avoid Bartelmy. Bartelmy was even less anxious to meet Peter, though his chief anxiety was how to deal with Effie. By this time he was sure where his interest lay; all the signs pointed to Viola Dimont, to say nothing of her wealth, as he considered it, and her influential father. Putting this and that together, he had discovered that Judge Dimont, though not a communicant, was a trustee of one of Kansas City's largest churches, and could bring things to pass in other churches also, whenever the effort seemed worth the trouble.

When the moment came, the break with Effie was easier than he hoped. Certainly, she helped him. In the hall after a joint Hamilton-Euterpean function one Saturday night, Effie, determined at last to have an understanding, pocketed her pride and went up to him.

"Bart, won't you drop in tomorrow night after Church? I'll have some refreshments ready."

Taken unaware, he hesitated. She saw his indecision; and all was over.

"Never mind, Bart," she said quietly. "I understand. You will be otherwise occupied, of course."

The taunt stung him, but Bartelmy Bonafede could not often afford to be angry; assuredly not now. Something better offered —a way out of his difficulty.

"Effie," he said, "never mind about me. I could explain if you really wanted me to. But you've been seeing Peter a good deal lately, and I can guess what he thinks. Maybe you are finding that you care more for him than you do for me? It would not be strange. And why should I stand in your way; or his?"

Effie's amazed indignation almost choked her. "Why, Bartelmy Bonafede! *Why, Bartelmy Bonafede!*" Then swiftly she saw what he was really doing, and a strange surge of relief went over her, and drowned out all her anger. She laughed in his face.

"Bart, my friend, you put it the wrong way to, and you know it. But it is just as well. What you really want to know is why I should stand in *your* way, though you haven't been much hindered, from what I hear." And then, taking him a little further out of earshot of passers-by, she said, "Bartelmy, boy, I've always understood you better than you understand yourself. You'll succeed with Viola."

And Bartelmy, though he too felt that a great strain was relaxed, still followed his own mind, not hers. " I should have realized long ago," he admitted, "that you and Peter were made for one another. But I'll stand aside now. Never mind what becomes of me. I want you to be happy in your own way."

"And you in yours?" Effie could not help interjecting.

"I should have seen it before," he reiterated; "but it is not too late."

Effie's hands went out in a gesture of helplessness. "Have it as you will. You couldn't possibly have seen it much before Easter, you know. But if you see it now, we can agree on that point, anyway. And," rather lamely for her, "we can still be friends."

Bartelmy could scarcely believe it had been all so simply done, but there was an uncontrollable relief in his voice. "Friends!" he almost gasped, "I should think so. Why, Effie—" but she cut him short with a cool, expressionless smile and a "Good night," that saved him from more inventive effort. He had never been quite able to match her in swift adjustment to new circumstances.

In the morning, however, he had regained some of his poise, and felt that by immediate action he could acquire much-needed merit with Peter. So he wrote a note, and took it to Peter's room at an hour when he knew the place would be tenantless.

"Dear Peter," it ran, "I'm not quite up to talking about it yet, but I've found out—I'd rather not say how—that Effie's feelings toward me have changed. I can't bring myself to insist on explanation, but neither can I ask her to continue a relationship which has become distasteful. I wanted you to know right away, because we three are old friends."

It was Peter instead of Bartelmy who that Sunday night enjoyed the refreshments which Effie spread in the parlor of her boarding house. Peter, with the obtuseness of the male, had taken the facts, if not the inferences, of Bartelmy's note at their face value, and supposed the rest would be easy. He had omitted to reckon with Effie, not reflecting that she might be unwilling to seem the submissive and unquestioning prize in any sort of contest between Bartelmy and himself.

"Bartelmy tells me," he said, "that you've thrown him over. I know what he means, all right; and I won't lie and say I'm sorry. You know I'm not."

Effie looked her most distant. "I'd rather discuss something else," she answered. "Can't you and Bartelmy think of anything better than me to talk about?"

"I haven't seen him," Peter said. "He sent me a note."

"Or anything better to write about?" Effie persisted.

So it befell that, though Bartelmy's note had ended one uncertainty, Peter went home no wiser about the other.

Within a few days, after she had put him properly in his place, so that he behaved as a suppliant should, Effie permitted him to prosecute his suit according to the immemorial rites. And their little affair, one of the many affairs of any spring term at Calder, went on its appointed way quite as auspiciously as any.

XIII

A new president was Calder's special attraction of that year's commencement. Dr. McBean, grown old and gray in the school's service, had been for months steadily failing; in fact, ever since he had worked so hard on the big deficit. Midway of the year he resigned, asking to be released at commencement.

After the usual search, some of it openly pursued, and some carried on through those hidden intricacies of the ecclesiastical system which are the delight of the Methodist adept and the despair of the outsider, a new man had been found. He was in all ways a contrast to the scholarly, rather grim and ceremoniously courteous McBean; a preacher with a business head and a brusque manner; one of the earliest of the high-pressure promoter type which has since been so much sought after.

His inauguration gave commencement week a new distinction. The proceedings were as stately and formal as Kansas could compass. Again Bartelmy sat with the choir, behind the new president and the other dignitaries, just where he had sat the year before when Paxson of Denver had preached on the siege of Samaria. He watched his new president intently. Here was another of those successful men whom he might hope to emulate; a man who got results.

The inaugural address, though after the first ten minutes Bartelmy disregarded its substance, fired afresh all his ambitions. He felt that this man, despite his prominence, was beyond him in degree only; his was a goal whose path he could see clearly all the way. And Bartelmy Bonafede, in a rush of exultant self-confidence, said to himself, "Give me ten years, and I'll stand level with where he is today."

Peter could have been fairly happy over his graduation, even without the two incidents which made it unforgettable. But when his father and mother turned up unannounced, he had but one thing more to ask of the kindly fates.

Henry Middleton in his capitulation held nothing back.

"My boy," he said, in his only reference to the old disagreement, "I have learned something from my books, but I have been to school to you these last four years. Don't be surprised if I have learned something there, too. You can't expect me to go back on some of my old opinions, but there are others I have put away for good. And one of them is about your religion of Jesus. I can find it in my mind now to be glad that you will be a preacher, because I think I know what sort of a preacher you mean to be. God bless you, Peter!" Which was the longest and completest and most religious confession the old man had made since that far day when, a child, he had been confirmed according to the Lutheran rite.

And then there was Effie. Most of all there was Effie.

As for the one thing Peter wanted above every other to hear her say, it was not said. But, discourage himself as he would, he could not deny that something had happened at the end of their long walk in the afternoon and the deepening dusk of Commencement Day.

The public fuss was all over. The students and visitors were gone. On the morrow Effie would start for her first Institute, and Peter would go to his charge.

He was counting on this being the most important of interviews. They retraced their steps over all the old familiar creaking wooden walks; they stopped at all the convenient stopping places. Yet nothing seemed to come of it. Only a sort of quiet poise was on them both as they walked.

She would not let him talk about love, though he tried, manfully. It was hard for her to forget how nearly she had thrown away her own gift for loving. But about his future—that she insisted on sketching; the details varying from moment to moment, but the main point never. He must go to a theological seminary as soon as possible. He must get all the equipment he could. And then he must set out on a career of unselfish and successful service.

"You are not to be a spectacular preacher, Peter," she said, "but a preacher trusted and loved because you will be honest and frank and gentle. You will treat your people all your days as you treat your New Hartford folks. And see what they think of you!"

Which was true enough; as the presiding elder himself was voluble witness; and all the more because Peter was not highly impressive in the pulpit. But this particular elder declared that he had never before met, in a "supply" from college, such an old, wise head, so steady, so dependable and so depended on. Not so long ago New Hartford had been the hard place of his district; now he knew that it would give him no more trouble, at least until Peter was appointed elsewhere.

Peter was not thinking, just then, of his future. He could not be displeased with Effie's way of forecasting it, but the pleasure came wholly from her glowing absorption in the picture; you might almost think she was ordering this future of his from some familiar spirit who had no choice but to obey her.

And so the thing he did say when the last moment came was almost as great a surprise to himself as to her.

They had reached her gate. No, he must not come in, she said. It had been a long and exciting day, and they must both get some rest.

"Now, Peter," she said, as he took her hand, "you've said you won't think you are through school just because you are through college. You'll think of the next thing, the seminary. Well; what can you gain by waiting? Why shouldn't you go right away; this fall?"

Up to that moment going to seminary in the fall had been of all plans the one he had not been considering. But her words touched off something.

"I don't know," he said; "maybe I could. I haven't thought of it as being quite so urgent as that." And then, the inspiration! "But, Effie, Effie,—if I should—would you go with me?"

What happened in the next moment was over almost before it began, but no imp of doubt could ever make him disbelieve it. There in the soft darkness, her hand in his, she stood as poised for flight, like a frightened bird. She lifted her head to his, and then—and then she was gone.

But, in the instant of going she had said, "Oh, Peter!" Had she meant to kiss him? At least, their lips had touched and then she was slipping through the open door like a shadow of the night, while Peter followed her not with eyes only, but with his very soul.

XIV

From Hastings, the seat of the Institute where Effie was beginning a month's work as teacher of teachers who had even less equipment and experience than her own, she wrote Peter a somewhat cryptic letter. "I hope you'll not think I was bold the other night. But I couldn't help it. You are so dependable and so easy to understand. It is not quite as easy for me to understand myself. But if you are willing to run over to Hastings, Friday of next week, we can have a good talk. In the meantime there are some things I've got to think out for myself."

With which Peter was as satisfied as a man can be who must wait a week before his half-proposal and the girl's acceptance can be completed—as, like any fatuous lover, he felt sure it would be.

But the next Sunday he preached most disconnectedly, and seemed to the New Hartford people more than ever the incomprehensible Peter whom they loved just for that.

A Kansas institute boarding house of the early nineties was not arranged for such business as Effie and Peter had in hand. So she had written him that she would meet the evening train where it stopped at the Santa Fe Crossing, and they could have supper and then walk about for an hour or so before he went to the town's one hotel.

Peter, as the train neared Hastings, was saying to himself, "I can figure it all out except what to do in the first minute after the train stops. If only we were actually engaged, I'd know what to do then, too."

When the train did stop, and he saw Effie coming toward him, he did it. So did she. She was so radiant and yet so self-possessed that more than one passenger who saw them go to each others' arms said, half-enviously, half-cynically, "Very pretty; bride meeting her husband after his first absence from home since the wedding."

They had a supper of some sort—neither knew just what—at the railroad restaurant. Just across the track was the Chautauqua park; and as they left the restaurant and turned into the gate Effie felt that first of all she must explain her demonstrative behaviour.

"Peter, dear," she said, " I wrote you last week that I was sure of you. But I had to have a session with myself. It took me a little while to see through some things that happened back on Paint Creek; but everything is clear enough now. I misunderstood; and so did you. It wasn't our fault, and we know whose doing it was; but I'm not in the mood to blame anybody. So that's why I was so silly when I saw you getting off the car."

Said Peter, "Let's be silly again, both of us."

By and by, slowly returning to town, they were talking about the coming fall and its plans.

"I have a little money saved," said Peter, "and Dad has told me that I can have what more I need, up to a certain point. It is to be charged against the forty acres he always intended to give me when I settled down. But can you get ready, Effie?"

"Well, it's shorter notice than most girls ask for," said Effie, "but I'm not going home to be married, so there needn't be any great fuss. How much time can I have?"

"I'd take you back with me to New Hartford tomorrow if I could have my way," Peter said with unnecessary emphasis, "but that wouldn't be fair. You've been rushed a good deal as it is. Then I've got to put myself right with the charge, and give the presiding elder time to find another man. Besides, there's the seminary to consider; where to go, and all that. We ought to start east by the middle of September, I should guess.

By the way, young lady, have you any choice in theological schools?"

The idea pleased them both immensely. They were prepared to be pleased at almost anything. Still, Effie was not entirely ignorant. She knew that, east of Kansas, there were three great centers for the training of Methodist preachers; one in Boston, one in New Jersey, and one in Chicago or near by. Peter's knowledge was scarcely more extensive. Both had heard about the Chicago school from Calder men who were there. And Chicago had always attracted him. New York and Boston by contrast seemed remote; almost alien. He felt that he could understand Chicago.

Said Effie, "I'd love Chicago, too. New York doesn't scare me; I know it, but I don't like it much. Chicago isn't really western, of course, after Kansas. But it *faces* the West. And I'm a western woman by adoption, you know."

So Chicago it was to be. Peter, back in New Hartford on the morrow, began the process of prying himself loose, and wrote to Evanston for information.

XV

Bartelmy, who had nowhere else to go, meant to stay on through the summer at the bookstore. He had become virtually its manager, and in sole charge, Mr. Fletcher having lost his health entirely. Then, before Bartelmy had warning enough to think of the event's relation to his own future, the old merchant died. Directly after the funeral the family decided to sell the store to an aggressive young fellow from St. Louis, who told Bartelmy, before returning to St. Louis to close up his affairs there, that the store would have to get along for a while with the services of one man only—its owner.

Once more the old fear took him. He had been so comfortable—and so sure. Within a year or so he would have been beyond all danger of being hurt by a thing like this. But now, in a moment almost, he was plunged into the uncertainty which as a child in Thornlea he had seen make cowards of the strong, and blockheads of the wise.

Now, as always, the emergency drove him to the first visible way of escape. He thought a little of Judge Dimont, but decided it would be impolitic to apply just now for help in that quarter. He thought of Peter, knowing him to be happy in his work, and having some success with it. And it occurred to him, "If I'm to be a preacher, why not begin now? There's a living in it, and it seems easy. I wonder if there's an opening anywhere?"

At once he wrote to three of the presiding elders whom he had known in their occasional visits to Calder, and one of them answered favorably. Yes; he had a circuit of three points, whose pastor had left to take a charge in Nebraska. It would not pay enough for a married man, but a student could manage very well.

Bartelmy had received his local preacher's license some months before, and, the elder said, if he should take the Spring Valley work he could come up the next spring for admission into the conference on trial.

To Bartelmy the opening was quite good enough. His one urgency was to get into assured employment of some sort or other, and so be rid of the choking panic which gripped him when he thought of himself as being adrift. He could not afford to be choicy.

By this time it was midsummer. Bartelmy paid a hurried visit to Viola in Kansas City, and told her, with justifiable reluctance, of the change in his affairs.

She made no effort to hide her displeasure. "Bartelmy Bonafede," she said, "whatever made you do it? What was the hurry?"

He could not tell her that. Nobody could be made to realize what he had gone through; Viola least of all. It would seem a nightmare's unreal terrors, that vanish in the telling. And, while he was ashamed of the fear which had driven him, he had been helpless before it. But Viola simply couldn't understand. So she must not know. Besides, he had thought of an explanation which seemed to him quite plausible, even praiseworthy.

"You see, Viola," he began, "I've realized lately that the store was keeping me from making a beginning at my real life-work, and when Mr. Fletcher's heirs sold out it seemed like a providential indication. There was this opening on the Spring Valley circuit, and—well, I just took it. It's not much, but it gets me started."

"But—Spring Valley circuit! Why couldn't you wait until something decent offered? You must know what a circuit preacher's life is. I'm surprised at you, and disappointed, too."

"You mustn't be," he urged. "I do know what it means. But the presiding elder says it will only be until spring, and will make possible my joining the conference then. That will save more than half a year. There are always good openings for one or two Calder seniors every spring. Spring Valley is just a stepping stone, that's all. And, when I get the new place—" He looked the question he could not put into words.

"Time enough for that when you're sure of a new place," Viola said shortly. "But don't expect me to become interested in Spring Valley. I'll find somebody else to play with on Sundays while you're out among the cornstalks."

With which ultimatum Bartelmy was perforce content. It showed him what was expected of him, and he did not falter. After college opened, and all through the year, he was Viola's constant slave from Monday to Friday. Spring Valley was a bad second in his schedule, and his studies came last of all; he narrowly missed failure in two of the Fall term exams.

A few books of outlines served as his chief dependence for his Sunday work. One sermon a week was all he needed, and his feeling for a flowing and somewhat vivid English gave him a measure of dexterity in handling the dry bones of the borrowed outlines. Most of his hearers, uncritical and often unheeding, saw nothing out of the way in this strawy sermonizing, though one or two had discernment enough to recognize it for the second-hand stuff it was.

In the spring Bartelmy was admitted to the conference as a probationer, and appointed to Brewster. Naturally, he was not to be on the ground much until after commencement, but the Brewster church readily agreed to that; the people had been given to understand that, as soon as he graduated, Brother Bonafede would go to Kansas City and return with his bride, the only daughter of a great city lawyer, Judge Dimont. With an event like that in prospect, more important churches than Brewster have bravely endured a little temporary irregularity of pastoral service.

CHAPTER V

I

There had been a wedding in Paint Creek Valley, with the Middletons and the Albrights and a few neighbors as the only guests. Not even the Fairchilds from Wolf Creek were included. Effie had long ago decided that her Wolf Creek relatives were more kin than kind, and had been quite as ready as they to ignore the blood-tie.

In Evanston by mid-September, the Middletons were established in a third-story makeshift of two rooms on the wrong side of Sherman Avenue. Garrett's unmarried students had for their housing a huge barracks on the campus. The married ones were considered to have committed, if not a crime, a most regrettable blunder, which they expiated in the torments of such quarters as no other self-respecting dwellers in that exacting suburb of Chicago would occupy.

The student appointment of the second year turned out to be a little church in an unpretentious suburb of Chicago; its membership made up of workers in half-a-dozen small factories, mills and machine shops, with a sprinkling of young folks who had office jobs in the Loop.

Peter's preaching would have been less effective in almost any other church. Most of his people were newcomers in that part of Chicago, of many diverse religious traditions. Two-thirds of them were Methodists by the accident of propinquity, no more; if the little church had been five blocks from where it was they might easily have been Presbyterians. Afterwards, when Peter's unconventional sermons and the alluring humanness of the parsonage began to bear fruit, the recruits whom these things attracted were even more hopelessly incapable of labeling than the original membership. Towards the end of his pastorate one of Peter's classmates, visiting him over Sunday, said, "Old man, I think you must have borrowed members from every known faith and order except the Jews and the African Methodists."

And Peter assured him, "We have three African Methodists in the Sunday School, and our soprano in the choir is Mrs. Levy Rosenfeld. She hasn't joined the church yet, but she gave us our last Christmas turkey."

The peculiarity of Peter's work in the pulpit was that he couldn't—or wouldn't—do it according to rule. If he had been at all inclined to rigidity in public worship, this particular church would probably have discouraged him. Since he himself was anything but a formalist, he found it easy at Colton Park to practice a reverence which gave large latitude for the demands of the moment. He would not let any form, however venerable, quench the spirit of fellowship with God and one another, or govern the conditions of his pulpit work. There was one exception. Already he felt unrealized values in the Communion Service, and he sought always to magnify it.

Through the last two years at Garrett, the Middletons stayed on at Colton Park. Whenever anybody would suggest, however, that they remain after Peter's graduation, they had a little ceremony. As soon as they were alone the two of them would recite antiphonally their well-defined conviction for the first pastorate after school. It took this form:

Peter: "This conference is full of men who came out of the seminary and for various reasons are working right at its door."

Effie: "And if the seminary is really to serve the church, its graduates should be scattered where they are most needed."

Peter: "Therefore the Middletons have decided to scatter."

Effie: "Which means that if two churches or two presiding elders or two bishops beckon to us, the one who beckons from the point farthest away from any seminary gets us."

Peter: "So mote it be;" and, with a silly little exchange of kisses the antiphon was ended.

Just before the conference which would end Peter and Effie's tacit contract with themselves and Colton Park, the presiding elder was in the parsonage front room, and Effie, happier than usual, even for her, sang as she finished up the supper work in the kitchen. The elder would take the nine o'clock train for the seat of conference, two hours to the westward. Peter wasn't going.

Peter lowered his voice as he drew his chair closer to the elder. He had news to communicate.

"I doubt if I get to conference this year, Dr. Clitheroe," he said. "We're expecting a world-shaking event in the next few days, and I'd sorter like to be on hand."

"Is that so? Well, I'm delighted. You must stay, by all means, my boy," said the elder heartily. "Conference will get along without you. Anyhow, you know what you're headed for as soon as Mrs. Middleton is ready to travel."

"Yes," Peter agreed. "I heard from the presiding elder out there and I guess we're as good as appointed to that Colorado church. My reports have all gone in to the conference, and after next Sunday you can send your new man along as soon as you like."

"He'll not have an easy time," said Dr. Clitheroe, as he said good night.

While Peter's elder and the other elders of the cabinet were settling themselves in a hotel room that night for a midnight palaver with Peter and his cares forgot, Peter himself had never been more miserable or felt more nearly useless. He had been alarmed by Effie's trembling urgency at midnight that he call the doctor, who lived across the street. The self-possessed practitioner, when he arrived, had promptly called another, as well as a nurse from the city. Everybody but Peter had something to do, and knew how to do it. Peter kept himself out of the way until he was called, and was wearied more than they all, with nothing to do but to think and fret and wait for morning.

As the night wore on, his soul, from being impatient, grew heavy and dark. The doctors, at first uncommunicative, told him just before dawn that Effie was not getting through the ordeal quite as well as they had wished. They could not speak with any certainty, and she would have every chance that their skill and care could give, but he must hold himself together.

With daylight they gave him a little more hope, and a measure of gladness. Out from the bedroom came the nurse, with a carefully-held bundle. She called Peter from his battles with an unseen enemy out on the front yard grass, and charged him to look at his firstborn, his daughter.

Which Peter did, but not with any great enthusiasm; his thoughts were straying to the bedroom.

A little later the nurse called him in, and he leant over the bed to see a strange new Effie, just emerging from the slumber of utter exhaustion. In her eyes was a question.

He answered, "Yes, I've seen her—our daughter. She will be like you." Which was a pious guess.

The nurse came and put the tiny bundle by Effie's side. For a few moments she held it close. Then her arms relaxed, and she turned her face to Peter, bending over her.

"Dear boy," she whispered, "at least you'll have her. She'll be company for you. Tell her about her mother, won't you?"

The words put a deadly fear into his blood. What he saw in Effie's face did but make that fear the blacker. He turned to the nurse.

"What's the matter with her?" he asked.

The nurse, hand on the patient's pulse, said quietly but tensely, "I think she's going to faint. I'll put the baby in the other bed, and I'll be right back here. But you'd better get Doctor Francis back again as soon as you can."

While a desperate and urgent Peter was rousing the weary doctor from the sleep he had barely begun, Effie's eyes opened, and she saw the nurse lifting the baby from beside her.

"Let me see her again," she said, and the nurse bent over her with the child.

Effie seemed to discern that this was a sturdy infant, who would have her father's strong frame, and when the child's eyes opened and she saw how darkly brown they were, her face took on a look of content. Something about his daughter would always remind Peter of the wife of his youth. There was a tear on Effie's cheek; it may be she was grieving for Peter's loneliness, and for the long years of hoped-for comradeship she knew now she would never share.

The doctor, disheveled, came in. He was shocked. He had known this was a serious matter, but not, he had thought, past hope. Now hope was gone. He could see that.

Peter caught the doctor's helpless gesture. He turned from the man to the beloved figure on the bed. Effie saw him, and smiled into his eyes. But this was not the strong, competent Effie he had always loved; no more than a shadow of that other and infinitely dearer in this moment of despair.

She spoke, but so faintly. He stooped over, and she breathed the words into his ear, painfully fighting for breath the while.

"You will, Peter, won't you? I mean, let her help you in my place when she grows up. She's mine—and yours. I'd like for her to know a good deal about me, sometimes; so that she'll understand what I had wanted to do. You must teach her to be your partner. Only it will be a long time to wait until she's old enough. I'm sorry; if I could have stayed I would."

The effort must have used up all the strength she had left. Her eyes closed, and she breathed with weak laboriousness. The doctor knew that it was the end. As his colleague of the night, hastily summoned by the nurse, entered, his eyes asking all manners of questions, Dr. Francis said, simply, "Pulmonary embolism." And the other nodded soberly.

II

The baby was all right. But Peter, broken and spent with grief, could not be comforted for the dead mother by the living child. He had scarcely seen the baby at all until Effie, yesterday so brave and so eager for this new experience, had closed her eyes and slipped away.

There was love and sympathy enough, if it could have helped. Colton Park asked only what was wanted, and would have done anything. Garrett, which for a year had known Effie nearly as well as it had known Peter, had been always admiring; and now it sorrowed with him. But at first all this kindness almost revolted the boy. Why should anyone offer these horribly inadequate condolences, when what he wanted would have made them all unnecessary? All he wanted was Effie back again; the Effie of last year, last week; *his* Effie.

When that mood had left him, he remembered his vocation. Even in those earliest days of his ministry he had been, in not a few grieving homes, a kindly and much-desired comforter, and he bethought him now that too easily he had preached resignation to others. Resignation was everything but easy.

Also, in a little while, he remembered his faith. As in after days the Book spoke to him with reminders not to be thrust away, so now. The Scripture which first stayed his complaint against God was none of his own seeking, nor was it one of the passages of consolation he had quoted to others.

"I think I know what some of hell's torment is," he told himself. And then there came to mind that word of the Psalmist, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." "It may be blasphemy," thought Peter, "but I can see something else in it. 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell:'—that's me. 'Thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption;'—that's Effie. She never did see it. She wouldn't. She won't see it now. Christ knows better. She died at her post, as he did. She went willingly down into the shadow, as he did. What could be holier than that?"

The Colton Park people were lifted out of themselves. They loved Peter; now they knew that they had loved Effie, not better, but more tenderly; with a simpler affection. And they could think of no better way to prove it than to turn it all toward him. Because he was so crushed, he needed them. Before, they had needed him.

A committee went to Conference, still in session. The bishop did the unusual thing of paying special attention to a supply preacher's case. The committee said, in effect, "We expected that Brother Middleton would be moved. He was going to Colorado. . . But now we want to ask for him back. He ought not to go to a strange church right away. Send him back to us. He can have a leave of absence for as long as he will take it, and when the time comes that he can stand it to think of his next appointment, we'll release him and take our chances."

Said the bishop, after talking over with the presiding elder the strange request, "I'm not sure that I ought to do it, but I am sure I want to do it. And who knows? maybe you and your church won't suffer for making the most Christian request of any committee I have met in all my days. I'll send Middleton back, and whatever you and he and the elder agree on about a leave of absence will be all right with me."

All this moved Peter beyond words; almost beyond endurance. The very excess of kindness out of which it came held him constantly in the presence of his loss. He did not want to forget; God forbid. But he wanted, for a time at least, to hold his sorrow in his own heart. Also, he knew he must somehow try to make a new pattern for his life. The first one, wrought out so absorbedly, had been her work as much as his; and any new one, though it could not but bear the marks of her devotion and strong common sense, would have to be altogether different.

It was such thinking as this which brought him to see, in the end, that there was something in the suggestion of a leave of absence. He must get away, and work out his problem in a new scene, where he could feel himself insulated from the things that confused him.

Mother Middleton, who came on for the funeral, took him and the baby back to Odessa, and two weeks on the home place did Peter good. He took the black pony, and rode for hours over the open range between Paint Creek and Wolf Creek. He spent long days on the hayland, and laid up many a yard of its loose stone fence, while he thought and thought.

Bartelmy Bonafede and Viola sent love and expressions of sorrow; and Peter, to his own surprise, could not bring himself to resent the intrusion of their formal message. After all, he and Effie had lived these few short years in a comradeship wonderful beyond words; and, no thanks to the Bonafedes, he owed it to them.

It was weeks before Peter began to find any boredom in his aimless wanderings near home. But by the late fall he was ready to be taken out of himself, and that would be a matter of new experiences in unfamiliar places. It might even mean thinking about new people.

And then came, just when he was ready to welcome it, a telegram from a bishop he knew slightly: "Emergency at Parkerville Grace Church. Will appoint you unless you have positive objection. Wire acceptance and date arrival."

Parkerville! It meant staying in Kansas, but not the Kansas of his boyhood. He knew Parkerville only by reputation—a town strangely mixed of Kansas and the new frontier, with a few factories to give it a touch of Eastern industrialism. It had had its bad men not so long ago—men of the Bill Dalton, Cherokee Bill sort. Nevertheless, it was big enough to need, or least to have, two Methodist churches.

Knowing so much, Peter had no excuse for delaying his decision. The place would give him a chance to prove himself, he thought. He wired the bishop, "Accept appointment; can take charge second Sunday December."

III

When Bartelmy Bonafede left Brewster and went to Kansas City for his bride, on the Sunday night after he received his Calder diploma, he was easier in mind, except for a bothersome financial uncertainty, than at any time within his memory. Certainly, he was embarking on a great adventure, but the old fear had been exorcised, and with a finality which surely precluded any chance of its return. Not only had he a job, and a better one than most of his fellow-probationers in the conference, but he had the beginnings of a standing in one of the honorable if not lucrative professions. He had a college degree, which to the people who had known him in his native Thornlea would be beyond understanding, almost beyond belief. He was about to become the husband of a proud and beautiful girl, and the son-in-law of a man of substance and position. Truly, he had travelled far since the hungry days of Balaklava Terrace, scarcely a dozen years in the past.

All the accompaniments of the wedding fed fat his young complacency. Even the invitations ministered to it. They set forth, with those slight additions to the rigidly correct formula which Kansas City then favored, that Judge and Mrs. Dimont requested the pleasure of the recipient's presence at the marriage of their daughter Viola to "The Reverend Bartelmy Bonafede, A. B." Bartelmy got hold of a handful of these precious engravings, and took a secret, childish delight in sending them to a few people who had known him only as Mark Bonafede's son, or Van Tassel's hired boy. He sent one to Samuel Jessop, Esq., of Thornlea, who once had forced him and his to go hungry to bed; and one to the Thornlea *Recorder*. His father and mother received theirs in due course from the Dimonts, and Bartelmy forced himself for once to write a long letter to his mother, grieving her heart out in Nepperhan for the boy who seemed no longer to need her.

This letter of his cheered her greatly, but not for long. Though she wrote affectionately to Viola, and much more voluminiously to Bart, their answers were slow and perfunctory. Viola thought she knew all she cared to know of Bart's people, and was quite resigned over their inability to attend the wedding. Bart had carefully ignored all the hints, rising at times to direct suggestions, that the family would be glad to come west if he could find out where steady work in his father's line was most likely to be had.

The wedding itself was a Kansas City boulevard wedding of its time, with all the prescribed accessories and appurtenances. The Judge, with a discernment which Bartelmy highly approved, took him aside a little before the ceremony.

"Bart, my boy," he said, "you've no false delicacy, I hope. I know what you've had to do with your money, when you got any, and I judge you're not flush, even on your wedding day. Am I right?"

"Not flush, fath—Judge Dimont; no, not really flush," said Bart.

"You couldn't be;" the Judge observed; "and you may not know it, but you're marrying an expensive young woman. She'll have a little money of her own, and she'll need it, until you go up a peg or two above Brewster. But that's all right. I'm investing in futures today, and they're not all financial. What I started to say, though, was that Viola tells me you're going to Colorado Springs for the honeymoon. Is that the program?"

"Yes," admitted Bartelmy; "that's it." The suggestion had been Viola's, as a matter of fact; he had not been prepared for Colorado. Excelsior Springs would have been more in keeping with his means. He had paid for railway tickets and sleeper fare, and the week in Colorado Springs had become already a problem in dollars and cents.

"Well, Bart, as I said, you mustn't stand on any false pride. It's all in the family. So here's a little private wedding present for yourself; it doesn't need to be accounted for to anybody, and it will help you to keep Viola from worrying about money until she must. She could spend her own, but I know you would prefer she shouldn't, not yet. Viola's a wonderful girl; but she's not used to the Methodist preacher style of living, and you and I have got to ease her into it by degrees."

Bartelmy was too grateful for words, not on account of the check alone, though the amount it called for was enough to make speech difficult; but almost as much because of the Judge's way of offering it. He didn't know how to thank his father-in-law, and said so. The Judge waved away all that.

"Never mind the words. You helped me a lot once, and, anyway, I'm trusting my girl to you. What's money, alongside of that? Just be decent to Viola, and we'll call it square."

He was nearer to sentimentalizing than he had intended. Brushing an impatient hand across his eyes, he forced a laugh.

To hide his feelings, he even essayed a joke: "I've always said that whether Viola made her man a good wife or not, she'd make him a good husband. So don't say I didn't warn you!"

They took the afternoon train out of Kansas City. Bartelmy, eight years before, had ridden in a day coach over the same rails as far as Odessa Junction, eating the dry remnants of a lunch put up by his mother. Today he rode, for the first time, in a Pullman, joint occupant of a drawing room with his bride of an hour, their meals brought in from the diner.

Gentle, attentive, tender, he was quite the bridegroom; but not even the picture of his Viola on the seat opposite him quite blotted out the other picture—the forlorn boy of eight years ago, adventuring fearfully into the unknown. He felt that God had been very good to him, and said as much to Viola, who agreed with him. But their thoughts were very far apart.

IV

Viola's ideas of parsonage life were such as she had picked up at second or third hand among the preachers' daughters at Calder, added to some slight impressions gained in her infrequent contacts with the one preacher's wife in Kansas City whom she knew. Although Judge Dimont had given her some warning, she considered herself fully prepared to begin her life at Brewster. But from the first day it was an education.

The girl had spirit. She would have said that she loved Bartelmy, if not so ardently as he could have wished; and already her life-purpose had begun to take form. Having chosen a minister, for her own sake as well as for his she would work towards his career.

Bartelmy's people were impressed, congratulating themselves over the talented young couple which their church had captured. Nor was the presiding elder indifferent. He knew Judge Dimont by reputation, as most Kansas presiding elders did, since railway passes often appeared in the wake of the judge's favor. Bartelmy he had not known until the boy's application for a place came to him the preceding autumn. Evidently this was a young man worth watching on his own account.

The records of the charge were in better shape than usual. Bartelmy's brief office experience in New York had not been wasted on him, and in those days the necessary bookkeeping of a small Methodist church was simplicity itself. It is different since the Centenary.

The Brewster pastorate offered Bartelmy better than an ordinary chance. Of the county high school's five hundred students, a good third stayed in town over Sunday. They would attend the church which had most to offer them. Thus, to the minister who pleased them, the situation afforded opportunities for local distinction. And Viola knew that if Bart really addressed himself to his task, his triumph was sure; for the other two ministers of Brewster even to her inexpert eye were rather poor stuff.

When revival time came, Viola found herself hesitating between her determination that Bartelmy should lead the district in the number of his converts, and her scorn of revivals. She could not bear either their methods or their manifestations. Brewster, as she and Bart deduced from all the preliminary talk, required its revivals neat.

Bartelmy had read much of the methods which Bishop Vincent was recommending to the pastors, and, as he told Viola, it would be much more self-respecting, and not nearly so disagreeable, if he could put on a series of meetings such as the Bishop had often outlined.

But a little cautious inquiry showed that nothing of this sort would satisfy Brewster. Brewster, if Viola had announced it openly, would have concurred in her ambition to lead the district, but there was a nearer and dearer objective. "The Campbellites" of the town, imposing less rigid requirements upon candidates, and being unhampered by the Methodist rule of six months probation, could usually make a better numerical showing in their revivals. So Brewster Methodism, now that it had a college graduate for a pastor, and a pastor's wife who could outsing anything in the county, would be satisfied with nothing less than a good old-fashioned protracted meeting.

Viola saw the opportunity. She said to her husband, "It isn't going to be pleasant, I know; but we've got to make the best of it. I'll work up some solos, and if you stick to it you can get up a short sermon in a morning's work. Can't you buy some new books that will help you?"

"Yes," said Bartelmy, perforce falling in with her suggestions, "maybe I can. There's a new collection of revival sermons advertised, and I've already sent for a half-dozen paper bound books of illustrations. Another thing; I saw at conference a new song book, that sells at seven cents a copy. It has only fifty songs, but most of them are new here. Don't you think we could make a big feature of the singing? Get up a choir of twenty-five or so, I mean. Some of the high school folks will be glad to join it. And with your solos we might make it a revival a bit different from the sort they have had here before, and yet without enough new-fangled ideas to scare them into opposition. I think there's something in it."

"So do I," said Viola. "The official board won't want to be responsible for the songbooks, but you order them and I'll pay for them. Maybe you can sell the books at a dime apiece and get the money back."

Bartelmy's preaching was neither better nor worse than that of many another young fellow with his experience and training. But to Brewster, it was different. His thought-forms were not those of the Missouri Valley. His vocabulary, thanks to his omnivorous if ill-assorted reading, was richer than his hearers were used to. Though he borrowed his illustrations from the books, he knew they would make a better impression if they could be brought more realistically to his audience. Therefore, by discreetly vague hints that he had been over the ground covered by the story of the moment, by slight rearrangement of detail, and sometimes—for he had a genuine if uninstructed appreciation of emotional values—by bold revisions of plot and incident, he worked up a group of revival stories which would have held a more sophisticated audience than Brewster could produce. That winter's experience bore fruit for many a year, in places every way remote from Brewster. It is not too much to say that Bartelmy Bonafede's stories are today the common property of his denomination.

The revival, arranged for two weeks, ran to four. At Bartelmy's invitation the presiding elder came over for the last Sunday, when Bartelmy had arranged to receive on probation the largest group of converts within the memory of Brewster Methodists. His very good reason for asking the elder was that, not being himself ordained, he could not administer baptism. The elder must also see what a success Bartelmy was; but there was no need to write that into the invitation.

At the end of the two ceremonials, baptism and the reception of the candidates on probation, all the converts stood in a triple row across the church in front of the pulpit. The elder, in bringing the service to a close, spoke first to these rows of awkward neophytes, variously enjoying their momentary distinction. He was profusely complimentary to all concerned. Even God came in for part of the credit.

Bartelmy's appointment for the second year was a foregone conclusion, and at an increase of salary. At the close of the revival he and Viola were at the top of their acceptability. For the first time in many years there was an unclouded era of good feeling in the Brewster Church. The two elements which had striven for priority found themselves striving now for the favor of the pastor and his wife, and this compelled at least a truce. Faction vied with faction in praise of the Bonafedes.

Then the question of the parsonage arose. Bart and Viola drove out one February day to a country member's to spend the night. The snow which was falling as they turned in at the farm gate developed before dark into the worst blizzard of the winter, and they did not see home again for four days. When they plowed their way back to town, more than the desperate cold of an empty house greeted them. Inside the front door a sizeable snowdrift blocked their entrance, and under all the windows, north and west, other graceful drifts bore testimony to the searching ingenuity of the recent storm.

Even Bartelmy was dismayed by the sight. With the thermometer still near to zero, how could they stay in such a house? Viola's reaction was not dismay, but active protest.

"Bart Bonafede," she said, "we've always known that this house was unfit for humans. You've simply got to tell the trustees that unless they begin to plan for a new parsonage you won't stay another year."

As he scurried about, making the fires in the two stoves which were all the house had provision for, and clearing out the snow, Bart worked over in his mind the possible modifications of Viola's ultimatum which he might venture to present to the trustees. Himself, he did not believe in ultimatums unless you know beyond peradventure you could make them stick.

When the matter came up in the trustees' meeting, a February thaw was making a fair imitation of early spring, and the parsonage's south door had been open to the sun all the afternoon. The matter did not seem so urgent.

Spring came and went before anything definite was done, and the late summer heat was upon Brewster. One day Viola told Bart she must arrange to go to Kansas City for a month or maybe six weeks. She wanted to be with her mother, and near the family doctor.

"I'm all right," she said, "and it's my business to see that I stay that way. But there are no facilities in this old shack, and you know I don't like the only doctor we have in the church. There would be trouble if I called in Dr. Wyndham, though he's the best doctor here. It would be a scandal if a Unitarian doctor brought my baby into the world. So I've written mother to have my old room fixed up, and I'll get away sometime next week."

It was not for Bart to object, especially as Viola's plan provided a way of escaping the difficulty about the doctors; but he did want to have some part in the decision. So he said, "I'd thought of that; and it's quite the best thing for you to do. But I must insist on coming to you when your time draws near; even though it may mean being away over a Sunday or two."

"Of course," Viola said; "that's understood."

Their son was born in September, and Mrs. Dimont's cup of joy was full. As for the Judge, his ecstasies were almost lyrical. Fortunately, the political scene was for the moment undisturbed, and he had no public or business responsibilities. Viola's practical mindedness dominated them all. Bart, up from Brewster, ran errands, forgot his church, and tried to behave like a father; with the usual results.

Much too soon it was well into October. Viola had been but a few days back in Brewster; and she was ill-content. The place irked her; she missed the comforts of her old home, and while the trustees delayed action or even agreement about the parsonage, another winter was coming, and the prospect of going through the cold weather in that house, with a baby of months—it would have tried a woman more patient than Viola.

She blamed Bartelmy, but without reason; for, as he mildly said, what could he do? He, though no happier than she at the outlook, was even yet not inclined to take the high course with the dilatory and untroubled trustees. He was for peace. The trouble was to find a formula.

"Very well," she said, "if you cannot do anything, I will."

And that night she wrote her father such a letter as sent him into action within the hour.

V

Before the week was gone Judge Dimont and a bishop of the church sat in a room of the Coates House in Kansas City. The dignitary, on his way to the meeting of a great church board, had word from Dr. Burton, one of those presiding elders who weigh all their words, that Judge Dimont was a man who would not ask too much, and who always acknowledged favors in ways highly advantageous to the cause. Dr. Burton brought the two men together, and retired discreetly to the hotel lobby.

The Judge had learned long ago to suit his manner to his man. He saw that this man could be dealt with in just one way, and, fortunately, in the way which he himself liked best.

"Bishop," he said, "it is a short story, and I have nothing to conceal. My daughter is the wife of a Methodist preacher, and the mother of my six-weeks' old grandson. That explains my interest. But this preacher boy has stuff in him, as I could prove if you had the time. My word for it. He's pastor now at Brewster, over in Kansas, and if he had a little more time would make it go. Last winter he had the best revival and the biggest ingathering in the town's history—not that I'm so strong on that sort of thing myself. But the baby's just here, and my girl is not so well, and the Brewster people will fuss for another year or two, hesitating, about a parsonage that leaks like a sieve, and is open to the four winds. I'm not asking you to give Bart Bonafede anything he can't handle, but I'm just asking if you can give him a church—now, right away—where there's a decent parsonage, so that I shan't be wondering all winter whether my daughter and grandson are freezing to death. You can send a single man to Brewster, maybe. But you know best about that."

And he rose to go. It was his habit to end an interview himself. But he paused with his hand on the door.

"One other thing, Bishop. My daughter has told me all about it, but I don't want Bart to know that I have had anything to do with the change, if you make it. You'll be safe in appointing him on his merits, as Dr. Burton will tell you. And my son-in-law need be told no more than that."

Dr. Burton knew enough to be influential, and was honest enough to be trustworthy. When he returned to the room, he confirmed to the bishop all that the Judge had said. Whereupon the bishop confided in him. "Of course I have many more requests such as this than I can take care of," he said, "but it happens there are two vacancies I must fill at once, and in the same town. Both pastors have had to move, because I couldn't take either of them away without seeming to favor the other, and some change was imperative. The physical conditions will supply what Judge Dimont desires. But the work itself is a subtler problem than this young fellow has had to face so far. What do you think, Doctor?"

Dr. Burton had his own information from Calder College about Bartelmy Bonafede, and in its light he thought he could answer the bishop's question.

"Young Bonafede really has ability," he said. "I'm not so sure he has some other essentials for success in our ministry, but one thing he needs is to be forced to do better than his inclination."

"If I send him to First Church, Parkerville, he'll get that," the bishop observed grimly.

And he turned to the desk, and began the first of three telegrams which saved Viola and Viola's baby from wintering in Brewster's gusty parsonage.

Judge Dimont was barely down in the hotel lobby from his satisfactory interview with the bishop, and Dr. Burton had scarcely finished answering the bishop's questions about Bartelmy Bonafede, when the bell boy brought to the room Peter Middleton's wire.

The bishop was much relieved. He said, "Brother Burton, I've done some good work this afternoon. That Parkerville trouble was bothering me, and I've found a way to settle it. You've told me what you think of Bartelmy Bonafede for First Church, and I'm appointing him. And this wire is from a young Garrett man who's been taking a couple of months off. His wife died early in the fall. He'll take the other church, Grace."

"What's his name?" asked the presiding elder.

"Middleton; Peter Middleton. You know him, of course. He's Kansas born, I'm told."

"Yes, I do know him," said the other; "and he's a good man for the place. He's got staying qualities, has Peter."

"I'm glad to know it," said the bishop.

"By the way, Bishop," Dr. Burton remarked as he was leaving, "did you know that Middleton and Bonafede were old friends? They went to Calder College together, if I'm not mistaken."

"No, I didn't," the bishop admitted, "but I'm very pleased to hear it. The trouble at Parkerville was because the two men who are moving out were most distinctly *not* friends. What you say only makes me the more certain I've done some good work today."

VI

The Belden House at Parkerville, Kansas, was a pretty good two-dollar-a-day, American plan hotel. It "opened its hospitable doors", as the Parkerville *Democrat* said, to the Bonafedes, and would shelter them until such time as their furniture should arrive. When Bartelmy had tentatively suggested a boarding house, Viola declined to consider it. "The hotel will be bad enough," she said, with finality. "We'll stay there until the parsonage is cleaned from top to bottom."

Viola was inquiring for a nurse girl, but as yet no suitable applicant had appeared, so she could not occupy the parsonage pew for Bartelmy's first sermon in Parkerville First Church. She stayed in their room at the Belden, with the Kansas City *Star* for company. That least sensational of Sunday papers had been in her home all her life, and she knew how to read, with the smallest exertion, so much of it as interested her. This morning it afforded a single piece of news which to her appeared quite sensational enough.

Bartelmy, returning from the morning service, brought with him Colonel Burlington, whom he had shrewdly identified as the church's leading layman, bearing a courtesy title which merely meant that he was a lawyer of Southern antecedents and had not successfully run for office. The new pastor and his wife were to take Sunday dinner with the Burlingtons, and the Colonel had come to escort them to his house.

Baby Marcus went also, but, once he had been provided with a bottle and pillow, he permitted his mother to enjoy herself without insisting on much of her attention. He had already given evidence of an even and restful disposition.

Viola waited only until everybody was settled for the before-dinner small talk. She asked about the service and the congregation, and heard the sermon politely praised. Then she sprang her news.

"I saw a queer story in the *Star* this morning," she said. Turning to her husband, a touch of acid mischief in her tone the only evidence that she knew her tidings would disturb him, "Bart, who do you suppose is coming to be pastor of Grace Church here in Parkerville?"

"I didn't even know that Grace Church was without a pastor," said Bartelmy. "Has it been long vacant?" he asked the Colonel.

Colonel Burlington knew more than he intended to tell that day. So he only said, "No, not long; in fact, the former pastor left about the same time as your predecessor did."

"Well, Viola," Bartelmy asked her, "is the new man somebody we know?"

"It's nobody in the world but Peter Middleton," said Viola crisply. She had never liked Peter, for one thing because she felt that he understood her too well; for another, because she suspected that he understood her husband, too.

Colonel Burlington here desired to ask a question. Grace Church was not so far away that a First Church leader could be indifferent to its fortunes.

"May I inquire who is this Brother Middleton, Mrs. Bonafede? You and your husband evidently have met him."

"We know him," Viola admitted, "Bartelmy knows him better than I do, but I know him as much as I want to. He's too good to suit me."

It was plainly Bartelmy's move, though he would have preferred to keep his own counsel.

"Peter Middleton," he said to the Colonel, carefully, "may be too good for Mrs. Bonafede, and perhaps there are times when he has to be borne with, but I am bound to say that he's got ability, lots of it. I have known him ever since I came to Kansas, though in late years circumstances have broken into our old intimacy. He is the son of a prosperous farmer near

Odessa, in Kinne County. He graduated at Calder a year ahead of me, and has had a course in Garrett. While he was there he filled a supply appointment in a Chicago suburb. Early last fall his wife died. She was a student at Calder with the rest of us. Her death was a great shock to Peter. It is a most surprising coincidence that he should be coming to be a fellow-pastor with me here in Parkerville. I shall look forward with peculiar pleasure to our cooperating in this new field."

"Quite handsome of you, Brother Bonafede; does you credit," declared the Colonel. "However, I'd go a little slow on that cooperation business, if I were in your place. After all, First Church is First Church, and we can't afford to let people forget that fact."

Which sentiment Viola approved. "I can't say I'm glad he's coming," she said; "he's all well enough in his way, and of course I'm sorry for his loneliness with his wife gone, and all that; but we have our own work to consider."

Bartelmy said nothing more. He was quite willing to be considered gracious and brotherly; that reputation did a man no harm. But he made a mental note of the Colonel's readiness to proffer advice. That they had met only three times, and only quite casually until this morning, gave the lawyer's promptness a significance not lost on his new pastor.

There was no knowing how Effie's death might have affected Peter's feelings toward the Bonafedes. Bart's old engagement to Effie, and Viola's remembered dislike of her, could not be effaced, though they might be ignored. While Bartelmy had been shocked and grieved, he was not entirely without a furtive feeling of present relief, that at least certain difficult situations could not now arise. Naturally, with only these two Methodist churches in Parkerville, their pastors would have to be on pretty intimate terms. It would not be easy, even with Peter, but it would have been more difficult if Viola and Effie had been brought into the same circle.

In their hotel room, late the same afternoon, Viola suggested the first move. She had not been as sure of their ground as she wanted Colonel Burlington to think. She had memories of Calder.

"The thing to do, Bart," she said, "is to take the lead, and keep it. You know well enough that I can't endure Peter Middleton, but if you and he have to be rivals here you must take advantage of every chance that comes. He's no fool; and he's had a seminary course and a Chicago pastorate. But you're pastor of First Church, and you were here first, if only by a few days."

Bartelmy assented as heartily as seemed prudent. "What had you in mind when you spoke about taking the lead, dear?"

"I meant just that. The paper says he's to be here some time this week, so as to be in his pulpit at Grace next Sunday. It's the Sunday before Christmas. You write and welcome him to Parkerville, and invite him to take Christmas dinner with us here at the hotel. We can have a private room, I suppose."

Bartelmy was quite willing. Indeed, he put more warmth into the letter than Viola would have approved; but already he was abandoning the habit, heedlessly formed in honeymoon days, of showing her his correspondence.

To Peter the word of welcome from his old friend was most grateful. He had been no less surprised that Bartelmy over the chance which now made them neighbors, and had felt not a little uneasiness about his own course. But Bartelmy's message made everything right. Bygones were to be bygones, so far at least, that they were not to be mentioned; and, anyway, the two had been chums once.

He arrived in good time for the Christmas dinner. It was almost a success. He paid much attention to baby Marcus, thus acquiring some slight merit in the eyes of the baby's mother, though quite innocent of seeking it.

"My baby is named for Bart's father," she told him. "Bart was *so* persistent; said it had been a family name for generations, but naturally I wouldn't have it just plain Mark, and he let me choose Marcus. Put that way it's rather distinguished, don't you think? And I'm not going to have it shortened to Mark, ever; so you needn't be counting on that, Bart. What's your baby's name, Mr. Middleton?"

"Say 'Peter', won't you, please?" he asked. "I'm not used to 'Mr. Middleton.' Why, I had to find a name for the baby myself, without much help. There was no family name that seemed just the thing, and my mother had no special choice. So I've named her 'Rhoda',—don't exactly know why. I sort of like it. Mother has her, at the farm."

"I think it's rather quaint," said Viola; "maybe she'll grow up an old-fashioned girl, and then won't it be just too appropriate!" Swiftly she followed one question with another.

"And where are you going to live here in Parkerville, Mr.—er—Peter?"

"It's early yet to say for sure," Peter answered; "but there's an old couple wants to rent the parsonage and take me to board and room. That may be the arrangement."

"What sort of a parsonage is it, Peter?" asked Bartelmy; he had heard things about it.

"Not so much of a place, I guess, but if it will serve for the Beattys, it will probably be good enough for me. I shan't need much except my room and a corner of the parlor now and then. It's likely I shall be out among the people a good deal; they seem to be the sort that expects considerable pastoral work—and needs it, too, I shouldn't wonder. I'll be free"—his face clouded at the word—"I mean, there's nothing to prevent me doing as much as they want."

"Oh, yes," Viola assented, something at a loss. She knew she ought to say the appropriate thing about Peter's bereavement, and for her life she couldn't find words. "But after all, I tell Bart the preacher's reputation nowadays is made by what he does in the pulpit. That's his throne, as the bishop said the first time I ever attended conference. I've never forgotten it. What's more, I don't intend to let Bart forget it, either. He's becoming quite a preacher already, Peter, if I do say it."

"I can believe it," Peter said, with a smile that made Bartelmy wince, though there was no malice in it. "He's a natural-born platform man. My pulpit work is a long hard grind, every time. Not that I don't like it; don't get that idea. But it takes work. I'm a good deal of a plodder, you know."

"I suppose," said Viola, "that your church *will* need more pastoral work. I heard there's considerable poverty, and even worse things in that end of town, and the people probably need practical help more than they need preaching."

Peter laughed. "Most people do, seems to me. Still I hope my preaching may be of some practical help in itself, too."

"Oh, yes, indeed," Viola hastened to say. "But about the other—we don't know yet, of course, just what First Church is able to do, but I'm sure if there's any way we can help we'll be glad to; won't we, Bart?"

Bartelmy said, "Yes, of course;" though he wished that

Viola would not seem so patronizing when she thought she was being pleasant. He knew that Peter was not to be patronized.

VII

As Peter walked the streets of "that end of town," in his first few weeks, he decided that Viola was right, no matter what her implications might have been. Poverty was there, plenty of it, as well as the "worse things". It was the section in which the people who worked at the cement plant lived, and the glass workers, and the few men who kept the little foundry going. Also, many people of no visible means.

The workers of the district were no special problem. Among these who were in his church, Peter found here and there a saint in the making; but mainly the usual proportion of aimless good nature, small jealousies, conventional piety, mingled spite and spirituality, dull decency, high idealism, dogmatic narrowness, and voiceless integrity, which go to make up the constituency of any middle-western church, rich or poor. That most of his people were poor did not disturb him. He was more disturbed over the complacent dullness of so many homes, and the apathetic animalism which presented a front harder than positive wickedness against the work he had come to do.

Therefore it brought almost a sense of relief when he had confidential word, less than a month after his arrival, that the glass workers were secretly organizing, with a man from the "outside" to help them. He thought he knew what that would mean. Organized labor was a new thing in Parkerville. The grievances of the men were many and sore;—low wages, of course, irregular employment, the terrific heat which, if more bearable in winter, was likewise more deadly than in summer; and a special complaint against the manager of the plant, who made all their troubles worse. He was the only man in Parkerville who had a sufficient skill and knowledge to superintend a glass plant, and, being a little-souled creature, lorded it over his narrow principality with a small man's delight in tyranny. All this was good soil for the organizer's seed.

Peter's slight experience with labor troubles had at least made him dislike them. But the contacts which he had made at Colton Park with industrial workers had shown him that discontent over starvation wages and evil working conditions might be a means of grace. Bad as its immediate consequences might be, he felt that protest was better for the men's self-respect than the dumb acceptance of a virtual serfdom.

This, with more ideas of the same tenor, he made into a sermon, and promptly got more attention from Parkerville than any Methodist preacher within living memory.

Peter's sermon was front-page stuff for the Parkerville *Democrat*. It was taken as a danger-signal by the glass factory crowd in local financial and social circles, which promptly went into action. This upstart preacher from nowhere;—who was he to encourage unrest and to sow the seeds of discontent among the hitherto well-disposed employees of a flourishing industry? Colonel Burlington was instructed to take steps.

The Colonel sought out Bartelmy at once. And, like the man of direct speech he prided himself on being, he went straight to the point.

"Look here, Bonafede, of course you don't agree with young Middleton; you've too much sense. But he's a friend of yours, and you've sort of endorsed him. I hope you see, now that he has broken out as he has, that it's your job to help us shut him up. You can give him some advice he very much needs. And if I were you I'd lose no time. He ought to know that no man can come here and hope to succeed if he mixes into affairs which threaten the incomes of many of our best people."

Bartelmy relished neither the implication that he himself was in some way to blame, nor the task of trying to make Peter shut up.

He had spoken of Peter perhaps with undue warmth and positiveness. At the time it had seemed to him a fine, unselfish gesture for the pastor of First Church to welcome so generously the new man, coming to what everybody considered the "second" church. But most assuredly he had not meant to take any responsibility for Peter's ideas. He told the Colonel so.

Then he said, "Brother Middleton's intentions are good, I am sure, Colonel, but I must admit that he is not as careful as he might be. That has always been his failing. If his zeal is aroused, and his sympathies are worked on, he does not consider that he may hurt the interests and feelings of people outside the group he is thinking of. If opportunity offers, I will speak to him, and it may be I can show him the harm he is in danger of doing." Not that Bartelmy believed for a minute he could.

"You'd better make an opportunity, and not wait for one," said the Colonel curtly. "If Middleton breaks out again we may have a strike on our hands. And that we intend to prevent, if there's any way to do it. Remember, my boy," and he put his hand on Bartelmy's shoulder, "we're expecting great things from your pastorate. You stand by us in this little difficulty, and you'll not lose by it. But we're counting on you to make Middleton see the light."

If it had been the other way about, now! Peter knew how to talk to Bartelmy, but Bartelmy didn't know how to talk to Peter. There was nothing new about that, only just now it put Bartelmy at a distinct disadvantage. Having gone to Peter and made his opportunity, as Colonel Burlington had rather bluntly recommended, he found the going, if anything, more difficult than usual.

"They're talking about your last Sunday's sermon, Peter," he said, when he knew he could avoid the topic no longer.

"Who is talking about it?" Peter asked. He knew the factory people were; not the glass workers only, but all the workers who lived in his part of the town. But naturally Bartelmy wasn't meaning them.

"Oh, I hear it in my pastoral work," said Bartelmy vaguely. "And it isn't being well received, if you want me to be frank."

"I didn't ask you to be frank, old man," Peter laughed, "but don't let that bother you. I'm not sensitive about my sermons —yet."

"I know," Bartelmy admitted; "but, really, Peter, if you'd be a little more careful to find out all the facts before you preach on controversial subjects you would get along better. You probably don't know even now that many of the stockholders of the glass works are in First Church. They have heard me speak highly of you, and naturally they wonder that a friend of mine should so lightly antagonize their interests."

"Now, Bart," said Peter, "we *are* friends, in spite of many things we needn't go into now. I was even hoping we might get back to something of the good old intimacy of our first year together. So please don't let's get started on this business. It's pretty bad, and if we can't agree about it, we'd better let it alone. I feel much too strongly to back down, or even to be patient with the dividend grabbers. You may say you have stockholders in your church. Well, I have glass-blowers in mine. And, if I have to take sides, though I'd rather work to do away with 'sides' entirely, I'm stronger for the poorly-paid men who make the glass than for the men who get the big profits."

Bartelmy protested. "But, Peter, can't you see that there is a real other side? These 'dividend grabbers', as you call them, are good men. They made the glass works possible, and give employment to many people. They devote much money to good causes. It isn't fair to the church in general for us to put them on the defensive, and maybe, to alienate them from the church and its work. We can't afford to do it."

Peter could not repress a sigh of weariness. This was the Bartelmy he had half hoped might be forgotten. But evidently it was the only Bartelmy he could deal with.

"Bart," he said, "you've asked for it, and you might as well have it. I'm squarely on the side of the workers, whenever, as in this case, it is a question of big dividends on one side, and a decent human chance at life, to say nothing of self-respect, on the other. You say we may alienate the people who put part of the dividends into the church. Suppose some of us do. If these stockholders and the system of things which they represent keep on trying to buy the silence of the church, do you know what's likely to happen?"

Bartelmy said he didn't, which was quite true. He had no idea of what Peter was driving at.

"This will happen. The church has paid altogether too little attention to people like my glass blowers. Yes; I said 'my' glass blowers. I haven't known them long, and I don't know them very well, so far; but they're mine. And I'm claiming them for the church. Some day a church will see that if it can't be true to its own genius without offending men like your Colonel Burlington, for example, it may as well make a readjustment. It can turn to the workers, who already understand Jesus better than most stockholders can. And that church will discover in the workers so much latent capacity for brotherhood that in teaching them it can start miles ahead of the place where it has had to begin with these others. It will find the workers can more easily grasp the real simplicities of the Gospel, and already have such riches of human interest, that it will have more than an equivalent for the dollars of the men who are so poor that they have nothing but dollars to give."

"Where did you get all that, Peter?" Bartelmy asked in frank amazement.

"Well, Bart, you may not recognize it, but that's a piece of my sermon. I learned some of it by reading in all sorts of books, some by associating in Chicago with people who know a sight more than I do. But some of it I've learned at first hand in these few weeks over in the east end of this town of Parkerville, the town in which you and I have to do our work and get our results. Of course I don't want to see the church break away from either side. There's no real need that it should. But the difficulties of getting together are immense. The owners think they have so much the upper hand; though they are as blind to their real interests as most of the men are. They won't change their policies either for your arguments or mine. And the men are not ready for much, yet. Only a few of them see what they really need to strike for. The majority think they just need more wages, when the big thing, for them and the owners as well, is to consider the glassworks as an industrial partnership. But it's slow work, getting the men, even, to think that way. And it will take longer to make the stockholders see it. Belknap, the organizer, who's trying to get the men together, has much more influence than I have, and he talks money more than he does anything else. They listen to me, of course; but they pay attention to him."

"If it's as hard as all that," said Bart, "what can you hope to do? The organizer puts in all his time, and he knows his job. You have other things on your hands."

"I know," Peter assented. "All the same, I've got to help, anywhere there's a chance. It may count in the long run."

Bartelmy got up to go. "I wish I saw it all as plainly as you do, Peter," he said, "but I don't. And what do you get out of it? Only the ill-will of people who deny that you have any right to interfere in their private affairs."

"I get more, old man," Peter answered. "But you may not think it worth having. It's all a matter of taste. Or opinion. One of my opinions is that this thing is a good deal more than somebody's private business. Anyway, I've got to go my own road. You know that."

"Yes," said Bartelmy. "I know that. And you always seem to be sure you have something to go by. I wish I could feel as sure."

It was a touch of the old Bart, and Peter rose to it. "Bart," he said, his hand on the other's shoulder, "it's not for me to preach to you. But you can be just as sure as I am. Or anybody. You know where the realities are."

But Bart could only say, "Maybe;" he would not trust himself in Peter's hand. He knew he couldn't afford it. And so he went away.

VIII

Colonel Burlington made his request for Bartelmy's report a day or two later, during their first financial session. Save for a few dollars each Sunday night, turned over out of the loose collections by the treasurer of the Board of Stewards after paying the janitor, Bartelmy had received nothing on his salary. Colonel Burlington made an appointment with him at the Citizen's Bank, where he turned over to him a check for what salary was due to date. With this check, by the Colonel's arrangement, Bartelmy opened the first bank account of his life.

Nobody else was in the little reception room, and Colonel Burlington suggested that they sit down for a moment. Then he came at once to the point.

"Have you talked with your friend Middleton about his sermon?"

"Yes," said Bartelmy, who, caught unawares, wished he had taken the trouble to work up some plausible account of the interview, "I have. It was not so satisfactory as I had hoped, but that sermon of his can be partly explained by his experiences before he came here. When he was in Chicago he fell in with some pretty radical people—preachers and others whose work was in the slums. And then he's been reading the wrong books. Still, I don't think there's any immediate danger of trouble from him. That organizer is more important than Middleton, just now. His arguments mean more to the men than anything Peter can say. They like Peter, but Belknap talks money."

The Colonel banged his fist on the table. "And money talks! Bonafede, 'nuf said. I see what you mean. We've been thinking of that very same thing. All we needed was to be sure which was key man, Middleton or Belknap. No use to get you mixed up in it, but you've confirmed what I've said all along. You needn't tell your friend that he's due to run out of sap pretty soon; though he is, if I don't miss my guess. Your report will convince the others that I knew what we have to do. It will be the best of all ways of blocking Middleton's game, and I'm glad to find that you agree with me about it."

Bartelmy was quite unaware that he had made any suggestion capable of being used to block Peter's game, having no thought that the Colonel imputed shrewdly-veiled meanings to his quite casual remarks about the relative influence of Peter and Organizer Belknap. But that did not prevent him from a deprecating acceptance of the Colonel's approval. Nor did it prevent that gentleman from telling the directors, at their next called meeting, that the young pastor of First Church was wise beyond his years, and saw clearly what should be done.

"Of course," the Colonel explained to his associates, "I was careful not to speak too out-and-out. So was Bonafede. That's one thing I like about him. But he knows. He suggested what was in effect the same idea I have already proposed, and he backed it up by an observation that ought to be easy to prove. There was no hint of a plan, you understand. That's our business, not his."

In a few days it began to be noticed by the more observing glass workers that Belknap, though he had come among them to organize them into a union preparatory to a strike, was losing interest. He called meetings of the cooperating committees, and then stayed away. He forgot to pay bills which he had run up in the stores of the neighborhood; and his small borrowings, "until I get my check from headquarters," were not repaid. He became cantankerously critical of the men who had been the first and readiest to respond to his plan for a union, berating their lack of interest and their thick-headedness. His popularity waned swiftly; and, with it, the spirit of revolt.

In all this there was nothing to lay a finger on, but one day Joe Sullivan, one of the best men among the glass workers, came to Peter with a report to make.

"Mr. Middleton," he said, "I think Belknap is crooked. I was up the road Sunday, and I saw him on the train with one of Colonel Burlington's closest friends. They didn't see me, and just before he got off at Lawton Junction I heard him say to the other man, 'You shall have it Saturday.' Now, what were they up to? What was Belknap going to send to a man he is supposed to be fighting?"

Peter could not say; but with Joe, he feared a betrayal. On the next Saturday Sullivan had an answer to his own question; he and six other men found discharge notices in their pay envelopes. These were the very seven who, under mutual pledges of secrecy until the organization was deemed strong enough to come out in the open, had formed the committee which was Organizer Belknap's first move in the rounding-up of the workers.

The news spread quickly. Inexpert in labor struggles, most of the other men began to be afraid for their own jobs. On the next Tuesday night, pursuant to a call, there was a meeting at Joe Sullivan's home. Apart from the seven scapegoats, only two or three others came near. There was no sign of Belknap, and the little group did no more than talk in aimless, dispirited fashion. Though each of the original committee knew well enough that he had been discharged for daring to support an effort at unionizing the plant, there was no proof.

After the last of the men had gone, Sullivan went around to Peter's room at the Beattys, and told him how everything confirmed his suspicion about the organizer.

"That Belknap sold us out; I'm sure of it. He was the only man who could name the seven of us, unless we did it ourselves; and we didn't. This was what he meant on the train when he promised something to Lawyer Jenner by Saturday. It was a list of our names. He had all the week to make his getaway before we could find out what he had done. We're out, and he's gone, and there won't be any strike. Mind, I don't blame you, Mr. Middleton, but maybe if you hadn't spoken out so bold like in your sermon, the bosses might have been kept in the dark until we were too strong to be double-crossed."

"I'm sorry, Joe," Peter said, "and a good deal more than sorry. Maybe I was in too much of a hurry. But if Belknap did work this trick, don't you suppose they would have found ways of getting at him, whether I had spoken or kept still? I know there's not much comfort in that, or in finding out that this is just a skirmish in what may have to be a long war. I wish we could even get rid of the war idea, but we are all readier to fight than to think and to reason things out."

It hurt, all this; but he could not persuade himself that he had been precipitate. He had depended too much, perhaps, on the good faith of that man Belknap, who almost certainly had turned traitor to the men who trusted him. But what Peter vainly tried to think through was the thoroughness of Belknap's treachery. It must have been a powerful inducement which would lead him to end his career as a labor leader in that section. How had the owners contrived to get rid of him?

There was a quick subsidence of strike talk. The glass workers thought of their discharged shopmates, and for the moment were resigned to hold their jobs on any terms whatever. And there was much satisfaction in the banks and offices on Grand Avenue, where practical business men told one another that it was no use fooling with industrial troubles; you'd simply got to fight fire with fire.

IX

Colonel Burlington, or Bartelmy, or Peter himself, whichever you will, had been wholly right in his estimate of the extent of Peter's influence in labor circles. Because he would not agree that the men needed nothing beyond an advance in wages, many of the workers lost interest in his preaching. Because he bore down more heavily on the sin he found in his own parish, though daily learning more about the sins of the rest of the town, the love of others waxed cold. But he had friends who stuck to him with determined if not always demonstrative loyalty.

Doug—not Douglas, if you don't mind—Swanley was one of them. When Peter had come to Grace Church, it was Doug with his wild team of ponies who delivered the new preacher, bag and baggage, at the Beatty cottage. Doug never forgot how readily Peter had accepted the invitation to ride with him on the wagon's high seat, and few who saw or heard the parson's progress from the station to his rooming place are likely to forget that. Peter enjoyed it, not knowing that Doug was the town's most hilarious and irrepressible sinner, nor that at the outset, by his unashamed ride with Doug Swanley, he himself had lost caste with certain good citizens; for Doug drove his ponies like a small-town Jehu, plus all the rowdy boisterousness of a sociable cattleman who had just drawn his pay.

Time came when Peter and Doug got to grips in a strictly private struggle for Doug's soul; and one night, in the Beatty parlor, the boy had such a conversion as Peter would have openly derided in any penitent less broken and humble than his once swearing, roystering teamster. Thenceforward Doug Swanley had two dominating certainties in his life;—the vision of Christ, crude and partial enough, which had come to him at Peter's side one midnight; and Peter himself, the first preacher he had ever loved or feared.

The thing which had happened in Doug Swanley's life never became epidemic; but before the year was over Peter had a queerly-assorted group of devotees, like-minded young fellows, apparently unable to acquire the vocabulary of the prayer meeting, rarely present even on Sunday mornings, but giving themselves with steady devotion to the evening service, and bringing to bear a real if inarticulate demand for the best that the preacher could give. They developed a habit of dropping in at Beatty's after meeting, partly because Mrs. Beatty shamelessly closed her eyes to their foragings among the pantry shelves.

Only when the discussion was repeated at second—or third—hand was there any likelihood of trouble. And it was such a mischance that gave Colonel Burlington an unfair advantage.

The Colonel had bought one of the first "horseless carriages" that found its way west of the Missouri, and he needed a driver for it. In those days only a man who understood the peculiarities of the new contrivances from intimate knowledge of their construction would presume to take liberties with them. Doug Swanley was such a man. He had worked a few months in an Indiana factory where the things were made, and he got the job with Colonel Burlington.

Leaving the office one afternoon, the Colonel told Doug to drive around by the freight yards, instead of going straight home. Their road took them past Grace Church.

"I hear you are a pretty regular attendant at this church, Doug," he said.

"Not exactly what you would call regular," said Doug. "I don't go mornings. Can't, now. But I'm there most Sunday nights. And after meeting I show up with the other boys at the Beatty place where the preacher rooms."

"That's interesting," said Colonel Burlington. "What do you do at Beatty's?"

"Oh, just talk. That is, Preacher Middleton talks, and sometimes some of us ask questions, and then we have it back and forth. Mrs. Beatty sets up the cookies or maybe a cake or a couple of pies, and a pitcher of lemonade. Everybody has a nice time."

"Does Mr. Middleton talk religion?" the Colonel asked. He was not meaning to be inquisitive, nor did Doug think him so, but answered without hesitaton, man to man.

"Sure he talks religion. That's what we want. But not the way he talks in his sermons, exactly. He goes at us straighter, because he sees that we're asking for it. He's no Holy City sort of sky-pilot, though. Never mentions heaven. Talks about Parkerville and its folks, mostly; 'specially us."

"But doesn't that make it somewhat embarrassing for some of you?"

"Not so much. 'Course, we know he's got the goods on us. But what he says ain't preaching; it's the truth." And Doug was quite unconscious that he had said anything to make the Colonel laugh.

"That's good enough to tell at the club," the Colonel said, chuckling again. "Do you believe all that Mr. Middleton says?"

"Why not?" asked Doug. "He knows. He ain't been shut up with books all the time. But some things he says about the Bible are different from what they tried to learn me at Sunday School."

"What, for instance?"

"Well, the Jonah story, for one. He says that's a missionary story, not a fish story. And about the bears that a priest or somebody got to chew up the kids for calling him Baldy; and the Noah's ark business. He calls some of 'em traditions, I believe the word is; and some parts of the Bible he says are poetry, though it sounds like punk poetry to me. Then he talks about us. One of the boys had got all lit up one night not long ago, and Peter found it out. The kid was sorry enough, after, and the preacher had sense enough not to rub it in. I asked him the next Sunday night if he thought getting drunk was the worst thing a fellow could do. He said it was pretty bad.

Another of the boys said he thought being a church member and getting rich off what poor people had to stand for was worse than getting drunk. He said, the preacher did, right off, 'So do I.' Well, Colonel, I ain't a church member, and I don't either get drunk or get rich off of anybody; but the preacher is right."

Doug had warmed to his subject, and, since Colonel Burlington seemed to be listening with interest, he went on. "Yes, and Preacher Middleton don't believe in a brimstone hell. Neither do I." Whereupon something inside of him told Doug that he had made what might seem like an audaciously infidel confession, and at once he was smitten with a most uncharacteristic taciturnity.

The Colonel tried a few more questions, but could get no more than laconic disclaimers; "I dunno;" "Maybe;" "Uh-huh."

X

Colonel Burlington, to do him justice, was no heresy hunter. But it irked him that a mere mechanic should be hearing and accepting strange doctrines from a Methodist preacher. Doug's ready approval of Middleton's ideas showed that the preacher could be dangerous. What if some of the working class in Parkerville got to believing all this modern stuff, and some even more dangerous?

He did not forget to repeat to his club familiars Doug's remark about Peter; "What he says ain't preaching; it's the truth!" and got his laugh. On top of that he rehearsed other of Doug's comments, which did not seem so funny.

"But, Colonel," said the largest stockholder, except the president, in the Citizens' Bank, "really, that's going too far, don't you think? I'm no theologian myself, but a preacher who doesn't believe in hell, and who has so little objection to drunkenness, can hardly be a safe man to have in the east end of this town. He's made trouble already; and this sounds as though he could make more. Can't you do something?"

The Colonel had been asking himself the same question. "I don't know," he answered; "there's probably no use in speaking to any of Middleton's members. He seems to be getting a grip on them. But I'm a Methodist, you know, and I've learned that it's never more than a few months to conference. And at conference preachers are moved for all sorts of reasons."

A few days later the Colonel called Peter up. He was no man for hurrying, and he felt inclined to study this young agitator a little before going further.

"Won't you lunch with me tomorrow, Mr. Middleton?" he asked. "I've been thinking that you and I ought to get better acquainted."

Peter could see no reason for refusing, though he was not specially drawn to Colonel Burlington. The appointment being made, he found himself the next day with the Colonel at a quiet table in the Belden dining room.

They talked of many things. As the Colonel began to realize that his guest was something more than "just a preacher," his mood of formal if gracious hospitality vanished. He felt that he could deal with Middleton on more familiar ground.

"If you'll pardon my saying so, you're wasting yourself at Grace Church, Middleton," he began after a pause in which each man had continued to size up the other. "I've been in this town a long time, and you're the first man that church has had who showed any marks of real ability. I doubt if your people appreciate it."

Peter could be flattered, but not in that fashion. "My short experience," he said, "makes me feel that no preacher is too good for his church. I think you misjudge my folks' capacity for appreciation, too. Why, to say nothing of all the others, I have a bunch of young fellows there who keep me extended all the time, as far as my mind will stretch."

"I've heard of them. My man Swanley is one of them, isn't he?"

"Doug Swanley? Yes, indeed; one of the best."

"But aren't you afraid to be giving them so many new opinions that may disturb their religious faith?"

"I might be, if they'd had any faith to speak of. But most of them didn't know a doctrine from a darning needle when I first began to get at them. Some of them, I find, have a queer sort of natural theology, but if they ever got anything real out of whatever contacts they've had with the church they don't show it."

Colonel Burlington had no illusions about his own theological knowledge, and he had not been impressed by his chief stockholder's criticism of Peter's disbelief in hell. Little as he knew on such subjects, he felt that the criticism lacked cogency; not for years had he heard a sermon on the physical suffering of the damned, and he realized that nowadays the doctrine had its difficulties. So he abandoned that lead.

And he could not be insensible to the simple directness of Peter's manner. Though Bartelmy Bonafede was quite to his mind as a preacher, being at once fluent and impersonal, he admitted to himself that Middleton's was probably the sturdier character. All of which did not obscure Middleton's undesirability for the pulpit of Grace Church, from the business and the First Church point of view.

"Well, Middleton," he said after a pause, "I'm not inclined to rail at anything you can do for those young fellows. But I'm still of the opinion that you're not getting the chance you ought to have."

And then the Colonel shifted his ground. "You will remember, Middleton, that I said nothing to you about it at the time, but all the same I was interested, as well as a little disturbed, by that sermon you preached when there was talk of a strike at the glass works."

Even unsophisticated Peter began to get the Colonel's drift. So he would be on his guard. "What was there about it that disturbed you, Colonel?"

"Oh," the Colonel said, "not so much what you said as the general implication of your attitude. I've often noticed that you young men come out of college and seminary with abstract notions of industrial questions, and when you get to dealing with actual conditions you are liable to go very far astray."

"But, Colonel," said Peter, warming up in spite of his resolve to be wary, "it was the actual condition here in Parkerville that stirred me; there was nothing abstract about it at all. I'd been finding out how these people live, and what they have to endure and to look forward to."

"I know, my boy; I know. But I wonder if you thought, at the same time, of the people who made the glass works possible, and who have provided the chance of a livelihood for these workers. They put their money into a rather risky enterprise, and took the chances. They can't afford to have their investments menaced by unrest and disaffection, especially when the trouble is stirred up by outsiders."

"Maybe not, Colonel. Still, they take fewer risks than the workers take. They have their homes and their positions and their other income, apart from their investment in the glass works; but my people have only their labor. When they are forced to sell that for too little, or can't sell it at all, the only thing for them to do is to move away or starve. They haven't the money to move with, and so they stay—and come pretty near starving, sometimes. No wonder they listen to anybody, outsiders even, for, though they risk everything, they have nothing to say about wages, or short time, or hours. For them it's a bare take it or leave it proposition."

"Which is what has made America the greatest industrial power in the world," said the Colonel. "Everybody takes risks. But money can't be driven into obviously unprofitable enterprises. That's impossible; a contradiction in terms. Make any business unprofitable, and capital must avoid it. If the glass company met the wishes of the workers, it would soon be in a receiver's hands."

Peter leaned across the table in an access of eagerness. "Colonel Burlington," he said, "I'm not an economist. But there's a notion I can't get rid of, about that very thing. I know that any business is a sort of partnership. The glass company here provides the work and the management, and the workers furnish their labor. Considering the other advantages the stockholders have, don't you think it's up to them to devise ways of making the business profitable without wasting the strength and spirit of the workers? That's a management job. America will hold her place as the greatest industrial nation only if American employers work as hard to conserve its man power as they do now to protect all our other resources."

"All very well, Middleton," the Colonel retorted; "all very well in theory. But there's a practically unlimited supply of labor, especially as immigration is increasing year by year; and your notion would cost a good deal more than most businesses could stand. I know that's true of the glass works."

"Of course it would," said Peter, "as business is run. Besides, the glass works was a speculation; I've heard how it came to be organized. And the time will come when immigration will not be as important a labor supply as it is now, and, when it falls off for any reason, if business never thinks of reducing costs except at the point of what it pays for labor, it will find itself up against a stone wall. Why can't you business men turn your attention to other ways of making your enterprises pay, instead of always thinking about reducing wages? You can't get them down very far, if at all, and, anyway, wouldn't it be better for all industry if wages went up instead of down, so that the workers would have more money to spend?"

Colonel Burlington gazed with genuine admiration at his young guest; but back of that was the deepening certainty that this active-brained young preacher must be got into a less dangerous pulpit than Grace Church.

"I'll tell you what, Middleton," he said. "I said you were wasting yourself in that church. I'll say more. You're wasting yourself in the ministry. If you'd go into business, it would take you a little time to shake off some of your impossible notions, but before long you would be showing your real gait. Why, man, I believe it would pay the glass company to take you on, right now. Once you get the right point of view, you would be worth a big salary; far more than you can hope to get by preaching. Leave preaching to men like Bonafede. He's a born preacher; but you're a born manager of men."

Peter laughed. He was young enough to enjoy the flattery, and too settled to let it move him.

"Thank you, Colonel, for a rather doubtful compliment," he said. "It's pleasant, I admit, to hear you say that. But it's the best of all reasons why a preacher should stay in the ministry. You're right on one point. I'm no such preacher as Bartelmy—we were boyhood friends, you know, so that I have a license to be familiar—but I believe there's room in the church for both kinds."

The Colonel settled with the waiter, and they got up to go, leaving the room together in the friendliest fashion. But the Colonel was saying to himself, "There must be a way to get this boy promoted out of Parkerville. We couldn't weather a strike next year, and if he comes back I doubt if we could head it off."

XI

Life moved easily for the Bonafedes in First Church parsonage. Baby Marcus thrived; Viola had found a jewel of a nurse, a quiet, reserved colored woman, who almost from the first day conceived a deep and passionate affection for the child.

So Viola had time for such activities as she had deemed worthy her-attention. Without forgetting her larger ambitions for her husband or her own interest in the Parkerville Woman's Club, she gave herself to the promotion of his immediate interests, quite sure that they are right who say, in the success books, that great advancement is usually the sum of many small triumphs. While she thus looked to the future, history was preparing to turn a new page.

For a generation America had been at peace with all the world. She had seen the Civil War veteran in his successive changes; first as a stoutish young citizen busy with homesteading or running for office or working on his father's farm, then coming to the period when he was still capable of surprise at being able, out of his discharge papers and his Grand Army uniform, to get public office and a modest pension, and at last approaching old age; often querulous, often honestly aggrieved that his country had been so ungrateful to its saviours, and here and there becoming a not so innocent tool of politicians shrewder than himself.

She had seen her navy rusting away through two decades after the Monitor's sudden brief adventure in Hampton Roads, until a New York lawyer, becoming Secretary of the Navy, took it in hand and began to create the Great White Fleet. She had almost totally forgotten her army, except when an episode like Custer's disastrous stand at the Little Big Horn or Nelson Miles' pursuit of Geronimo or the exploit of the Seventh Cavalry at Pine Ridge Agency gave it a day's brief innings of glory or of grief.

To all appearances it was the hour of the nation's least military mood. And yet in a day we went to war. There was trouble in Cuba, Spain's last remaining colony in the Western world, but not many Americans gave it serious thought, and few, except army men, considered the possibility of hostilities between the United States and Spain.

Then the Maine blew up in Havana harbor, and the circulation-mad newspapers of the great cities, still half-unaware of the high explosives which slumbered in the screaming headlines of their new technique, shrieked an unwilling President and a sluggish, unwarlike nation into war.

Bartelmy subscribed for a New York daily which was blatant with the new imperialism. He thrilled to a keener consciousness of his lately-acquired citizenship, and saw himself among the preachers of a modern crusade. "The White Man's Burden" had definitely fallen on American shoulders. Bishop Berkeley's "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way" assumed new significance with the despatch of Commodore George Dewey from Hong Kong to "find and destroy" Spain's Asiatic fleet. The Oregon was racing home on her epic voyage around Cape Horn, to join the fleet in Cuban waters under Sampson. The movements of the Atlantic Fleet reflected the hysterics of the coast, which shivered in panic fear of a Spanish descent on undefended ports, anywhere and everywhere from Rockland Harbor to Key West.

In that May of 1898, the Parkerville Memorial Day sermon fell to Bartelmy. At ten o'clock he stood with the throng which saw three companies of one of the first Kansas regiments march down Main Street to the cars which would bear the men to Chickamauga's storied field, there to join the rest of the regiment and prepare for the invasion of Cuba.

Then he went to his church, and, from its flag-draped pulpit he preached to the Grand Army Post, the Sons of Veterans, the Woman's Relief Corps and a mixed gathering of other citizens—some of whom had just seen sons or lovers, husbands or brothers, march away—the crowning sermon of his Parkerville career; "What Mean Ye by These Stones?"

It was a great effort. Everybody said so. Taking its text from Joshua, and its metaphorical stand by the long rows of soldiers' graves in a national cemetery, reminders of America's greatest war, it made the present war the noblest of the noble series. The United States could no longer maintain her ancient and outworn isolation. She had gone unselfishly to the aid of little Cuba; but the resulting war, without any self-seeking on her part, would make her a World Power. When the inevitable victory had been won, she would be a messenger of Western civilization, that supreme flower of centuries of Christian culture. She would expand; but with her enlargement would go all the blessings of the Gospel and all the values of her interpretation of that Gospel in terms of education, scientific progress, business prosperity, and Anglo-Saxon world-leadership.

The Parkerville *Democrat* printed the sermon in full the next day, and Bartelmy became the leader of Parkerville's more pious patriots.

Peter, on the other hand, was distinctly out of it. He had no leanings to martial oratory; and, though he had few special convictions about the war, he hated with all his soul the pose of smug self-glorification with which the country went into it. He could find no excuses for Spain's Cuban muddle; like most Americans, he knew little about it, except what the headlines told. He believed in a freed Cuba, certainly, yet his orderly mind sensed the fatuous blundering which marked the country's preparation for Cuba's deliverance. And even before midsummer he was somewhat ashamedly relieved, for the nation's sake, to think that his country's foe was a bankrupt, fourth-rate monarchy.

He made as little use of war themes as he well could, and no recruit could claim that he rushed from Peter's reaching to the enlistment office.

XII

In the next summer, away off east in Tarrytown the quiet monotony of the Bailey home was broken at last by the only intruder that could have made any change in its routine. Father Bailey, steadily going to his day's work at the boat-yard, came home one afternoon, and said, "I don't feel any too well." The next morning, when his wife woke, she found him still sleeping. Mrs. Bailey knew something was wrong, as indeed it was, for he did not wake again.

After the funeral, and the first exchange of telegrams with Peter, the widow wrote to him to say that there would be some legal matters with which she needed help, and that she thought maybe Peter might come on east, when it was convenient, to do what was necessary, especially since the bit of money which they had always intended for Effie would now go to Effie's child.

Peter was not unwilling to think of the journey. The death of Father Bailey had touched his own hidden wound, and there came upon him again a hint of the restlessness which had sent him a-wandering when Effie's loss had been only a matter of a few days.

The managing editor of the *Democrat*, who had followed up Peter's sermon on industrial justice by dropping in at his church now and then, heard of the contemplated eastern journey.

Dewey was coming home from the Philippines, and the *Democrat* could use some special dispatches from New York. There was no money to send a man. Middleton, he knew, could tell a story.

He called Peter up. "You're to be East, I hear, just when Dewey shows up. We want something special about it,—not the usual A. P. stuff. But we can't afford a special correspondent, unless you'll be it. We'll give you credentials, get all the tickets you need, and meet your hotel bill. What do you say?"

After raising a few not very vigorous objections, Peter said "Yes." The prospect rather appealed to him.

He had planned to make a stopover at Odessa on his way to Kansas City and the East. Two or three times since his appointment to Parkerville he had been able to run up to the farm one day and back the next; but this time he spent three days with his parents, his infant daughter, and the rest of the Paint Creek family.

Already baby Rhoda had begun to discern that this agreeable stranger who asked her to call him Daddy had some sort of special claim on her attention; and now she openly deserted and even flouted all her other admirers. Grandmother insisted that she knew well enough who Peter was. Peter thought that if she didn't there were signs that she could learn, and he gave himself with zest to the business of teaching her.

With Rhoda on his lap, asleep, or playing with the spoils of her explorations into his pockets, he and his father sat on the shaded south porch and exchanged the laconic confidences of men whose intercourse is deeper than understanding, complete respect and deep affection making automatic allowances for every difference of opinion and belief.

It came to Peter that these parents of his had lived their lives. His father, long past work, had given up to his two younger sons, after he had sent each of them to the Agricultural College, the whole management of the farm. Mother

Middleton's quick, birdlike busyness was anything but the confident and capable thing it had been, though she seemed no less the complete housewife than of old.

All this Peter saw or felt; and he knew that the changes now hastening must touch him directly, through his little daughter. At any moment the question of her care and training might need to be entirely reconsidered. What could he do? How was he to begin the pleasant but unaccustomed and puzzling business of caring for her himself?

He would not raise the question with his mother, except by the most careful indirection; for he saw how her heart was bound up in the child. But it was the one anxiety to which he turned again and again as he resumed his eastward journey.

At Tarrytown he found Mother Bailey a woman patently unhappy; out of touch with life, though still hale and active. She had not moved from the little house bought when she and her husband came in from the farm. The other proceeds of that change, and the modest accumulations of a lifetime of thrift, she now wished to put into some form which would permit of relief from worry. There were bits of business which called for two or three visits to a steady old lawyer, and it was necessary to examine certain records in White Plains, and to consult a real estate man. Peter saw that his mother-in-law would have about five hundred dollars a year out of her various small funds.

When they went over the figures for the last time she said, "Well, Peter, it may not be much, but we've lived on less in our time, and I don't doubt it will serve my needs. Rhoda's to have it when she grows up, you know. But there's one thing I'm still troubled over, and you haven't helped me with it. I'm not complaining about it, for it's a great relief to have my business all shipshape, and down in black and white. But, Peter boy, I've nothing to do. I couldn't be a lady if I tried, and five hundred dollars a year isn't enough for that sort of thing, anyway you take it. Thirty years I've been a busy woman, with somebody always to do for, and maybe to scold a bit. Now I'm no use to anybody. Tell me what to do for that, and I'll thank you more than for all the rest you've done."

To which Peter, by sudden, strange impulse, said, "Mother, it's more than likely I've been as good as blind about you.

Tell me, would you rather live in Tarrytown than anywhere else?"

"Not I," she said. "I've no kith nor kin hereabouts. And I want to live where I can keep from rusting out. If I stay here all alone I shall be dead of lonesomeness in a year."

"All right," said Peter, his mind made up, "then I'll propose to you. It's a selfish proposal, I know, but maybe you'll think it has its points. How would you like to come west and live with me, and bring up Rhoda the way you brought up Rhoda's mother?"

She stared, incredulous. Then he told her of his own mother's feebleness, of the changes already decided on at the farm, with the boys getting married and moving into their own homes; of his own need of a home, and of his daily increasing desire to have the baby with him.

"Besides, Mother," he said, "I want a home. I wouldn't think of asking it if you were older, and worn, but you have years of activity before you yet. Come and let's make a home together, you and I."

It was a proposal not new to Mother Bailey's mind, though she had not dared to hope it would ever be made, and certainly she would never have suggested it. But when Peter put it so straight and bold, she got up from her chair and came over to him. Her hands on his cheeks, she stooped and kissed him. "Peter, there's nothing would give me more joy," she said. "If your own mother won't think me an intruder."

"I'll answer for her," he said, a trifle more confidently than he felt. "When she gets the boys fairly married we may have two grandmothers on call when needed. But my mother is older than you by fifteen years, and she's getting to be far more willing than able."

So it was settled. Peter would go back West after his New York week was done, and would get things finished up for Conference. Then, after he had had a chance to talk things over at the farm, Mother Bailey should come out, first putting her house in the agent's hands for rent or sale.

In Peter's eyes it was a great arrangement. He wanted Rhoda, but also he wanted somebody who could do for her the things no man could manage. And Effie's dying desire was never to be forgotten. What though her ardent hope had leaped in an instant across all the long years of her child's babyhood and schooling, to the day when she could take her mother's place as her father's helper? Even so, it was a vision which often gave him an almost prophetic comfort.

XIII

Peter's three days in New York at the Dewey celebration as Tammany's guest (thanks to the *Democrat's* credentials and letters of introduction) were crowded with new sensations. He saw it all; the naval spectacle in the Hudson from a boat reserved for distinguished visitors, the land parade from a grandstand straight across from Dewey himself and under the shadow of the great arch in Madison Square.

He sent three dispatches to the *Democrat,* carefully following instructions as to subject matter, filing and all the rest, and his reports attracted far more attention than he suspected.

When he got back to Parkerville he found that they had made something of a hit. Harper had featured them under the general head, "Dewey Days in New York; a Series of Letters from Our Special Representative, Pastor Peter Middleton of Grace Church."

It was a common experience, in the first few days after he came home, for Peter to be stopped on the street by people whom he had never known, and told, "Those letters of yours were the real thing. Human stuff, you know. Why, I could almost believe I had been there myself." Said one, "And that 'Dandy Seventh' story was a corker!"

Colonel Burlington asked him to lunch again, and this time it was almost a party, with a half-dozen of the city's financial and legal lights to tell him how much they had enjoyed his reports. "Even," as one of them said, "when you took a sly swipe at the childish ostentation of it all. Certainly, in a way, it was foolish; but we can't very well do without that sort of thing after a war."

Peter tried to think that his report was as good as everybody had said, but soon gave it up. He had happened to be the man who had the chance to describe the celebration for Parkerville; that was all.

But he was rather more grateful to Colonel Burlington than he would have been if he had overheard the talk after three of the men, back from the luncheon, had gone to the Colonel's private room at the bank.

"You can see," he said to the others, "that we mustn't just slaughter a boy like that. Has too much good stuff in him. He's got to leave Parkerville, all right, because he's learning more than is safe, just now. But I'm not such a conscienceless plutocrat that I'm willing to hurt him. The Methodist Conference meets within the next two weeks. The question is, where does he belong? And how can we get him there?"

The man who had explained to Peter that celebrations like the Dewey reception were a sort of national safety-valve thought he might make a suggestion.

"My son, Athelstan, is on the faculty up at College Park, you know. He writes me that the Methodist church there is open. Its pastor, Dr. Culbreth, a good old man who took the pulpit when he resigned from the presidency of the college to make way for the great geologist who is president now, has had a breakdown—no doubt his last. What do you think might be the chance of recommending Middleton to the Presiding Elder for College Park?"

Colonel Burlington said, "It sounds like the very thing, Dailey. Long ago I learned that it is easier to get rid of a man by kicking him upstairs than by kicking him down, and College Park would be a real promotion for the boy."

But the third man, one of the directors of the glass works who had not quite recovered from being offended over Peter's strike sermon, was not so sure. "Don't you think it might be dangerous to send him where he can have a chance to influence so many young men from all over the state?"

"Not a bit," said Colonel Burlington. "He'll influence them, no doubt of that; but why not? There isn't a bit of danger. Why, we all know that Middleton's more than half right, in theory; and it won't be long before some of the ideas he has picked up will be common property. We'll be putting them into law in a few more years. In the meantime, this young fellow will be getting some of our boys and girls ready, and if I'm not badly mistaken he'll mix in so much of Christian stuff that the result of his work will be far less dangerous than what is being taught in some of the college classrooms."

"Suppose you're right; what reason have we to think we can influence the authorities to make the change?"

"Well," said the Colonel, "of course it is for the bishop and the presiding elder to say, after they have consulted the people at College Park. But we can make suggestions. And we know other people who can back up our recommendations. Your boy Athelstan, for instance, might talk the thing up at College Park, if you tell him about young Middleton. They need his sort in a college town. I'll see our elder, who is a reasonable man, and we can write a letter to the bishop. Being an old Methodist, I know it is always taken for granted that a Methodist church is willing to lose its pastor if the change means something of advance for him. Funny, but it's so. If that wasn't the understanding, how could you explain why some churches work so hard to get their pastors made bishops? Even a college has been known to electioneer like a Republican in a Pennsylvania faction fight, to land its president in a bishop's chair, though all the time the college rooters protest that the college never was so prosperous as it has been under his leadership."

Events proved the Colonel a student of men and things. The presiding elder having vainly looked through the conference from end to end to find a man available for College Park, was, as the Colonel had said, reasonable. Professor Dailey had worked up a petition in the church; and once more Peter found himself picked up by the Great Iron Wheel, and flung whither he had not chosen. Still, it is only fair to say that he was consulted more fully this time, and was urged, before the wheel tossed him from Parkerville to the new place, to go up to College Park and look the field over. Which he did, and was content.

XIV

Bart had a secret, shamed relief over Peter's going from Parkerville. Mixed with it was something of resentment, that College Park should be a better appointment than his own. But the relief outlasted the jealousy. Not for a day since coming to Parkerville had he been wholly easy in his mind over the fact of Peter's presence in the same town.

One form which his concern had taken was an unreasoning reluctance about launching any large plans for his church. He had thought of them, by the score. All of one sort, pretty much. But almost unconsciously he tested them, while still amorphous, by speculations as to Peter's quiet appraisal, when they should become known. Many an ambitious project he abandoned in the egg, scarce knowing why, but somehow sure that Peter's comprehending scrutiny would see it small and cheap.

Now he could branch out. He began to develop his penchant for putting other men's ideas into new settings. He felt his way with a few programs for the Sunday School—recitations, songs, responsive readings, and such like gleanings, so arranged as to develop a theme or work out a coherent order of exercises for some special service or other.

It was a day when freshness had almost vanished from this species of religious literature, though still it was widely used, and Bart's touch was at least not so hackneyed as that of the older practitioners in the field. Quite outrunning his first thought of the business, his flair for this sort of thing answered to a demand far beyond the confines of First Church. Under pressure of many requests, he experimented with half-a-dozen of the endless possibilities of the art, and with continued facility. "Programs," "Exercises," "Displays," "Services of Poetry and Song," came easily to his hand. He made good use of remembered days at Thornlea, and turned out Americanized variations improved and modernized, on the Penny Readings, the Band of Hope dialogues, the "Services of Song," and the Anniversary Services of his Wesleyan childhood.

His reading of the current English periodicals on file in the Parkerville Public Library gave him one most valuable idea. Of late the fad of pageantry had spread over England, from Land's End to the Tweed; the time was ripe, Bart saw, for an adaptation of that fad to American conditions.

Bart saw this golden opportunity, and grasped it. The new word alone would almost do the trick. Instead of the condemned and forbidden plays, with their smell of the stage, he gave to his little but ever-enlarging constituency a series of "pageants," with "characters" instead of "actors" and "settings" instead of "scenery." By paying lip service to the local gods of history, legend and tradition, by introducing such innocuous individuals as prolocutors and pageant-masters, and by dividing the production into episodes instead of acts, the curse of the footlight was avoided, and the younger folk, with many of the more active if older spirits in the women's societies, flung themselves into a new form of religious amusement. It could not but be proper, since not only had it unselfish purpose, but evident and even certified purity of form and content.

In those two years of his pastorate at Parkerville after Peter's removal to College Park, Bart gained a practically Conference-wide reputation. No major Methodist gathering which could justify a pageant was complete without him.

By the time Bart's appointment was "read out" for Pottawattomie, he had become one of the marked men of the Conference. The local paper in his new town spoke of him as "the well-known author of many cantatas, pageants and dramatic settings of church history." "Author", of course was used in its broader sense. Bartelmy claimed no originality for his output; merely that he had brought together the best he could find on the subjects with which he dealt. And, to do him full justice, even at Calder, no man had approached him in devotion to Foster's "Cyclopedia of Prose and Poetical Quotations," the "Christian Year," and all the anthologies the library afforded. Since then, it had been merely a matter of broadening and systematizing his gleanings.

The Pottawattomie pastorate moved prosperously through three years or so. Then, on a day, a man of consequence in the denomination came to town—the secretary of one of the great benevolent agencies. He had heard of Bartelmy, and, for his own ends, he wished to sound him out. It had been easy to arrange through the presiding elder for a date when he might come to Pottawattomie in the interest of his cause. He had to be somewhere in the West that Sunday; and no secretary of his caliber had been in the town for years, if ever.

He came. He made a most effective presentation of the cause he represented, and assisted in the raising of a really respectable collection. But when in later years he spoke of this visit he said nothing about his speech, nor about the people's financial response. Rather would he tell how he saw at once that here was a young fellow he could use. In one of the departments of his organization there was need of just such a man. Since the palmy days of Charles H. Payne he had known of nobody, in any of the boards or out of them, who could do a thing he so much wanted his board to go in for—a combination of publicity, promotion, tract-production that should avoid the traditional, and a dozen other means of approach to the church public through the printed and pictured page.

Bartelmy sensed at once what the secretary wanted, and felt himself even more competent to provide it than he really was. The prospect of a better job stimulated his imagination. Viola, who had measured Bartelmy's pulpit ability better than he knew, and who saw that he would not get ahead in the pastorate much faster than the speed of the Conference itself, a speed imposed by a sort of seniority rule on all but the exceptional men, was all for the sort of change which this thing promised. Bart would make much faster progress when he was doing something for which he had evident capacity to excel. Since all concerned were in accord, it was easy for Bartelmy to become Publication Secretary for the Board of Special Philanthropies.

CHAPTER VI

I

Peter's appointment to College Park could not have been better timed. His predecessor was a saint, absent-minded and impractically serene. What he did not wholly forget to see and hear, he saw in a suffused glow of natural goodness, and heard as a fragment of the song of the morning stars. He believed that everybody was as free from the struggle against evil as himself, and equally concerned about the abstractions amid which he lived.

College Park was ready for a complete revision of this saccharine conception of the pastoral function, and with Peter's coming it got what it asked for.

Much was to be done by way of organization; much adjustment of the church's creaking machinery; with constant demands on Peter's skill in lubricating this or that point of friction. He took his time; was in no hurry to introduce novelties that might have gained for him a premature acclaim.

In a few weeks the college was fully aware that a new preacher to students and their teachers had come to town. College boys and girls, in the Kansas of the opening century, were the sure barometer of a preacher's acceptability. If they had fewer religious habits than the older folk, they had also more ease of movement. They could come to church or stay away with far less trouble than the established citizens.

By the new year the church was straitened for room. And Peter's Sunday School class of co-ed seniors filled the whole of the rear gallery.

Mother Middleton had promised to visit Peter and Rhoda often at College Park. She went in the spring of Peter's first year, and though she behaved bravely, her son's solicitous eyes could see that the visit and its attendant excitements took toll of her small store of vitality.

She and Baby Rhoda rejoiced exceedingly in each other, and Mother Bailey was consideration itself. But the old lady was ready to leave before the time set for her to return, and she was too frail to make the journey alone.

At the farm Peter found another grief. Henry Middleton was still erect, and, to the unobservant eye, self-sufficient as ever, little worse physically than at any time these twenty years. But Peter knew he was not himself. He needed no word from Retha, though that devoted daughter took him aside, as soon as she could, and gave him details. At first Peter thought it might be chiefly that his father's memory was at fault; but soon he could detect signs more ominous. The mind which had been like a cheerful hearth-fire, warm and glowing from whatever fuel it received, was at last unable to deal with anything save its own dying embers.

Just before he left he sat chatting with his father on the couch in the old book-and-newspaper cluttered sitting room. The shadows that hung about the old man's brain seemed for the moment to lift a little and he spoke quietly of his end.

"Peter," he said, "I'd like to go. Something's happened to me, and I'm done. There's nothing in this waiting, that I should want it to last. Mother will likely slip away first, and I can't think of living without her. She's had a hard life, but she's lived it well; and I should be worse than dead without her. I wonder if God has forgotten that my time is up?"

Because Peter did not know what to say, he put his arm about the old man's shoulders, and waited. This interval of clear-mindedness must not be spoiled.

"I suppose the religion I've taken second-hand from you—"

"Not from me, father! Nor second-hand, either. You got it where I did. And for us children's sakes, as well as for all the other reasons, we don't want your time to be up, and yet we don't want you to suffer, either. It seems almost cruel that it must be one or the other."

"Not cruel, boy; just queer. But I've seen queerer things than that. And I'm waiting. But God knows that waiting is hard. There's no sin in wanting to go, is there?"

God had not forgotten about Henry Middleton. Before Peter had been back at College Park a week his brother called him one night over the long-distance wire.

"Peter, come down on the first train. Mother's almost gone, and Father wants that you should come right away. He asks for you."

Fred, with the farm's best team, met Peter at the station. "Mother's sinking. We'll have to hurry if we find her alive."

The horses knew they must make time, and they made it; in fifteen minutes they drew up, steaming at end of the three mile drive. The two sons went straight to their Mother's room, where the others were.

The old woman heard them come in. As she looked feebly up into Peter's face she spoke as though he had not been away. "Peter, I never told your father about giving you that money when you first went to college, and I want that you should tell him now. I think I should feel better."

Peter, his hand on her brow, turned to his father, sitting by him in the Morris chair. "Of course I'll tell him. He'll say it was all right. Won't you, father? She gave me a hundred dollars."

The old man, as one called back from a journey, turned his face toward mother and son as he spoke.

"I know more than any of you think," he said. "I knew she wanted you to tell me. And I knew she gave you that money, 'way back yonder. I knew she would. I put an extra fifty dollars in the place where she hid her savings. She must have thought it was a miracle. It was. I meant to be hard, that time; and I couldn't explain to myself why I put the money there."

A small thin hand came up from the bed and found its mate. As the old lovers clasped hands, Mother Middleton whispered, "I've always said you were the best man I ever knew. And I've always been proud of you, Henry. Kiss me."

It was their last kiss. As the old man straightened up again, the faintest of tremors passed over the thin little body in the bed, and the peace of death touched the wrinkled face.

Her husband saw it, and cried out, "Why that's the way she looked when I first courted her!" And they led him away.

He survived her less than a week. Since it had been seen that the interval would be brief, Mother Middleton's body was held in the receiving vault of the Odessa cemetery, and in a few days more there was one funeral and one grave.

Henry Middleton's will was short, and contained only one surprise. It left all his possessions "to my dear wife Harriet, without conditions. In the event that I survive my wife, the property is to be shared among my four children, subject to such arrangements as they may agree on for Margaretha and Peter, in case it is decided that Oscar and Fred shall carry on the farm."

The unexpected paragraph read: "I hope that my wife, if she survives me, will make provision to carry out this, my great desire; but if I should survive her, the sum of two thousand dollars I direct to be set aside, before any other settlements are made, and sacredly kept for the use of my granddaughter, Rhoda Bailey Middleton, in the securing of her education."

Peter tried to object. But he did not get far before Retha checked him.

"Father sent all of us to school but you," she said. "He paid all our expenses, and he didn't stint us. I had my chance at Standish and both Oscar and Freddie had their four years at the Agricultural College. Why shouldn't he think of Rhoda?"

"But Father did help me," Peter protested. "It was only in my first two years at Calder that I had to support myself. And you remember he told us when Mother was dying how he tried to help me secretly, even then. Besides, I can take care of Rhoda's education myself."

It was Oscar; slow, stolid, practical Oscar, the best judge of Poland Chinas and Herefords in all the Paint Creek Valley, who shut Peter's mouth.

"Yes, old man," he said, "we know that. You get fair money, for a preacher, and you'll probably get more in a little while. You can take care of Rhoda, all right. But don't forget this. Dad wasn't just figuring on helping you to educate Rhoda with this two thousand dollars. He was trying to straighten out a kink on his own record. None of us knew much of it at the time, but he was honest in being against your going to Calder College, and this is his way of saying that he knows now he was mistaken, and wants to make up for it. He would be hurt if you should refuse that money."

Peter had no words for such a view of it. After a minute he said, "Well then, I won't refuse. Only, when the time comes, it will be up to me to see that he isn't hurt by the use I let Rhoda make of his gift."

II

At College Park for the first time Peter felt that he could follow his bent. Long before he left they added an "L" to the church, and rejoiced that it was filled on every Sunday of the college year. Professor Athelstan Dailey and the other faculty men who happened to be Methodists gave him all the heartier support because of their five years' immersion in Dr. Culbreth's sweet and misty futilities.

Peter, who by instinct repudiated the priestly theory of the ministry, nevertheless had been greatly drawn, from his first experience of it with Eugene Eberle, to the sacrament of the Supper. He had suffered keenly at its often crude, even barbarous administration in churches large and small; he had knelt, humble and joyful, in a great cathedral-like church where every accessory of setting, music, lights, reverent celebrants and devout partakers, enhanced the essential simplicity and significance of the rite.

Not even a clumsy, mechanical or unseeing celebration could altogether spoil for him the fact that this was the Christian's true Feast of Thanksgiving, nor might the most churchly and reverent atmosphere measurably increase for him its inner, living wonder. Though he was at the farthest possible remove from the dogma of the Real Presence, he found himself coming to a truer and self-confirming Christian experience through the ancient ceremony. His simple phrase for it was, "Sharing a meal with Christ and one another."

It was at College Park, too, that he began his distinctive evangelism. Through half the year, Sunday nights were Peter's great dependence and anxiety. People who did not know him were quite sure he must be impossible as an evangelist; and in the conventional sense perhaps he was. But all through the six months, every Sunday night, he toiled at his evangelism; in highly irregular fashion, it must be said, but with results. His sense of Jesus Christ, always personal and immediate and ardent, drove him to seek every appeal which might kindle a like awareness in his hearers. And none he had used was so sure, so completely defensible and so constantly available as the Holy Supper, which he himself so reverently loved.

On many Sunday nights, then, in the months of his directly evangelistic preaching, Peter arranged that the Table should be spread. He had shortened the ritual, with no loss of impressiveness, saying to those who had objected to its brevity, "I am trying to save, not the ritual, but the man who needs that Christ should be made real to him. And how can any forlorn sinner better find his way to the Saviour than by this simple confession and fellowship, in the hour of his greatest hunger? Jesus made it simple for that very reason; if the rest of us provide fellowships for the penitent, we may cheer his heart a little."

It was during the last three of the six busy years at College Park that Peter's old friend Bartelmy Bonafede had taken his first long step towards ecclesiastical greatness, and when, one Sunday near the end of his sixth year, Peter was doing his best not to be affected by the attention of a rather poorly-disguised committee looking for a pastor, it interested him not a little to be told that Bartelmy was an official member of the church they represented.

However, six years was a long pastorate in those days, and with all his zest in the work at College Park, Peter felt that there must be some basic wisdom in the idea of "the itinerancy." So he was not unwilling to be moved, when the committee, having returned from spying out its man, reported on him favorably.

His transfer and appointment having been asked for, and the customary formalities having been observed, after conference he came once more to a situation wholly new; he found himself pastor of Columbus Avenue Church, Iliopolis. Mother Bailey had died the year before, and for Rhoda's sake he chose to live in the big parsonage, turning the management of the place over to a colored woman of sensible and competent habit.

Though a city church in all its essentials, Peter Middleton's new charge, Columbus Avenue, Iliopolis, was, geographically, suburban. All its people were of the city; some were rich, and none was very poor. Here was opportunity for much new experience and knowledge; he had facilities for becoming familiar with aspects of Methodist ecclesiasticism such as he had not before faced. The city had a resident bishop, and it had enough churches to make it the premier city of its conference. Bartelmy's Society maintained its office in the city, as did one or two other but minor Methodist agencies.

Among his fellow ministers in and around Iliopolis, Peter began to be rated successful, but queer. And to be considered queer was not altogether comfortable. He learned that the beatitude of the persecuted has few advocates and fewer devotees.

Yet the men he admired and cared at all to emulate were small minority against whose names the conference watchmen were prone to set a question mark. For that reason he found large comfort in watching the career of his friend and student mentor at Calder. And well he might. Eugene Eberle's rise is one of the epics of Methodism in this generation.

Eberle, it should be kept in mind, has never fitted into the official scheme. But, going his own way, he has applied his peculiar gifts to the task of the moment with such apt adjustment of means to ends that officialdom has never been able to bring anything against him. The ready-made methods put together in distant offices for long churches and short, churches fat and lean, churches wise and simple, and for a hundred varieties of Methodist pastor, have seemed by comparison with his carefully-adjusted work to be the output of a scarecrows' tailor.

III

When Peter went to Iliopolis, Eberle was pastor of a huge Tabernacle church in a great industrial city. That city had no other church like it, nor has any other city, if the records are trustworthy. Nor could the town boast another pastor like Eugene Eberle. How the man did his work no one could say. Being unmarried, he had no one to protect him from becoming the community's beloved drudge. The labor unions no less than the Chamber of Commerce clamored for his attention, both groups with unnatural docility taking from him such caustic appraisal of themselves and their corporate behaviour as no preacher before him had dared to utter.

The woman's club of that region which left him off its winter program had to explain to its members. He was a welcome visitor at all the high schools, and a holiday club of the town's captains of industry made him its permanent chaplain.

If he was incisive above the ordinary, touching the sins of robust offenders, Eberle was gentler than the gentlest where grief kept company with pain, or where shame sought him out to make its confession with deep if unconventional penitence.

The brethren of his conference gave him an affection strangely selfless. Nobody ever thought of including Eugene Eberle in those familiar conference groupings which are held together by reciprocal favors. In 1904 he had led his delegation in the General Conference. That was the year when, partly because of his deeper interest in other questions, and partly because the second man cared very much about membership on the premier committee, Eberle had waived his right to choose the Committee on Episcopacy. But his waiver did not touch his leadership. That rested on qualities and abilities so obvious that it was mainly taken for granted, and even among men naturally jealous it excited scarcely the slightest trace of envy.

Not merely the rank and file of his conference, but its most important men, were of one mind about the General Conference of 1908. That body would elect Eberle to the Episcopacy. Other nearby conferences, and some more remote, shared this opinion and the desire out of which it grew. And yet nobody could assign the ordinary reasons. Least of all could anybody say that his conference was trying to get rid of Eberle by promoting him. Although he was a man with whom few could always agree, it would be hard to find in modern Methodism a man so implicitly trusted, as well by those who think him too progressive as by those who wonder why he does not take still bolder ground.

In short, Eberle was—and is—that singular sort of Christian, a man so attuned to reality and simplicity that the usual temptations of a minister in a material world touch him not at all. From his Calder days he has lived almost austerely. His personal needs are easily supplied and quickly forgotten.

In his journeyings, Eberle frequently passed through Iliopolis. From the station he would telephone Peter. On one of these days he said, "I've got two hours between trains; can't you come down and eat a railway restaurant meal with me at the counter? You know; as usual. I want to cheer you up about your new job."

Peter made good time to the station. These between-train visits were not frequent enough; nor, when they came, were they the sort of intercourse with Eberle for which his soul craved. But they had served to keep alive an intimacy he sorely needed; that was their complete justification.

"I knew you would be discovered, Peter," Eugene said after their brief and cheerful greeting. "And I knew why, as I have told you before. In our church, when a man is consecrated clear to the center, and then puts all the sense and persistence and capacity for drudgery and imagination that God gave him, into a seven-day job, he's a marked man. You've been doing that, right along. Even the machine knows it needs you."

"How do *you* know so much?" Peter asked, with a grin.

"Oh, there are people who talk. I have just been at College Park, and out there they believe you saved their church from drying up and blowing away. You'll have something different to do here. This church is too solid, if anything. I know Columbus Avenue a little, and my guess is that you'll have to make real Christians out of a mixed lot of sales managers, department heads, lawyers, bond brokers, club women, business women, and, in general, the top layer of Iliopolis Methodism. Good stuff, much of it; but it is too well satisfied with itself. Certainly it will say its prayers of repentance if you arrange them into a ritual and pick out the right hymns. But, on the practical level, it's a stiff mixture of orthodoxy, complacency and worldly wisdom. You'll have to jolt it now and then; only you are not much of a jolter. One thing I'll prophesy; these people will take a lot from you because, for one thing, you have no illusions about the pastor's authority."

"All that sounds nice enough, Eugene, old man; and some of it is not so far from the truth, if my first impressions can be trusted. But you don't cheer me up as much as I thought you would. I'm thinking you've outlined a job that's too big for me. But I'm here, and can't get away if I wanted to. And I don't; not yet. So I shall have to think a good deal about your diagnosis of Columbus Avenue."

"And of yourself, too, Peter. Don't forget yourself, entirely. To me, it's the combination that looks cheerful. You'll get along."

Peter laughed a trifle consciously, and said, "I hope you're right. But that's enough about me. What about yourself? From all I hear, they're going to make a bishop out of you. I'm for it, of course. We all are, who know you. But—do you mind?—are *you?* I think you ought to be elected. What I wonder is whether you think so, too."

"There's a lot of talk," said Eberle, "and it bothers me. I can't dodge this thing; and, to be frank, I'm not trying. I believe in letting the church do its deed, and you know me well enough to take that exactly as it stands. But I can't say that being a bishop looks like a prospect of paradise. If I should be elected, what then?"

"Why, you'll be a bishop by no fault of your own, and you'll be a good one. Why not? What bothers you?"

"Well, I don't believe, for one thing, in what some people mean when they say the Episcopacy. I believe in our church taking hold of men—that it chooses to call them bishops is due to an accident—and assigning each man of them to the hardest work it can discover for the sort of man he is. There's not much glory in that, except the hard work. And I've already seen that the tremendous power which we give a bishop is more than a heavy sword; it has two edges."

"Anyway," said Peter, "I'm glad you don't mean to turn away from an election. The church needs a man like you in the Episcopal board. And if you are elected, everybody will know, who knows anything, that you had nothing to do with it except by being yourself."

"What else can a man be, and stay at peace with his own soul?"

"Sure enough. I remember that's what I thought when you took me to your revival meeting at Blue Oak long ago. But there's more to being yourself than just a phrase. Probably without knowing how or why you do it, you have almost forced other people, when they deal with you, to want to be as sincere as you are. I think that has a lot to do with the votes you'll get next May. Everybody knows you'll be everybody's bishop."

"Leaving the Episcopacy out of it, Peter, don't you believe that most people really prefer to be their best selves whenever they can manage it without too big a strain? The trick is in getting rid of the strain. Well; that's what being a Christian means, to me;—having a religion that has become, not always easy, but second nature."

IV

In his work with the Board of Special Philanthropies, Bartelmy Bonafede really came into his own. Here he had periods of full content. He felt that he was doing as good work as anybody in his field, and better work than most.

His output was prodigious. All he asked was a hint. He could produce a program at sight of a title. One department wanted a story for the *Advocates,* and another a booklet for local church workers, and another a program for the next annual "Day," and another a scheme of posters or form letters or literature for a special financial campaign, or leaflets announcing new plans and new activities in the office or in the field—it was all one to Bartelmy.

Bart had another sure dependence, with practice becoming every year more of an adept at its use. He cultivated a ready and voluble orthodoxy, but, in its expression, he used the most modern phrases he could come by. It is the sure way to a reputation for being progressively conservative, or conservatively progressive, and Bart had not failed to notice that by it some held their place in the church, when others no more advanced in opinion, but less adroit of speech, went suspect all their brief official days.

He reaped the first harvest of his cultivation of the brethren in his Conference when, six years after going into the detached work, they elected him to the approaching General Conference. True, he was the low man of the delegation, but he was in. And, being in, he would not be so proud that he could not discern certain possibilities in his assignments to important committees.

When the month of the great convocation dawned, Bartelmy Bonafede went humbly. Also he found ways of making himself useful to the newspaper men, and to the secretarial staff of the Conference, and to the men of his own delegation, and even to a foreign delegate here and there.

One outcome of this General Conference puzzled Bartelmy. At Calder he had known Eugene Eberle only as a queer stick; a student difficult of approach and not so very responsive when one did make an effort to be friendly.

He had graduated when Bart was a sophomore, and of course everybody in the church knows of his steady rise to prominence. Within a dozen years he had become such a figure as Methodism produces once or twice in a generation,—a man widely known and sought after by all sorts of people outside as well as inside the denomination.

And Eugene Eberle had been one of the four bishops elected. Not on the first ballot, certainly; the Eberle support was neither organized nor spectacular; but his vote grew steadily, until it crossed the difficult two-thirds line. Bartelmy could not explain it by analogy with any other election, nor with the methods of the most seasoned General Conference practitioners.

Bartelmy's repute once established, he labored mightily, but without too obvious anxiety, to strengthen and extend it. The books he needed, he bought. No collector or reviewer studied more assiduously the catalogues of old books or the advertisements of new ones. His choices had a wide and tolerant catholicity. An idea dug out of the *Billboard* or *Printer's Ink* or *Vanity Fair* could be made use of just as well as if it had been found in the *Homiletic Review;* better, even, in that its source was not so likely to be known, and its bearing on Bartelmy's scheme, whatever that might be, was likely to be more human and natural.

And to Viola these years were also kind. Marcus demanded little of her time; Ellen Rector saw to that. Moreover, he had always been more than commonly self-reliant, and as he grew from babyhood to little-boyhood and then to school days, and to those grubby sorts of play which boys so strangely affect, he much preferred to be let alone.

Though the Bonafede apartment was larger than Bart's income really justified, Viola had selected it, and that was an end. She had never been small about money matters, and Bart did not know how much she spent beyond the monthly check he gave her from his salary. All he knew was that this check represented two-thirds of his income, and with it she was supposed to manage the house, paying all the bills, including his own. She saw that he went to a good tailor, and the cost of her own wardrobe might have been a shock to him; except that both he and Viola took care that he was not subjected to the risk.

Viola was predestined to a Woman's Club career. She had the clothes for it, and the leisure for it, and the instinct for it. Socially and mentally she belonged. From her father she had learned the elements of politics, which though differently applied by women, must be pretty much the same for both sexes. She became a leader, first in the city, then in the state, then in the National Federation.

Judge Dimont, by this time too old for politics, shrewdly observed Bartelmy's progress. "I told you so," he chuckled to Viola on one of her visits home; "that boy is doing just what I said he would. He watches his corners. He did it the first time I saw him, when he won in the oratory contest. He did it when he got me to Kansas City on his special train. He did it at the last General Conference, though he wasn't much noticed. And, you hear me, he'll do it again, many a time. I'll see you a bishop's wife yet, young lady. The Methodist Church will discover your husband."

Whereat Viola only said "Maybe;" though in her heart she believed him; and turned her attention to what she conceived to be her share in the Bonafede program. Mrs. Dimont, who always missed the evidences of her husband's genial cynicism and her daughter's calculating practicality, said, "Don't you go putting such nonsense into their head, Judge. But it would be sort of nice if it should happen, wouldn't it?"

Mrs. Dimont's ignorance of the process whose result she envisaged could not have been more complete; but evidently her heart was in the right place. As for Bartelmy, he knew only that he would do what he could to help the church discover him, if and when it might be looking for men of his quality.

He neglected none of the devices, and applied all of the formulas, which are dear to Methodist climbers. Once or twice he thought he had invented a new one, but that came of his inability to know all the climbers. There are no new schemes.

V

And the signs were almost all favorable to his hopes. Omen followed propitious omen with cumulative results. His conference recognized his growing influence, and, on the principle that influence breeds influence, it added the one almost indispensable weapon to his armory; it elected him to the next General Conference at the head of the delegation.

This, in Methodism, is much more than a mere coming out at the head of the voting. Automatically it carries with it the chairmanship of the delegation in the General Conference, and, by long custom, membership on the most conspicuous committee of that body, the committee on Episcopacy. To Bartelmy the distinction would be doubly useful. Apart from its direct personal values, it gave him larger opportunity to further the ambitions of his chief, the man who had lifted him out of his Pottawattomie obscurity into the place where he could set about making people aware of him throughout the connection.

As many other men have wanted it, and will always want it, so Dr. Dalkeith desired the Episcopacy; not only for its own sake, but because he had grown somewhat weary of his present exacting office. That he supposed being a bishop would be less exacting is not likely; nor even that he felt peculiarly equipped for its often thankless duties. The reasons which lie back of such ambitions are never as simple as they sound, and rarely are they stated with entire frankness, even by the aspirant to himself.

The situation created by Dr. Dalkeith's ambition was made to order for Bartelmy's genius. He took on himself, with no formal request that later might be embarrassing to anybody, the direction of the Dalkeith campaign. He organized the entire staff of the Dalkeith office into a corps of sentiment-creators and vote-hunters. He made shrewd appraisal of those direct or indirect beneficiaries of his society's activities who had been elected to General Conference, and saw to it that no man of them all forgot to do his duty.

At the General Conference of that year many other things happened, but the first event of importance to Bartelmy was the promotion of his chief. Dr. Dalkeith was elected, though with much effort and after long uncertainty. Before the balloting could begin, it was necessary that the conference should decide on the number of bishops to be elected, and this in turn depended on the number of vacancies in the Episcopal Board, as well as on the number of new residences to be ordered, if any.

From his place in the Committee on Episcopacy, Bartelmy gave himself to the furtherance of two enterprises;—the addition of one new residence, and the retirement of a bishop who was well under the usual age of retirement, but whose record in administration had occasioned no small criticism. Bartelmy was careful not to advocate the bishop's shelving. Many delegates were outspoken for that. Some of these had been aggrieved by his official acts, and were bluntly for declaring him non-effective. On the other side, men recognized his really useful qualities, and insisted that no bishop ought to be retired merely on the demand of men who had personal grievances.

It was Bartelmy who proposed the expedient which was adopted. Said he in the committee, "No one of us desires to take the responsibility of saying that Bishop Valentine is ineffective. And yet we cannot entirely ignore the objections which have been made to his official conduct. Since, in the last analysis, the General Conference is the real arbiter, I suggest that we present the bishop's name for conference action on his effectiveness, without recommendation." And it was done, by a committee which, in the main, suspected nothing.

Now Bartelmy had guessed that the men who actually wanted to strike back at the bishop by voting for his retirement were in the minority. But he was sure that others would vote with them, some from a sort of second-hand prejudice, some from a sincere belief that the bishop's usefulness was at an end, and not a few for the reason which was in the back of his own mind. The more vacancies, the more chances for every candidate.

His judgment was borne out by the event. Bishop Valentine, by a secret ballot of the whole General Conference, was put on the retired list, to his own amazed but fruitless indignation. When the Conference also ordered the fixing of a new Episcopal residence, without discontinuing any of those already established, another door of hope opened before many aspiring brethren.

Even so, when the actual voting for bishops began, it took nine ballots to get other candidates out of the way—up or down —before Dr. Dalkeith had his chance, and several times Bartelmy would have given up in despair, if he had been no more than the manager of the Dalkeith campaign.

But the delay was also his salvation, as he discerned at the last. More than once, Dalkeith's vote dropped so low that recovery seemed impossible, and quite low enough to discourage anybody from coming out into the open as a candidate for his secretarial office. There is a practical etiquette of such things.

Meanwhile Bartelmy was instant in season and out, strengthening this combination, suggesting that, reassuring the fainthearted, bargaining with the tough-minded, doing his utmost to head off the introduction of new Episcopal candidates and the re-entry of old ones. He was like a spider whose far-extended web is threatened as much by the vagrant wind as by overt enemies.

Viola threw her talents into the common stock. She saw her chance to help, and she knew how to supplement her husband's labors as she had supported her father's. Her role was that of the lovely lady who, though prominent in Woman's Club work, knows nothing whatever about politics, but who delights in bringing congenial women together in the intervals of the conference sessions.

At the headquarters hotel, every afternoon, the Bonafede suite was full of quiet and well-bred activity. The wives of delegates agreed that it was a far better place in which to meet the right people than the public lobby downstairs. Mrs. Bonafede was charming, and you were away from the endless milling-around of the chronic greeters. While there was much chatter, and a gentle sound of spoons and teacups—the tea was Bartelmy's innovation, and proved effective—one could hear one's self speak.

The women delegates who dropped in during the intervals of committee work found it a haven of rest. Viola saw to it that nobody talked shop to them; the initiative must be their own; but she could listen attentatively as well as sympathetically, and she was often able to pass on to Bartelmy the hint that some special thoughtfulness in a certain quarter would bear fruit in a useful bit of gratitude.

It was anything but easy work for either of them, and Bartelmy paid part of the price in the few hours of each twenty-four when he and Viola were alone together. But he had learned, as much as a man may, how to cushion the jar of his wife's reaction to weariness. For himself, irritability was out of the question. In his early years he had been sharply disciplined against indulgence in that luxury; later, when he was free to choose good or evil, he decided that he could not afford nerves. His long habit of self-control was one of Bonafede's greatest assets.

When at long last the Dalkeith vote suddenly shot upward and slipped safely over the two-thirds line, it carried with it the one remaining man to be elected bishop. And the day was Saturday; that meant there was little time left of electioneering among candidates for other offices. Bartelmy knew that the consecration service must come on Sunday, and that the Conference would hurry on Monday to the elections of secretaries and editors, for the last days of the session drew near, and everybody would be wanting to get done and go home. So he felt reasonably sure that there was slight danger of any successful foray on his preserves.

Naturally he expected a race; and it was no surprise to him that on Saturday afternoon two men were announced in the lobbies and on the streets as candidates for Dr. Dalkeith's post. But they came belated, as he well knew. Bartelmy's name and person had been too long in the thought of the delegates. True, few had openly championed his cause, and he had asked for nothing. But neither his fitness nor his "moral" claim, as Dalkeith's most effective assistant, could be overlooked. It was said of him generally that he was the logical candidate, and one delegation pleased him greatly by coming to him in a body and asking the privilege of nominating him.

His chances could not have been better. The Dalkeith strength, of course, was his, and this meant even more than the support of a retiring secretary, for the retiring secretary was to become a bishop. A new bishop's influence is a beautiful example of metamorphosis. Yesterday he who is now a bishop was a mere chrysalis of the Episcopacy, unglamorous, merely a would-be bishop; and nature, prodigal here as everywhere, always considering the possibilities of frustration, provides far more embryos than can come to maturity. Today he is a Purple Emperor, brilliant with all the gorgeous potentialities of the general superintendency.

VI

Thus by Monday night another goal was reached in the progress of Bartelmy Bonafede; for, as compared to the struggle over his chief, his own election was a swift and easy triumph. He could not deny himself a moment in which he might roll under his tongue the sweet morsel of this achievement. He, Bartelmy Bonafede of Thornlea, shoddy-born and shoddy-bred, immigrant, office boy, hired hand, country school-teacher, poor but industrious student, now by the choice of a great church had become executive secretary of its Board of Special Philanthropies, charged with the administration of a budget that would run into millions, and in control of men and institutions not less important than those of the largest Episcopal assignments.

All of this he rehearsed to himself, and to no other, though he spoke more freely of it to Viola that night in their room than was his wont. And, to his great delight, she was unusually responsive. She felt that this was a time for such gracious wifeliness as she could display to distracting perfection when she chose; so that for the moment Bartelmy the successful contriver of his own fortunes was completely lost in Bartelmy the ardent and enraptured lover. Her frank pleasure in his new importance flattered him no less because he realized the next morning that she had been thinking quite as much of her own ambitions, and their approach to realization, as of his own. He was too happy in his election, and in her special favor, to begrudge her that luxury. There was glory enough for both.

Bartelmy as a department head had contracted a zeal for industry, but Bartelmy as executive secretary of a great Board became a truly prodigious worker.

The headquarters in Iliopolis had been established a few years before, and on a quite modest scale. The Middle West had not yet learned to think of itself as the great treasure land of Methodism. For ecclesiastical leadership it still looked, though with steadily diminishing subservience, to the East.

But with Bonafede's coming into full executive power the offices of the Board of Special Philanthropies buzzed with new activity. He persuaded the Board to make appropriations for an enlarged staff, rented more space, and prepared to lead to the conquest of new worlds—for the glory of the church as represented by his particular Board.

This organization had become, through successive adjustments, a sort of omnibus of philanthropies and church work. Many and only slightly-related activities were under its care. It had authority to encourage and aid in the expansion of varied Methodist enterprises. Not always did it provide the funds, but it was permitted to furnish as much moral support as it thought proper, and to supplement this, in carefully defined circumstances, with loans or grants of money.

Under Secretary Bonafede all its work began to effloresce, primarily in an array of reports and surveys—statistical, comparative, graphic, pictorial—the like of which had never been seen in the denomination. What came today in a letter from the field tomorrow reappeared in a tabulation or a chart. If it promised to be especially striking it came to its full glory in a stereopticon slide, gorgeously colored. And the secondary outcomes of it all—are they not writ large in the life of the Methodist churches of the time, and even until now?

That Peter Middleton should be Bartelmy's pastor during such a time as this was as little of Bartelmy's seeking as Peter's. Peter had come to Iliopolis while yet Bartelmy was a subordinate under Dr. Dalkeith, fully occupied with his dual task of promotion-expert and campaign manager for his chief. And, anyway, Bartelmy had little contact with Peter or his church, for his duties took him away almost every Sunday.

Even in the first few months of his pastorate it was evident that neither Peter nor Bartelmy need have any concern that they were both officially related to the Columbus Avenue church. The Bonafede home was really outside the parish, and Viola, in the beginning of their life in Iliopolis, had found a congenial group of women in a more easily accessible church; "smaller," she said, "but much more select." Undoubtedly there were fewer women of importance, zealous of their long-time prerogatives, in Summerfield church. When Bartelmy became secretary, the Summerfield people saw his increased value to them, and made it easy for the Bonafedes to stay. That Peter was pastor of the other church had no little to do with Bartelmy's acquiescence.

VII

Iliopolis has a High School, well out from the business district, to which even Iliopolis, though it has several high schools, points with special pride. Here are all the modernities pertaining to the most modern American High Schools.

It was soon after the beginning of the fall semester. Between classes freshmen halted as they came through the long hall, and gathered in little clusters about the bulletin board on which the class roll was posted. Each day brought new knowledge of their classmates, gained in the recitation rooms and study halls, and they liked to check up on names. Besides, they must soon organize, and it was important that they should know who was who.

A chunk of a girl, slightly under the medium height, with dark brown hair and a face not unpleasantly freckled, her mouth perhaps a trifle wider than it need be to accord with her other features, moved in close enough to touch on the arm a boy who stood with the group at the board.

"Excuse me, but aren't you Marcus Bonafede?"

The boy blushed. Marcus blushed too easily, his mother said, who always had her own blushes under control, even in the days when girlish blushes were highly thought of. He was of paler coloring than the girl; slender, and tall for his fifteen years.

Said he, as he looked down at her, "Why, yes; that's my name;" and waited. He had not found many friends as yet; scarcely a dozen people had spoken to him. His somewhat solitary childhood had given him little skill in the touch-and-go associations of more normally brought up boys. But this girl who had so easily addressed him—by no amount of taking thought could he have matched her poise—seemed so friendly that he almost forgot how unusual the experience was.

"I thought you were," said she; "Dad told me what you looked like. I'm Rhoda Middleton. Your folks and my folks were in college together in Kansas, so we're sort of acquainted already. What school did you come from to Alexander Moore High?"

It did not take long for each to become possessed of all those facts which high school freshmen find it necessary to know when exchanging confidences. They discovered that Marcus had been born in Kansas and Rhoda in Chicago. They reminded each other that Rhoda's father was pastor of Columbus Avenue, and that Marcus was the son of Secretary Bartelmy Bonafede. Marcus had heard that Rhoda had never known her mother, and Rhoda learned a little, but only a little, about Marcus's mother, except that she was beautiful and usually busy with her club work.

Then they found that they had interests in common. Marcus admitted to being fairly good at making toy aeroplanes, in that day just beginning to be quite a respectable vocation, even for high school boys; and Rhoda confessed that she'd rather fuss with tools and sail a boat—she had spent two summers at Lake Geneva,—than bother with needles and thimbles and cook books. Also, he was learning to use the typewriter his latest birthday had produced; not merely its mechanism, but its stimulus to a half-awake faculty in the back of his head somewhere.

Cook books having been somehow mentioned, Marcus started to speak, hesitated, almost blushed again, and then boldly asked, "Can you make fudge?"

"I can eat more than my share, Dad says, but I've never had any luck at making it. I'm not careful enough."

Whereupon Marcus observed, with an effort at careless ease, "You may think it's a sissy business, but making fudge is one of the best things I do. I'll show you, some day."

From so casual a beginning there came into being one of those youthful comradeships which now and then spring up at the least auspicious age, in the years when most boys and girls are mutually and scornfully repellent.

It weathered the difficult days of the freshman year, for Rhoda immediately found a way of forestalling unpleasant comment over so conspicuous a disregard of the freshman code.

To a girl who said, "Rhoda, why do you make such an awful fuss over that Bonafede boy?" she replied, "Who? Marcus? Don't be silly. Why, his folks and mine are almost kin. Our fathers were roommates at college, and we've known of each other ever since Dad and Dr. Bonafede were pastors in the same Kansas town. I've about decided to adopt him for a brother, seeing that I haven't got any. Brothers can be pretty useful. And when the time comes, I'm proposing him for election to *Moore Gravy!*"

At any rate, there was no more freshman objection to the partnership between Rhoda and Marcus. By the time it became familiar, it was taken for granted, as much queerer things are. As the year went by, it developed advantages which the class could turn to its own profit. For these two were full of resource, and not afraid of taking pains. In the school paper, *Moore Gravy*, for one thing. Marcus had one year as editor; but a cheerfully whimsical humor in his copy showed to best advantage in *Moore Gravy's* signed column, "The Gravy Ladle." He was one of the first of what is now a long line of high school and college philosophers.

VIII

A few Methodist preachers of Iliopolis and its environs had a habit of coming together three or four times a year, with no purpose but indulgence in good talk. They found genuine recreation in the free give and take which is the mark of any true ministry in its hours of relaxation, and which is not easily come by in the hurly-burly of conference week. They called themselves the Fleming Circle, in honor of a rare-souled colleague, too early broken by unresting labors.

It was in Peter's sixth year at Columbus Avenue that the Fleming Circle held its annual "country" meeting in and about the little church at Morningdale, twenty miles east of Iliopolis. This meeting, among more sophisticated ministers, would probably have been called a "retreat;" to men of the Circle it was just a meeting, save that it was held at a point remote from their parishes, that it continued for two days, and that the time was about equally allotted to discussion, devotion and a sort of open-air lounging during which some of the debating went on with undiminished zest.

Much incipient and inquisitive heresy appeared in these meetings; not spoken in whispers and fearfully, but openly declared. Here was one place where there could be nothing to fear. The Fellowship met under an unwritten law that no man should be quoted, or called to account, elsewhere, for what he might say here.

Peter, being appointed to lead the talk on the first afternoon, plunged into the subject of church-controlled social, charitable, and educational work; he had long been brooding on it.

He started by telling of his increasing interest in the theme, and of queer ways in which various experiences had contributed to the intensifying of that interest.

"We have all heard of the Chicago World's Fair," he said; "some of us saw it, and will never forget it. In the Fair year and the next, a most eccentric and pushful English journalist visited Chicago; William T. Stead, of the London *Pall Mall Gazette*. He went down in the 'Titanic,' you may remember. When he was in Chicago he went slumming, as well as to the Fair. After his second visit he wrote a book, 'If Christ Came to Chicago.' I've been reading that book again this week. It was written twenty years ago, and it is strangely ahead of its time. What's more, it is much ahead of ours. It has some of the very ideas I think we must be feeling after; the city as a cherishing mother to the young, the sick, the poor, the tempted, the handicapped; the idea of Alma Mater enlarged, so as to take in the state, as well as college and church; making it include the whole community.

"Why should not the community take over those social duties and services which the church assumed when there was no state, no nation; when the church controlled the community more nearly than it can ever do it again? That was Stead's thesis.

"Soon after I came to Iliopolis, I made a chance visit to the State Tech. Fellows, that simply knocked me over. My own college, Calder, out in Kansas, is a small affair, as colleges go. Some of you are small college men, and you know what it means. I happened to be at Tech when the big financial campaign for our three Methodist colleges in this state was put on. The President of Tech is a Methodist, and it was by his courtesy that the banquet at which the campaign was launched was served in the gym.

"Honest, it would have seemed to me a huge joke, except that it was too expensive to be funny. There we were, trying to set up a three-year effort to get a little endowment for three schools—a quarter million apiece—so that each could add to its income something like twelve or fifteen thousand dollars a year. And the great school whose guests we were, with as many Methodist students as any two schools of the three we sought to help, had just been given by the legislature eight hundred thousand dollars for its current expenses! That was Methodist tax money, some of it, appropriated to the education of our own young people; and for Tech it was income, while we Methodists in our organized capacity were beginning a strained, wrenching effort to collect a smaller amount, not for current needs, but for endowment!

"I figure that the state is spending on Methodist boys and girls at Tech at least five dollars to every one we spend in the church's own schools. Everything the state does is of the best and the amplest; the one thing we know it can't do better than the colleges of the church is organized religious work, which, naturally, it can't do at all. Oh, yes; I know about the immeasurable influence of Christian teachers, and I value it more than I can say; but it wasn't always to be had, even in the Calder of my time, nor in the Northwestern of yours, Jim Weatherley. And it isn't wholly absent, I judge, at Tech. I know about the objections to big classes, and the lack of personal touch between faculty and students, and all the other limitations of a state school. But they are not inherent in the idea of state control; you may find the same limitations at Syracuse and Boston and Southern California.

"I know, too, that we shall have the church college, and the not-so-very-church university, for a long time yet. But they told me at Tech, which is only one of many state schools, where our Methodist youth abound, that the enrolment includes over eight hundred Methodist students; and not the least intelligent students on the campus, either. The local Methodist church would be swamped if it tried to take them in. The pastor is busy enough with his town flock, and the building is remote from the campus. All of which amounts to saying that the Methodist students can't be fitted into the town church's life.

"I'll tell you what; if ever I lose my job at Columbus Avenue, I don't know anything that would tempt me so strongly as the dare to tackle a job like that. When I was at College Park, out in Kansas, I thought I saw what a man could do if he really cared about students and had no other people to be responsible for."

The discussion went far afield. It took in the whole range of church activities outside the walls of the local church, as well as some of those which are carried on inside. Some men stoutly insisted that no church ever had prospered without the benevolent and other eleemosynary outlets for its Christ-inspired impulse to serve.

After the first rush of comment there came the usual pause. Then the informal debate found its second wind. One of the men set everything going again by saying, "Has anybody taken the trouble to wonder why Middleton thinks this way, and why some of us, as we listened to him, wanted to think as he does?"

To which his neighbor replied, "Why, it seems plain enough to me. Middleton is one of our forward-looking preachers; isn't that enough?"

"Not for me," said the first. "I'm not interested in your Locksley Hall stuff, nor in H. G. Wells' trick of inventing a brand new Utopia for every new publishing season. Where Middleton got me—and himself, too, or I'm a poor guesser—was in his suggestion of an immense release for the church if it could ever be rid of its dependence on the big money. How about it, Peter; am I right?"

"Well," said Peter with a dry laugh, "you might be a worse guesser. The church is not different from other institutions which need what you call the big money. It must go where the money is. And that makes it watch its step at the very moment when there may be need for daring."

"Sure thing," said another preacher. "You remember that time when Dr. Bonafede wrote to the *Advocate* about Bishop Fitzwilliam's speech at the Methodist Men's Congress? Its effect, he said, would be to alienate some of our most generous laymen and seriously affect our benevolent income. I clipped that letter; got it yet."

And the guesser assented, "We all remember that. And I remember thinking, when I saw it in the *Advocate,* of Paul's words in his letter to Titus—or was it Timothy?—about those who are minded to be rich falling into temptations and snares and foolish and hurtful lusts; I'm not quoting exactly; never could; but you know the place."

"Yes, of course," said Peter; "but we shouldn't blame the secretary over much. He's like a man with a big family and small wages—he's got to see, somehow, that his brood is fed, and necessity has a great influence over conscience, with all of us. Dr. Bonafede can't help thinking anxiously about the long list of activities for which his Board is responsible. Could any of us, in his place?"

"We don't seem to realize," said the brother who had first stirred up Jim Weatherley, "that Dr. Bonafede is doing what circumstances won't let all of us do—he's making his job constantly bigger. That's his way of adding to his own importance. It is needful that people shall think him indispensable. You wouldn't want him to saw that limb off while he was perched on it, would you?"

"To leave out personalities," said Peter, "the question we've no more than raised here today may be really one of decentralizing the church. So long as we have these great groups of institutions, we shall need a tight and closely-graded organization; every officer must use the weight of his office to get results from those under him, and from the church at large. We shall put more and more direct responsibility on our bishops; soon they will be practically in charge of dioceses. Naturally they will want to make records for success, which they will interpret as efficiency; the pressure will come on to the district superintendents, who will pass it on to the preachers, who will work more and more to a pre-arranged and regimented program. We shall have more experts, more traveling cheer-leaders, more records, stenographers, meetings, campaigns. We shall be guided, not perhaps from above, but from overhead."

As a rule, little came of these Fleming Circle discussions. The men enjoyed them, and went back to their parish work with a sense of having been somehow refreshed; that was about the sum of it. Happily, the Circle had a Medes-and-Persians rule against adopting resolutions.

But this time something more did come of the talk. It had given Jim Weatherley a genuine scare. Jim was a lover of programs, schedules, "team-work," and all such concerted activity. He liked to be told what to do next. In his distress Jim broke the unwritten law of the Circle; he talked to an outsider. If he had any qualms of conscience, he quieted them by the thought that a man in Dr. Bonafede's place, with all his heavy responsibilities, ought to know what was being said, when it came so close to all his work. So he sought an opportunity to see Bartelmy, and told him the whole story of Peter's speech.

IX

Any Methodist preacher of ten years' standing has developed at least the beginning of a sixth sense. He can tell, he knows not how, when a vague unease first touches a few of his people, and makes their minds receptive soil for the baleful sowings of the disaffected brother—or, often, sister—who will shortly be wondering if the time has not come for a change of pastors.

This subtle feeling of mild alarm—if it was as much as that—came to Peter Middleton toward the close of his sixth year at Columbus Avenue. Finances were not quite up to grade that year, for well-understood local reasons; and there was a new church treasurer, a man whose early Methodist training and associations had been among a technically pious but hard-minded folk. The church has always had them. Witness Daniel Drew. And Boss McKane of Brooklyn.

This brother, Elting by name, confronted at the end of the year with bills which could not all be paid at once and in full, from the funds in hand, managed to pay more of them than anybody had expected. It was an exploit that called for explanation.

The explanation appeared at the last official board meeting of the year, on the very eve of Conference. The treasurer reported that most of the bills were paid. Casually enough, and all unsuspecting, the Sunday School Superintendent remarked, "Of course, that includes the pastor's salary?"

"No-o," was Brother Elting's breath-taking reply. "No, I'm sorry to say it doesn't. We've been behind in all the finances, and unfortunately that account will show a deficit this year."

Two or three of the brethren showed the surprise which all felt. Said one, "Deficit? But, Brother Elting, this church is not used to deficits in the pastor's salary. Do you mean that there's a possibility that he won't be paid in full?"

And Treasurer Elting patiently presented for their information a nice point of Methodist law. "You see," he explained, "no Methodist church guarantees its pastor a fixed and definite salary. It pays what it can, and when it has done that, and the pastor goes to conference at the end of the year, the slate is wiped clean for the new year. That has been the Methodist rule from the beginning. But the current bills that I paid—why, there's no wiping the slate of them; naturally they've got to be paid, in full, some time or other. So I have paid them, as far as I could, because it is important that we maintain the church's credit."

Whereupon things began to happen; with Peter, nominally chairman, too astounded to take a hand in them.

Superintendent Trotter, whose innocent question had produced the crisis, had a way of becoming thin-lipped, and white about the mouth, when he was struggling to keep from revealing the temper nature had given him. He rose and spoke with an ominous directness, scorning to waste so much as a syllable on the treasurer's fantastic "law."

"Since Brother Middleton starts to Conference in the morning," said he, "it is too late to remedy, as it should be remedied, this disgraceful and unheard-of situation. However, I move that the deficit on our pastor's salary be carried over to the new year, and that this amount, as well as the current salary of next year, be made a first charge on all our receipts until the pastor is paid up to date; and also that hereafter there shall always be a month's advance salary in the treasury before *any* bills are paid."

The motion was seconded by two or three. Peter, for once at a loss, turned helplessly to Dick Davenport. "You put the motion, Dick. I can't."

But Dick, usually a trifle deliberate, was angry enough to think swiftly. He had something better to offer.

He said, "I'd gladly put Brother Trotter's motion, because I know what's in his mind. But isn't there a better way? I mean, I'll be one of two, three, four, as many as you please, to advance the money now, not to the pastor, but to the church, giving our personal checks. That way our claims for reimbursement will be the sort that our treasurer thinks *has* to be paid. We can instruct the treasurer to pay, from what we put in, the balance due on our pastor's salary."

On the instant he had half a dozen offers. Then he put so much of Brother Trotter's motion as was still pertinent, and declared it carried; Treasurer Elting and one other not voting.

It was almost a physical nausea which brought the sweat to Peter's face as he adjourned the meeting. Most of the members gathered about him, in the interval of writing checks, to assure him that in their opinion Elting was a fool, as well as a scoundrel. One spoke up hotly, "I wish I'd called for his resignation on the spot."

Elting, busy with the unwelcome checks which were being forced upon him, overheard the remark. "You could have had it," he snarled. "I'm through with a board that doesn't appreciate the careful handling of its funds. My resignation will be ready at the next meeting. You can find somebody else to worry about your bills—and your precious pastor."

That was Peter's unhappiest going to Conference. He had done a good year's work, and the church had never been more usefully busy in all its activities. In spite of the industrial depression in Iliopolis, the benevolent collections, which he always personally supervised, were not noticeably short. Really, nothing untoward had happened, except that one flare-up in the official board. Of course, his talk in the Fleming Circle had been variously reported, the versions being variants of

Jim Weatherley's report to Dr. Bonafede. But that did not touch his own people.

Still, Peter felt there might be something sinister behind even that, and looking forward into the new year was not the pleasant imaginative exercise it had been at other Conference seasons.

X

Treasurer Ebenezer Elting was as good as his word. His resignation was in the hands of the pastor at the first official meeting after conference, and the meeting promptly accepted it. When the unanimous vote was announced, Dick Davenport said, with huge relief in his voice, "Well, that's disposed of."

Peter was not so sure.

Now Elting was a lawyer—there are degrees of decency among lawyers—and he had his office in a third-rate building on the edge of the law district, a building filled with similarly dubious professional men. Here he specialized in the shadier mazes of the law. The buying and selling of tax-titles occupied him in the season, and he did himself very well in some sorts of personal injury cases and the collection of peculiar and variously doubtful debts. Any bit of shady practice which promised a legitimate return from the time and effort spent was acceptable, always provided that it also offered possibilities of collateral profit outside the usual scale of fees.

He had come to Iliopolis from a little town in the Southwest, a place where periodical revivals and protracted meetings, persisting from the days when they had been great social as well as religious functions, provided an abundant supply of sensuous religiosity, but made very little demand on the commonplaces of an everyday citizenship. And not only had he brought with him the warped ethical sense of the emotional inebriate, but, as the event disclosed, a very pretty hangover of original sin.

He was no fool. He understood that a frontal attack on Middleton would be sure to fail; the action of the official board assured him of that. He would find other approaches.

For one thing he knew a woman whose hobbledehoy son had been mildly rebuked for creating disturbances at various social gatherings in the church, and, for worse offenses, more sternly dealt with. The mother had chosen to become highly indignant over the insult to the competence of her motherhood. And there was a brother who had made so utter a failure of a Sunday School class that his release had been demanded by the parents of almost all his scholars. He, too, was nursing a grievance. In a church the size of Columbus Avenue a diligent seeker may easily turn up five or six such malcontents, as Elting did.

This particular trouble could have been kept within bounds, even so, but the deposed teacher happened to be an employe of the Board of Special Philanthropies. When Elting had heard his story, he extended a true brother's sympathy. He gave him the comforting assurance that he was not the only one to suffer from the autocracy of an "unspiritual" pastor, and rehearsed the lamentable experience of the doting mother, not forgetting to describe with spiteful distortion of the facts his own virtual expulsion from the treasurership.

And, he intimated, all the church work was suffering; not only from these things but from the pastor's uneven favor. Brother Middleton was too much wrapped up in those young men who were forever hanging about him, and in the young people's society. Besides, he was away too much. What Columbus Avenue needed was a man who would stay on the job, and who knew enough to make more use of people who had the interests of the whole church at heart.

All this found various utterance in the office of the Board, as the offended brother talked with his fellow-workers. There being no other member from Columbus Avenue on the staff to redress the balance of his complaining, it was not long before forty or more people, busy every day with Methodist affairs, and coming from at least a dozen churches of Iliopolis and its suburbs, somehow had the impression that at Columbus Avenue things were not going very well, and that the church would soon be ripe for a change.

XI

It was in this fashion that the affair came to Bartelmy Bonafede's notice. For several reasons it interested him. He began by being sorry that even his old friend Peter could not escape the common lot of Methodist preachers, and by easy approaches came to wondering how the difficulty, if it really existed, might be used to the furthering of the Kingdom. He would be the last man to do Peter Middleton an injustice. Wasn't there some way to relieve him from what must have already become a difficult situation and might soon become an intolerable one, and in the very doing of it contrive to recognize and utilize his undoubted talents and his expressed preference? He recalled James Weatherley's disclosures about the Fleming Circle discussion. If, in bringing about some such relief to Peter, it could be managed so that Peter's change of appointment might be a relief to other people as well, would not the outcome be a happy one for all concerned? He had said, so Weatherly reported, that work with students made a great appeal to him.

It is hardly fair to Bartelmy to say that thus early in his secretaryship he had begun to aim at a higher place. And yet he had been made to think of it more seriously than ever. Even when he had been only a little over a year in office, he attracted so much attention by his thorough-going and, on the whole, competent reorganization of his Board's activities that more than one man said, "Dr. Bonafede, your work in this office will make you a bishop."

That remark, commonplace as it is, points to one of the weaknesses in the Methodist Episcopal system. For "Bishop" is a highly glamorous word. And, because in the past the office has had in it so much of the power and the glory, ambitious men have sought to win it by spectacular zeal in lower station. Not only so, but men who, left to themselves, would not have sought the episcopacy, have been almost driven by the persistent praise of their admirers to become receptive candidates for the office.

In Methodism there is nothing like the episcopacy for rewarding conspicuous service. It is the church's supremely distinctive office. It is the only office with a life-tenure. It is the only office which carries an assured and comfortable retiring allowance. And so on.

Most of all, by universal Methodist consent it is the only office in the church's gift which imputes to its possessor an awesome and ineffable importance, wholly apart from his innate worth. The "Board of Bishops" (in the South they say "College of Bishops") has many of the characteristics of a small and powerful nobility; it is in a real if restricted sense a House of Peers.

Men who have unsuccessfully sought the episcopacy for its very tangible rewards are to be found in almost every conference. On the other hand, it is not difficult to name a few men who, with abilities primarily non-episcopal, have had the episcopacy thrust upon them. Almost any Methodist can tell you of such men; one, a uniquely-gifted soul whom many admired and few really understood, a Pegasus hitched to the administrative plow; another, orator to his finger-tips, going from ill health in one great pastorate to recuperation in another, and thence to the episcopacy; glorious in the pulpit, eloquent on the platform, and almost utterly helpless in the cabinet room; a third, a high-tension wire of enthusiasm in public appeal, in administration often a broken reed.

If you would understand Methodist politics, you must begin and end your studies with the episcopacy. The ramifications of its influence reach to the remotest circuit of the obscurest conference.

All this Bartelmy knew. He had watched two General Conference cycles of the disappointed and the successful. He had seen that most of the unsuccessful failed because they were deceived by their vanity or else destroyed by a blundering strategy.

When one indication after another began to point him to the delectable heights, he did not need to be told that compliments were not equivalent to pledged votes. As the months went by, and honeyed words were multiplied in his ear, Bartelmy's pulses quickened. He must be careful. This, after all, was his first quadrennium as a General Conference official. On the other hand, men *had* been made bishops after only four years in a secretaryship; while others, less resourceful or slower at making friends, had toiled quadrennium after quadrennium, to be elected at length with all too brief a span between attainment and retirement; or, more often, had ended in shallows and in miseries, destroyed by the General Conference's deadliest drug—neglect.

Might it not be that a quick, bold, aggressive effort, while his secretarial projects were still fresh with the dew of their first beautiful allurement, would take him to the goal, before the dangerous days drew near, days of steady pull, of heart-breaking effort to realize his paper plans against the drag of ever-increasing costs?

The chances were doubtful that he could hold at its full height through another four years the specious sort of popularity he now had, or, at least, was sure to attain by General Conference time. Why not avoid all danger of a diminishing prestige by getting out now—and up? There would be no lack of men to take his place, and even to help him as he had helped Dr. (now Bishop) Dalkeith, men who would not realize, and so need not be told, that no successor could repeat his *tour de force* of an expansive reorganization of the Board. Already, as he knew better than any one else, the Board's work was uncomfortably extended; the next man would most likely have to retrench, and while retrenchment is always popular, it does not make the sort of reputation on which an Episcopal candidate is carried to the General Conference skies.

Bartelmy Bonafede did not easily decide on the bold course. His instinct was to stay where he was, and let circumstances thrust him forward. Never could he get his own consent to live dangerously. His preference was to consolidate what he had attained; to contrive so that any advancement would appear as the logical and almost inevitable implication of his career to date.

The consideration which decided him was the conviction, steadily growing stronger, that an immediate candidacy after all, would be the safe, not the risky, thing. The more he calculated his prospects, the more he realized that four years later the chances of failure would be greater, and the favorable circumstances fewer. So, really, to defer the quest would be to miss the tide now rising to the full. In a word, he persuaded himself that it was this time or never. Once convinced, all hesitation ceased. He was going to be a bishop if he could; he would try for it at the golden moment.

XII

By the last year of the quadrennium Bartelmy completed a plan to make a long itinerary, official beyond all risk of carping criticism, which would touch in its sweep every important center of Methodism. At every halting place, Board business would claim his attention, and he could reckon on an audience wherever public address might seem advisable.

With sedulous toil he put together the one speech which was to be his chief dependence on the tour. For months he had been trying out in public at every opportunity a collection of carefully constructed passages which seemed to hold possibilities of usefulness. Submitting these to a rigorous selective process, he assembled the surviving paragraphs into a sort of order, and threaded them on a sturdy cord of Methodist admiration for Methodism.

One could meet critics of this speech who said, with more truth than pertinence, that there was very little in it. After all, there was this in it, that it served with more than fair effectiveness the purpose of its author.

He needed to appear orthodox, yet safely progressive; he must do homage to evangelism, yet so as to avoid undue praise of mass emotion in the name of religion; he could, and did, let himself go on Prohibition; he managed to seem on intimate terms with the idea of stewardship, without being more than just polite to the idea of the tithe. He declared boldly for Methodist Unification. On that subject he gathered into one the fragments of every likely and unlikely plan proposed during the previous twenty years. In its details his scheme was vague but generous; as an official of the more numerous branch of Methodism he knew that he could afford to be more than magnanimous, before the event.

He understood, of course, that his audiences would be made up almost wholly of Methodists, and this knowledge filled his speech with the appropriate rhetoric. Methodists can stand more of that sort of public utterance than most Protestants. It is scarcely possible to overdo it, provided it is not too obviously the same old stuff, and Bartelmy could put just the touch of himself into it to escape that snare.

Long familiarity made him amazingly expert with this speech. He could do wonders with it. As occasion required, it became a lecture, a sermon, a presentation at the annual conference, a devotional meditation, an inspirational address. On two minutes' notice he could pick up the thread of it at any given point, and move with equal facility to the end of that paragraph or to the peroration's challenging thrill.

For it was a "challenging" speech. The word itself appeared frequently; all the more, it may be, because no one ever thought of picking up any verbal gauntlet thus thrown down.

His audiences took to this masterpiece from its first words. He chose to start far back, at the beginning of Methodism in America.

"Methodism was the first Episcopal church in the United States," he would say; "first to align itself alongside the Constitution, first to greet the first President; and from that time until now its story has unfolded side by side with the country's history. Our nation's burdens have been Methodism's burdens; what troubled the country has always aroused the solicitude of the church. It has never held itself aloof from the duties and responsibilities of the typical American church.

"Where can you go in the record of American achievement and not find our church in aggressive, militant action? In the dark and trying days of the Civil War, when the very existence of the American Union was at stake, it was the immortal Lincoln himself who paid us his historic compliment, 'It may fairly be said that the Methodist Episcopal Church, not less devoted than the best, is by its greater numbers the most important of all. It is no fault in others that the Methodist Episcopal Church sends more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospitals, and more prayers to heaven than any.'

"In the long warfare against the beverage liquor traffic, a trade now forever outlawed, thank God, what church has always been in the forefront of the fight? We have taught other churches the art of soul-winning, and have furnished them with thousands of converted recruits. When our General Conference spoke, a few years ago, of the then scarce-recognized need for Christianizing the social order, that Methodist deliverance was seen to be so adequate that it was taken over, almost as it stood, by the Federal Council of Churches."

Once into the swing of it, Bonafede would stage a grand review of statistical totals. "It is but a century and a half since Old World thinkers foretold the doom of Christianity; it had but a few years to live. Their successors are still uttering prophecies of gloom. And yet Methodism alone, taken the world over, now has thirty or forty million who welcome the Gospel message as proclaimed by the followers of Wesley, and shape their lives by it. Last of all the great churches to take its place on the world's stage, there is not a free church anywhere which can present the spectacle of such numbers or such strength."

Here followed the statistical array, and after it his modest tribute to the mighty enginery of Methodism. "Her numerical growth, her going out into all the world, have moved at equal pace with her marvelous development of polity and administration. In her organization we see strength and flexibility, popular control and centralized authority, thus putting behind the church's single purpose the potent activities of innumerable local yet closely related societies. Here is freedom which cannot become confusion; here is effective generalship which is never allowed to become a religious autocracy.

"But what has Methodism done with her organization? She has disdained to think of herself as a saints' rest for the too easily tired, or as a mere caravansary for pilgrims en route to celestial joys. She makes no offer of cloistered immunity from the world's affairs; nor does she hold her people by the claims of a medieval magic or the outworn assertions of an archaic theology.

"This Methodism of ours is rather a place of preparation for the tasks of this present life. She seeks to put into the hearts of the every-day men and women who make up the bulk of her membership the spirit of service, so that these humble folk, toiling and burdened, shall be trained and willing to give the hand of helpfulness to those lower down; to be revivers of the weak and restorers of the fallen and the lost.

"But it is not for us to boast. Our preeminent position in American Protestantism is less an occasion for pride than it is a challenge to all the powers which Providence has given us. Challenge? A thousand challenges confront us; providential leadings which we cannot ignore and dare not thrust aside!

"Methodists! Lift up your eyes and see the whitening fields! In sheer gratitude for what has been entrusted to us, let us not fail in this new and perilous time.

"When we reflect by what strange ways we have come to our place of unrivalled influence, how can we help but see it in all the divine girding of our people for yet greater achievements?

"It was the Methodist circuit rider who went into the West with the pioneer, and ahead of him, and claimed it for God. Never did the procession of Westward-moving life lack his fearless warnings and his moving appeals. He and his successors helped to lay the foundations of future empire, from the Eastern mountains to the Western ocean, until, today, Methodism is the mightiest spiritual force on the continent.

"What does that mean? No longer can we be content to think of this country alone. When John Wesley said 'The world is my parish' he dreamed of no such opportunity as we have had revealed to us. It is ours to think now, not in terms of states or even the continent itself; ours has become a world church, with world-wide expectation and responsibility.

"From this day on, every time we put the church's resources back of the new communities and societies on any American frontier, every time we fling out the Methodist banner, start meetings, organize a Sunday School, send a preacher and enlist new soldiers in our Captain's army, we must realize that we are taking new ground for Methodism and for humanity the wide world over.

"I want you to see how every cross-roads church is part of a mighty enterprise of world evangelism and service. America must not be content to pour out its material harvests by way of the Golden Gate, the Gulf and the Atlantic for the sustenance of the world; Methodism must help our country to prepare for and meet the spiritual challenge of our strategic place in the world's life.

"Let us sound the note, from ocean to ocean, that the future of religion in the earth is in the hands of that church which is willing to make the largest investment and the most daring ventures in the prosecution of its varied work, as varied as the limitless needs of humanity.

"Already our connectional form of Christianity carries the light of the Gospel to the remotest corners of the world. Not a church of our name but has its share in this task; not a commission, not a society, not a board, including that with which I have the privilege of serving, has in its truest purpose any other task, any other objective; but is part of this high and holy purpose.

"Never were we so near to understanding and applying the full program of the gospel. Never was there such evidence of our success. Our numbers grow by multiplied thousands; we see the youth of the land swarming into our services and our schools. Never had we such properties as we have now accumulated, and never was there such concern among us to make them perfectly adapted to modern needs. The spiritual life of our membership comes to new intensity and power.

"Brethren, Methodism moves out and forward once more. We are not ashamed to count ourselves of the church militant. As Wesley gathered the first Methodists for an advance that transformed England, as Francis Asbury led his ragged preachers across the Alleghanies to the conquest of the West, so we in our turn must march in a new campaign, far beyond all our former boundaries.

"Speaking as one entrusted with responsibilities that at times seem far beyond my humble powers, I cannot understand how any true Methodist may hope to escape the call of this hour. In whatever part of the army the leaders think he may best serve, there he must be willing to serve; it is for the church to command, and for him to obey. All considerations of personal ease or pleasure should be sternly set aside; in a larger, nobler sense than that in which the cry is being used to win recruits to hard-pressed England's armies, every Methodist must hear and heed the call, 'Your King and Country need you!'

"In closing, let me say that I have but set before you a few of the moving facts of the present crisis. These facts are not to be denied, or even questioned. I beseech you to draw from them the conclusions which I believe they infallibly indicate. Get the vision of your church's newest task, in a world whose needs are daily growing more acute. Face like Methodists the larger opportunities of such a day as has not been on earth until our time. Hear and answer its compelling call!"

There was much more to it than this. According to the character of his audience, he brought in his intimate denominational details. He could select as at a cafeteria, and offer to each group of hearers the balanced ration he thought it would most warmly receive.

But always the large view was presented; always the people felt that here was a statesman of the faith, dealing in greater matters than they could quite envisage; but, with it all, a man of humble mind and brotherly heart, a man who could reveal, if he had the time and they had the capacity to take it in, the whole secret of Methodism's greatness; and who, as it was, made them realize how fortunate was the church in a day like this, to have at least a few such men of faith and vision and deep devotion.

XIII

But before he could set out with a mind completely at rest, Bartelmy Bonafede must be able to assure himself that Peter Middleton would soon be too busy to set people thinking that the church's great benevolent work could be curtailed. Fortunately, Bishop Randolph was interested, though not for the same reason, in taking care of Peter.

When Bishop Randolph dropped in at Bartelmy's office one morning, the good man happened to speak of Peter Middleton.

"You know, Dr. Bonafede, I don't need to seek opportunities; but it seems to me a little strange that Brother Middleton has never asked me to speak at Columbus Avenue."

Bartelmy murmured his sympathetic understanding.

"It isn't," the bishop went on, "as if it would cost him or his church anything. Of course, most churches for which I speak send me a small check—fifty dollars or so, and I have plenty of places where I can put the money, after I have allowed for my expenses. But here in my own town there would be no traveling expenses; many of his people have cars, and would be glad to be useful—and I shouldn't really expect the check. I don't complain, as I say. Still, don't you think it rather strange?"

Bartelmy assured the bishop that he did, and that it was really too bad. "But," said he, "Middleton has always been pretty independent, you know; he's done unusually good work at Columbus Avenue, too. He's been there five or six years. I do hear of late there is some talk of friction, but it is probably just irresponsible chatter."

"No, it isn't," the bishop contradicted, who counted his right to know when such talk was going on as an unquestionable Episcopal prerogative. "I've been hearing things myself, from Sister Unwin, and Brother Elting, and some others. What have *you* heard?"

"Well," said Bartelmy, "it's all slight enough; but one or two officials seem to have been dropped rather suddenly, and I'm told there's some slight complaint of Peter's out-of-town lecturing."

"Does he lecture for pay?"

"I can't say as to that," Bartelmy replied, "probably he gets his expenses and a trifle more. But in fact I know very little about the whole business. I should know even less, except that in an office like this, with people from so many Iliopolis churches, and with all sorts of comings and goings, things do get talked about."

"And there's something in this talk," the bishop averred; "I shouldn't wonder if sooner or later it meant a change at Columbus Avenue."

"Surely not. Middleton's place would be hard to fill, as everybody knows; you best of all. However, Bishop, if the time does come when a change must be considered, I rather think our Board might like to put in a bid for Brother Middleton."

It was quick thinking, for Bartelmy. But the moment seemed opportune, and he had been on the lookout for such moments.

"Why, what in the world can *you* do with him?"

"Nothing that is definitely formulated; so far as I can see, Middleton is good for several years yet at Columbus Avenue."

"But if he isn't?"

"Well, in that case, though, mind you, I'm not suggesting it, I've been thinking a little of that Oxford Fellowship project at the State College of Technology. This year the report is that the college has over nine hundred students of Methodist families; certainly it is almost time our church were doing something to hold them to the faith of their own homes."

"I know, I know; but, Bonafede, your Board has no money for new work; however could you take care of a man like Middleton in such a venture? He has his serious limitations, but he's an important man. Look at the salary he's getting. He wouldn't think of it."

"Please understand, Bishop, that I'm not recommending anything. But I have often thought that we may have been too fearful and prudent about some of these new enterprises. Given a man with courage, and real ability, and without many home ties, is it not conceivable that he might establish a great work by actually going about the doing of it? As the Methodist fathers did, you know, 'with neither script nor purse.' It might appeal to the heroic in Middleton. He's talked somewhat in that strain, as I happen to know. We could put a small amount into the venture, and he could get some support on the ground."

"It would likely be just that," said the bishop—"on the ground; just what he could pick up. A lot of students and a few professors would furnish pretty thin pickings. But there's real stuff in what you say. I must have time to consider it."

"Is there some possibility, Bishop," Bonefede asked, struck by that word "consider," "that you would like our Board to take action looking to the beginning of work at the college if you can see your way to appointing Middleton?"

Neither the bishop nor Bartelmy had meant nearly so much as that; yet when Bonafede put the idea into words, the good man felt that it was worth adopting. So he appropriated it, on the spot.

"That's it, exactly. I'm holding this conference this year, you know. When I can see my way a little further, about a new man for Columbus Avenue, maybe you and I and Brother Middleton can agree that he is the sort of man you want. If he is, your Board shall have him."

Bartelmy wondered if he had not gone too far. Whatever was done with Peter, he preferred that somebody else should be responsible for proposing it. So he hastened to enter a disclaimer. "Please don't assume that even with Middleton we could make a start altogether on naked faith. Things are not done that way in these days; and I have no idea what the Board might think if so irregular a proposal were even mentioned. Ours is a rather conservative Board, you know. And Middleton must have *some* assurance of support."

"Yes, I know," said the bishop. "And of course I entertain no such assumption as you hint at. But I think you would be able to manage a small appropriation for such a man as Middleton."

The more Bartelmy thought of it the more he was willing that the bishop should think the idea his own. That way it would be much more likely to result in action.

He had been more shaken than he cared to admit, even to himself, by the report which had come to him of the discussion which Peter had set going in the Fleming Fellowship. Peter Middleton in a strong and independent pulpit was free to speak his mind in many places besides Iliopolis. And it was distinctly not to the interest of the Board of Special Philanthropies, or that of its secretary, that notions and arguments such as Peter had employed before the Fellowship should attain wide acceptance, or even currency.

Peter had more than once said that such work as this at Tech had in it something attractive to him. If he was sent to it, he would be so fully occupied for several years that he would have no time nor strength for agitation. Besides, he would be, in a sense, an appointee of the Board; its servant, in fact; and simple loyalty would be yet another check on his tendency to think that much of church benevolence is no more than a passing phase of organized religion.

XIV

While Bartelmy planned his criss-crossing tour of the country, Viola considered, as she had so often considered before, the fortunes of her husband. He was looking ahead, she knew, to the last great move which long ago her father had prophesied. She knew that he was making progress; remarkable progress. Though she could not have explained why, each interval between Bartelmy's several rises to larger importance in the church seemed to her long and inexpressibly dreary. Sweet were the fresh delights of each new distinction; but after a few months, all was as before.

Viola, for all she discerned, without his telling, the significance of this campaign of which Bartelmy's coming travels were to be a part, held aloof from his plans. When the time came for her to do her share in the promotion of their joint ambition, she would be ready, as she had been before. She would not spare herself. And then, if he won through to the great prize, his success would be hers, and it would suffice. This time it would not be something to enjoy for awhile and then to find wearisome. To be a bishop's wife; envied, talked about, sought after—that would last. She had always been keen over his successes; what she would do when he had no more worlds to conquer was a consideration which did not so much as rise in her mind. She could no more foresee satiety on that ultimate pinnacle than a king's son can receive the saying that crowned heads are uneasy sleepers.

To Bartelmy himself she had not changed much through the years, save by becoming more frankly the woman she had always been. If his world recognized him, so would she; when no new rewards came his way, and he was absorbed in the tasks of his office, she was by turns indifferent and exacting.

He had ceased years ago to puzzle his head over his wife's oscillations between apathy and antipathy, having long since concluded that, at bottom, she simply could not forgive him for being what he was. From the first she had condescended, and he had not resented it. Not only did she count him socially beneath her; through the years she had made him feel also that she considered him something less than genuine.

Viola had never seen his people. It was perhaps as well. She would not have appreciated Luke Bonafede's inarticulate sincerity; and Hannah Bonafede, with the not inexact sense of values acquired in one of Thornlea's better families, would have seen through her daughter-in-law at their first meeting.

Old Luke, after achieving neither success or failure in his adopted country, died in Nepperhan, and his mother, weary of vain longings for an invitation to visit her prospering son and her only grandson, had gone forlornly back to Thornlea. The younger children were married and away.

Bartelmy had been up to Nepperhan for his father's funeral, and, thereafter, whenever he was in New York alone. The last time was just before his mother went home to England.

"I know you're a busy man, Bart, and I don't complain;" she told him, "it's enough for me that you're a good man, too, and useful in the Lord's work. I can go back all the more content for that. I've arranged to live with my cousins, the Braithwaite sisters, two miles from the place where you were born."

Bartelmy paid her expenses home, and as long as she lived he wrote her four times a year, sending with his letter a check large enough so that with what she had from her father's estate, Hannah Bonafede's last days were circumstanced more comfortably than she had ever lived before. But she was a lonely woman in her old age.

Bartelmy more than once had taken Viola with him to New York, when official business called him thither. But by excuses and contrived engagements she avoided any chance of being with him when he went to see his parents. She knew they must be utter plebians, who probably spoke execrable English and wore frumpy clothes; and whose son, by good fortune and effort—she was fair enough to concede the effort—had risen quite above his origins.

Naturally she could not forget that her father had served one term as District Judge, retiring only to take up the much more lucrative employment of counsel and general political adjuster for the railroad; and her mother was one of the Philadelphia Waynes. Anybody could see that Bartelmy Bonafede had been extraordinarily fortunate in his marriage.

XV

That summer Bartelmy made a series of camp meeting and summer-school engagements, not neglecting the profitable contacts which his travels afforded. Viola took advantage of his long absence from home to close up the house. Marcus she sent off to a boys' camp in the Adirondacks, while she betook herself to Atlantic City. She could live at a good hotel, have a special boy for her chair on the Boardwalk, and spend some of the time, at least, in thinking about being a bishop's wife.

Her capacity for these enjoyments still unsated, she stayed on at the seashore late into the waning summer. Bartelmy had a week in Iliopolis between dates, and Marcus was home from the camp. For once the two had a little time alone together, and it must be said that they scarcely knew what to do with it.

They were at dinner one night when Marcus broached the subject which had been in the margins of his mind all summer.

"Father, you said last spring when I finished high school that I ought to be thinking right away what college I wanted to attend this fall. But you didn't say what college you would advise. It's getting late in the summer, and maybe it's too late for me to get in at some places. What school do you think I'd better try for?"

Bartelmy, sure enough of himself at the office or on the platform, found himself with no answer to his son's question. His work brought him into contact with the heads of many Methodist colleges; perhaps he knew too many to risk the consequences of choosing for Marcus.

"Well, son; I can't say that I really know. There are sentimental reasons why I should like you to have a year or two at

Calder, my own college, but I suppose you have thought of other schools not so far away."

"The distance might not be much of a hindrance," said Marcus, "but do you think I should find there what you want me to have?"

Bartelmy though he mightn't. But, after all, what was it he wanted his son to have? What plans had he for the boy's future? It came as a sort of hurt surprise to him that he hadn't any; and, so far as he knew, Viola had given the subject no more attention than himself. What did Marcus think about it? He put the question to the boy.

"Well," said Marcus, "it's not easy to say. I'm not cut out for a preacher; I like tools, and apparatus, but my math grades are something fierce, so there's no show for me in the real scientific branches. They're full of math, you know."

"What does interest you, then, so far as you have thought about the future?"

"I haven't thought much, I'm afraid; at Alexander Moore they said I could write. But I think I know what I'd like to find out at college."

"Yes?"

"You may laugh, Dad; but I want to take a good look at the world. I want to know what it's all about. Not to get exact facts about one part of it, but the whole scheme in general, if you get me."

"Why, yes; I get you; but where is there a college that has that sort of a curriculum? I know of none."

"Maybe not a real curriculum, but I've been told there's a little bunch of teachers at State Tech who aim at doing something of the kind. Historians, biologists, literature teachers, physicists, and such like. They are ready to give all sorts of help to a fellow who wants to get where he can sort of take a look at the whole show; I mean, the whole range of human knowledge. They seem to figure that if he gets it he can do a better job at choosing the part he'd like to take up and dig into, because he'd sort of feel more at home in the world. That's no way to put it, but maybe you see what I'm trying to say."

Marcus had feared that his father would be hard to convince. Now his fear seemed justified; Dr. Bonafede gave no sign that he was favorable to the idea of Tech. Perhaps some other argument was needed, some conclusive proof that it was the best of all possible schools. Unhappily he had no idea how to prove such a plea.

His father asked, "You are really sure you want to go to Tech?"

Marcus gave up his fruitless search for additional evidence. A direct question he could manage; all it called for was a direct answer.

"Yes, father; I'm sure. There isn't any other college I care about. I want to go to Tech."

Bartelmy had listened to his son with a growing uneasiness. From the moment when Marcus had first mentioned Tech, he knew that he had something larger to deal with than a boy's interest in the attractions of a vaguely-apprehended college course. Why had he not seen it before he had gone so far into that arrangement about Peter? But, now that he did see it, what could be done? What ought he to do? Should he tell the boy that most likely Peter Middleton would be his pastor if he went to Tech?

If Marcus entered Tech, inevitably he would come under the influence of Peter. And yet, why not? What harm could Peter do him? For that matter, what other influence would be so good for him? Bartelmy could afford that reflection, in private.

Nevertheless, the thought annoyed him. At the moment when he realized that he had let the four high school years go by without having made a place for himself in his boy's life, the boy was proposing something which rendered futile any hope of making up for lost time; something, besides, which would enhance Peter's influence as it diminished his own.

A helpless jealousy of Peter Middleton swept over him; a wave of illogical resentment. Why were their paths forever crossing? And why was it that Peter forever put him at a disadvantage? It had always been so. True, most people would say that he had usually come out ahead. But how often his victory had been mere illusion! He had married more circumspectly than Peter; but Peter had married Effie. Effie was dead these many years; but Peter had memories he could never know. He had been more successful in his career, but Peter seemed unimpressed by the successive steps of his progress to official importance. He had become one of the church's acknowledged leaders; but, he knew, not to Peter. If only Peter would admit his superiority! It seemed that he cared more for Peter's opinion than for all the others'.

Bartelmy made an effort to shake off the black mood which had settled on him. He had come to an impasse. He had thought at first to discourage Marcus from thinking of Tech; but now he saw that he dared not. He knew that Peter's appointment to the student work at the college was practically settled, though Peter didn't. And, while Bartelmy might face the thought of inflicting on his son a double disappointment, he could not endure that his son should one day find out the reason, and turn on his father.

Marcus had never been so surprised. For at last Bartelmy came over and awkwardly put his arm around the lad's shoulder. It was a gesture long disused.

"My boy", he said, haltingly, "I think you have hold of an idea . . . More and more I am seeing the need for just such a change in educational programs as you say these few men at Tech are trying to work out. So, then Tech it shall be. Your mother may object, at first, but she'll see the wisdom of it, I think. I hope so, because she will be able to do as much for you as I can. You know she has her own income and she can do as she pleases with it. Of course I'll do all that's possible, myself. You'll get along. And it will not be many days before you will be twice glad that you are going to Tech." He could not help that last touch, though he knew it for weakness.

Marcus was incurious. Enough that he might get ready for the great adventure. Other delights could come as they would.

But Bartelmy was not done with ordeals. He must face the necessity of explaining things to his wife, who, though she was not likely to care what college Marcus might attend, would not be easy to manage when she learned that her boy was going where he would be under the daily influence of Peter Middleton.

Viola's feeling about Peter, as her husband knew, was more unreasonable than his own; all the more he could neither tell her so nor hope to change it. One thought gave him comfort. Nothing was publicly known, as yet, of Bishop Randolph's purpose to appoint Peter to the Oxford Fellowship at Tech. He would merely need to be careful lest he betray to Viola that he had any knowledge of the arrangement. Then, when Viola and everybody else found out that Peter was to be pastor of the Methodist students, including Marcus, though she might make trouble, she would not blame him. And it would be too late to undo what had been done.

Bartelmy had rightly forseen the quality of his wife's reception of the news that Marcus had chosen Tech, and that his father had acquiesced. Within an hour of her return home she asked the question which brought out so much of the story as he chose to tell. Actually it meant little to her, except as one of those opportunities she often seized upon, to detach herself from all responsibility.

"I might have known," she said, "that neither of you would consult me. If you had, I could have told you that the Wayne men have always gone to Princeton; but of course Marcus is only a grandson of the Waynes, and neither you nor he care anything about family traditions. I will say you might have done worse, and sent him to that cheap little Calder College of yours, out in the sticks. But why in the world does he want to go to Tech? Is he expecting to be an engineer or something?"

Bartelmy tried to explain what Marcus was hoping to get at college. He did it badly, because Viola could not easily think in the terms he must use; but still he thought he stated the case better than Marcus had stated it to him. He undersood it more clearly than as yet the boy could do; and he knew that it embodied a coming theory of education. If only the Peter Middleton complication had not arisen. But of that no hint to Viola.

After all, it might have been worse, as she had said. Viola had spoken her mind, and was not thereafter greatly concerned. She knew that Tech had a great name in the state, and its football team stood high in the Big Nine. Her mention of Princeton had been almost wholly extemporaneous; she had vaguely remembered her mother's speaking of uncles who had enlisted in the Union army when they were undergraduates at Princeton. That was all.

XVI

Peter Middleton had not forgotten how his last year's salary deficiency had been made up, on the very eve of Conference, under circumstances that shamed him; but he had put the incident away, with other unpleasant memories. In this he was not worldly wise; the Ebenezer Eltings of Methodist official boards are not to be lightly dismissed, either from the mind or from their place in the machine.

Elting, now ex-treasurer, had told his story industriously, with none to contradict; and it had travelled. In its wanderings it reached a few people outside Peter's church who found it displeasing; but to two persons it was something which they could use.

To Bishop Randolph, from his first hearing of it, the gossip had been confirmation of his opinion that a change of pastors was due at Columbus Avenue. After the Bishop's opening of the subject to him, Bartelmy Bonafede looked upon it, when considered in the light of Peter's astonishing talk before the Fleming Circle, as an opportunity doubly to serve his Board. Peter, he was sure, had just the qualities needed for beginning the new work at Tech, which fact would be abundant justification for his appointment, no matter how little the work might prosper. And, once there, he would have small chance for a time at least to air his views about decentralizing the church. So by his performance and by non-performance alike the Board of Special Philanthropies would be the gainer.

Since Peter had been at Columbus Avenue, the Committee on pulpit supply appointed by the Quarterly Conference had done its work each year in the most perfunctory way. Its method, or lack of it, was to see the District Superintendent, when he came to hold the Fourth Quarterly Conference; and to say, "Of course Brother Middleton comes back?" To which the District Superintendent would say, "Of course." And that ended the negotiations.

This year the committee got a jolt. For an episcopal hint to the Superintendent had let that good man understand what he was to do. There is a sort of code for such instructions, not needing to be openly discussed, even among the initiate.

So he said to the committee, in answer to its usual inquiry, "I'm not quite sure, brethren, what is likely to happen. I understand that an emergency may arise; I can't tell you what it it, just now,"—the fact being that he didn't know himself—"but it may mean that Brother Middleton will be in line for something of large importance."

"How about Columbus Avenue being important?" said one of the committee.

"It is," the Superintendent admitted; "decidedly so. But

Brother Middleton is a good Methodist, and therefore he recognizes authority, as we all do. That's why the church has kept itself going so successfully all these years. After all, there may be nothing done in the way of change here. Anyhow, there's little to be done now. I'll keep you posted. In the meantime, I think maybe it would be as well if nothing were said to Brother Middleton."

"Is that so?" the truculent one of the committee asked. "Well, Mr. Superintendent, let me assure you that something *will* be said to Brother Middleton, and it will be said tonight. You may do business the other way, but we don't."

And in the quarterly conference as soon as opportunity served, the brother spoke.

"From a remark three of us heard before this meeting began," he said, "it seems there is some slight possibility that Brother Middleton may be moved, unless we do something to head off the change. I move, therefore, that, if necessary, the pulpit supply committee be instructed to go to Conference and tell the Bishop we want our pastor continued."

Columbus Avenue did less talking than most Quarterly Conferences, partly because it trusted its pastor and its committees. But this was an unusual occasion. Sister Unwin, whose son's disciplining had so rankled in her breast, would have liked to say more, being a steward. She knew her rights, but she discerned that she would be outvoted. She did manage to say, "In view of the fact that our church has always been loyal to the constituted authorities, I suggest that we leave everything in the hands of the Bishop and District Superintendent. If we cannot give them our confidence, what is Methodism coming to?"

Somebody unidentified said, "Second the suggestion," but when the original motion was put, the vote stood sixteen to five in favor of sending the committee to Conference.

At Conference the committee soon discovered that affairs were stirring. When at last it gained an audience with the Bishop, it found him courteous, but not reassuring.

"I am not ready as yet to reach any conclusion about your pastor," said he; "but I may tell you that I have an important new appointment to make, and so far he seems the best man available. If he should be, I trust you and he will see the matter as I do. And you need not fear; I will take good care of Columbus Avenue."

"But, Bishop," objected the spokesman, "we don't want Columbus Avenue taken care of. It's all right as it is. Just let us alone; that's all we ask. And that's all Middleton asks."

"Well, of course that is to be considered, though I have heard that your church is not entirely of one mind in the matter," said the Bishop. "Suppose you see Brother Middleton this evening, and put the question to him, whether, if you released him, he would accept another appointment."

Whereupon the committee, much disturbed, sought out Peter and asked him what it all meant. They found him talking with the District Superintendent, who would have excused himself. "Don't go," said Peter; "this may concern you, as well." Then he told his men, "I've heard what the Bishop is thinking of; and of course you know that whenever you don't want me at Columbus Avenue, you need only to say so."

"We understand all that. If we didn't want to keep you at Columbus Avenue, we would probably be glad to let you take this other place," said the belligerent one.

A colleague said, "Let's go tell the Bishop that. He said we should report back to him. Our pastor and we understand one another perfectly."

"It won't be necessary," said the Superintendent. "I shall see him before bedtime, and I will tell him what you say."

To which all hands agreed, and the committee, not unwilling to get home to their own beds, took the last interurban for Iliopolis. When the District Superintendent reported the conversation to Bishop Randolph, it was with a slight but significant shifting of its emphasis.

On Saturday afternoon a disturbing rumor reached Peter. Something was in the air, it was said, about his being sent to a new place. The appointments would be read on Sunday night, for this bishop had put the conference business through with unusual dispatch.

He tried to see the Bishop, but found he was dining with people on the other side of town. To Peter the business seemed urgent, and he ventured to call the Bishop's host on the telephone, saying that he must have a word with Bishop Randolph on a matter of importance.

The Bishop came to the telephone. "Yes, this is Bishop Randolph; who is calling?"

"This is Peter Middleton, Bishop. I've just heard that there is some danger of my being moved from Columbus Avenue, after all. And I felt sure you could not have quite understood what my committee and I had said."

"Oh, yes, I did, Brother Middleton. They said if you were willing to go they would release you, and you said that if they should release you, you would move. So I am sending you to open that new work at Tech for which there is such a great need. You are the one man we can trust with so important an enterprise as this Oxford Fellowship."

"Well, Bishop, I appreciate your thinking of me for that place, but I assure you that's all wrong about the committee and myself. We never said what you have just reported. You must have been badly misinformed."

"Not at all; I have the best of authority for what took place. And, in any case, it is too late to go into that now. The appointments are all fixed, and any change at this late moment would dislocate some of the most difficult adjustments the cabinet and I have had to make, and compel us to disappoint a number of the brethren whose assignments depend on it."

"But, Bishop, I can't go to Tech like this. What can I say to my committee? They will believe I have betrayed them. They went back home with the understanding that everything was all right. What can I tell them?"

"Why, just tell them that you love them, but that you are going to move."

"But they understood that you had put it up to them and to me, to say what we wished. We did say. I want to go back, and they want me back."

"I understand. Quite natural, too. All the same, you tell them what I said."

"But why, Bishop? Are they being disciplined for something, or am I?"

"No, no; not in the least. Of course you did get into an unfortunate mix-up over Brother Elting, and that Unwin boy, and those things are always to be regretted. That's all. And now I am offering you a great chance; such a place as I am told you have said you could covet. I hope I shall not have to think you capable of standing out against the judgment of the Bishop and cabinet."

The instinct of discipline is strong in most Methodist preachers; they make almost automatic response when that chord is touched.

Said Peter, obedient yet uncowed, "Bishop, the authority is in your hands. But I must say that I do not think you are using it fairly. If the appointment stands, you will know, with due respect, that I go under protest. And I shall put the facts just as they are before my official board at Columbus Avenue as soon as I reach home."

"Now, now, Brother Middleton, do not speak rashly. You will feel much better about the whole affair when you have time to think it over. So tell your people that you love them, and that you are going to Tech. They will find that I have taken good care of Columbus Avenue," and the Bishop went back to his half-eaten dinner. He would not be holding this conference next year, and the Columbus Avenue brethren would have time to cool off.

Peter had a most unhappy time of it between the end of conference and his actual moving to Great Meadows, the seat of Tech. To this day he dislikes to speak of it. His officials believed his version of the incident, of course. They knew him well enough for that. One of them, indeed, his staunch supporter and admirer, Dick Davenport, relieved his mind to Peter, and for his pains was gently but firmly told that the incident was closed.

"You may think it is, Brother Middleton," said Dick, with no little warmth, "and so far as you are concerned, it probably is. You'll take your medicine and say nothing. But you know as well as I do that it is a rotten piece of business; Bishop Randolph didn't do it all by himself. I've been watching a little on my own account, ever since that time Elting tried to bilk you out of part of your salary. He tied up with Gladwin, who had to be put out of Sunday School, you remember. And Gladwin worked in Dr. Bonafede's office. No, you needn't try to stop me," as Peter raised a protesting hand, "I know what some of the preachers have said about Dr. Bonafede's being afraid of you, because of that talk you made at the Fleming Circle meeting. They said he wanted to get you where you couldn't interfere with his ambitions, and it seems like he's doing it."

"You are greatly mistaken, Dick, my boy," Peter told him. "Dr. Bonafede has no need to fear that I'll interfere with any ambition of his. He knows that; has known it for many years."

"All right, Brother Peter, have it as you like. But I know what I know, not that I love you any less because of it either. I just don't like the system that makes it possible; that's all."

CHAPTER VII

I

If Peter had followed his first impulse, he would have declined his new appointment and taken the consequences. Two considerations prevented him from doing so rash a thing. For it *is* a rash thing, in Methodism. There are many ways of avoiding the final clash of wills, but, if these fail, the man who refuses to go to work assigned him is, officially, a rebel. No matter how many friends he has, their hands are tied. No other bishop can give him an appointment; no other church can offer him its pulpit. It is a necessary consequence of the Methodist system's effectiveness; and, short of actually leaving the church, there is no escaping it.

Peter had no desire to leave the church, for he loved it, and all his religious life had been found within its fold. More, as a student of ecclesiasticism, he thought it the most interesting and in many ways the most competent of all the denominations. It had larger potentialities of good, and therefore of evil, than any other, and the sheer drama of it fascinated him.

Another reason which deterred him he found in the nature of the work to which, by Bishop Randolph's appointment, he must go. The bishop may have had his private reasons for getting Peter away from Columbus Avenue, but that did not prevent him from a shrewd estimate of his man. He saw that a new day was coming in education; a day when as many Methodist students would gather in the state schools as in those of the denomination. The State College of Technology was strategic; it had everything to attract students, and every year would have these attractions in increasing measure. He felt that Peter was strategic, too; a man who, once he grasped the significance of the thing, would throw himself into it with joyful disregard of the cost.

And it was so. Peter Middleton began at Tech with little money and less equipment. On the edge of the campus was a church building; old, cheaply built, in poor repair. The principal Methodist church of the town, St. John's, was nominal owner of the place, but services had long since been discontinued. For years such Methodist students as wished to attend their own church must needs go a mile and a half to St. John's, which made occasional slight pretense of being sentimentally interested in them.

The old church was put at Peter's disposal, and he spent a hundred dollars out of his own pocket on the more obviously necessary repairs and cleaning. With the help of the two college "Y's" and the registrar's office, he began to find out what students had Methodist affiliations. His experience with young people, from the Parkerville days on, was an asset, and as always, the group he first rounded up became an eager recruiting agency. Soon the news spread, as news does spread among students, that the old church on the edge of the east campus had ceased to be a church. It was now the home of the Oxford Fellowship and the headquarters of Peter Middleton,—a Methodist preacher who was more man than preacher.

Marcus, in his pristine glory as an enthusiastic freshman, and not yet able to guess how it had all happened, was content to know it for the truth. He took Peter's advertising in hand, and made himself volunteer publicity agent for the Fellowship. Every moment he could spare from his studies he gave to card indexes and form letters and press notices and posters for the various bulletin boards. Rhoda, happy to work with her old chum, made the most capable of helpers. The two were more often together than ever, with no thought of any other relationship than their frank comradeship afforded.

The finances of the Oxford Fellowship would have offered no complications to an auditor, though to Peter they were endlessly exacting. From the Board of Special Philanthropies he had an appropriation of two thousand dollars. Officially, this was his salary; there was a maintenance grant of two hundred and forty dollars from some obscure Conference fund or other; and that was all.

The old church began to fill up on Sunday mornings. Peter's preaching suited the hard-headed young idealists who heard him, and shortly he had a discussion club going on Sunday afternoon. A sketchy sort of tea-room made a name for itself the first Sunday it was in operation. The new minister's weekdays were filled with study, visiting, talks with professors, and an unreckoned number of interviews with individual students.

He and Rhoda lived on the second floor of a house recently made over to shelter two families. It was not at all like Columbus Avenue, spacious and comfortable, but neither the Middletons nor Marcus, who promptly made himself an almost daily visitor, found any fault with it. Rhoda and he were classmates, though "classmate" here, among the hundreds of freshmen, stood for something wholly unlike the life at Alexander Moore High, back in Iliopolis.

One evening Marcus was working on some records he had brought from the college office.

"Say, Pastor Peter," he spoke, "we're going strong, don't you think?" Without waiting for an answer he went on, "But, we're headed for trouble. Winter's on the way; there's coal to get, and the light bill will be bigger. Where's the money coming from for such things?"

"Well," said Peter, "why worry? I've got a little money to spend, and the coal's already ordered and paid for. It will be put in this week. The furnace man says that when he's replaced a little of the old pipe we can be sure of hot air all winter. He seems to be something of a joker."

"The joker is in what you said about the coal, seems to me," Marcus corrected. "Why should you have anything to do with the coal bill? That's the church's business."

"Sure, my boy; but I'm sent here to get through on exactly two thousand two hundred and forty dollars, plus, of course, what the students care to pay. The total doesn't make much allowance for coal bills, and we haven't any plutocrats in our membership. That's why the bill is paid."

Rhoda caught at a word. "We do have a membership, though, don't we?" she asked. "We're a church. Well, why shouldn't the members help to pay the bills? I want to put my envelope into the plate, just as I've always done. Lots more would do it, if we asked them. Let's have an every-member canvass, Daddy."

In the end, they had just that. But it was not carried on in quite the usual way. Peter saw that he had just two groups of people who could be asked to share the expense,—the self-supporting Methodist students who had joined or might join the Fellowship, and the home people of those other students who were mainly dependent on their parents.

After much putting of three heads together, supplemented by the advice of the Fellowship Council, (Peter thought that name suited students better than "Official Board"), the main appeal of the every-member canvass was agreed on. To the students it was made in person by their fellows; and each student canvasser put it something like this: "If you went to a Methodist college, you'd pay tuition, and you'd get its religious values free. Here you pay much less for tuition, but what religious values you get will have to be paid for by somebody, or they can't be had. Will you chip in a sort of voluntary fee for your college religion—say fifty cents or a dollar a week for the school year?"

To the home folks Peter wrote a series of letters. He told what the Fellowship was trying to do; showed that the state could not do it, nor could the local church at Tech. "We're starting a university church," he said, "though so far, for reasons, we call it a Fellowship, instead. But it is Christian to the core, under Methodist auspices, and it is meant for your boy and girl. They'll get all we can give them, money or no money, but I put this question to you: Is it worth twenty-five or fifty dollars a year to you to know that somebody is caring for their realest needs?"

Many of the students wrote home in similar vein, and money began to come in. It was not enough, and never has been, in the dozen years since then; but the work has never stopped growing. Every year it wins more friends, and by now its income is not much more than three years behind its real necessities.

II

Marcus wrote home every week, as in duty bound. By inclination, he said little about himself, much about the Oxford Fellowship and Peter. In late November he wrote, "We're becoming famous at the Fellowship. Last Sunday morning the President of Tech himself came to the service. At the close Mr. Middleton asked him if he'd like to say a few words, and he said he would. He wanted to express his gratitude, and that of the whole faculty, to the Methodist church for having the courage, as it so often had, to pioneer in a new field, and for doing it so splendidly. That's a feather in your cap, Dad. I know Bishop Randolph was the man who sent Uncle Peter here, but I've found out that your Board made it possible for him to start this thing. Lots of times I've wondered about your work, and I hope you'll forgive me for sometimes doubting it; but if the rest of it does one-tenth as much good as this at Tech, you must be doing the biggest job in Methodism. So I was a bit ashamed for myself, but proud for you as well as for the Fellowship, when Prexy spoke as he did. Maybe you ought to get him to write it out, so you can put it into your annual report."

As Bartelmy read the letter, he meditated on what use he might make of Marcus's suggestion; the time was evidently ripe for the invention of a distinctive Board policy as to the Oxford Fellowship. Why should not the Tech president's surmise become an actuality? Already he could see that Peter might make history. Why not capitalize the Tech example; create a new department in the Board of Special Philanthropies to deal with the whole field?

Already he was prepared to forget the circumstances of Peter's appointment. Really, it had been more than a creditable thing to do; it had been statesmanlike, even beyond his own vision of the moment. Bishop Randolph's part was negligible. Brother Elting faded into the horizon. And as he rationalized the circumstances, Bartelmy began to see how he might add a useful section to his great speech, dealing with this idea, naturally being careful to couch it in such language as would not alarm those Methodists more directly interested in the colleges of the church.

Marcus, home for Christmas, made himself something of a nuisance by his enthusiasm for the Oxford Fellowship. Viola frankly told him that she wasn't interested. Bartelmy did get some crumbs of information about the boy's studies.

"I'm not far enough along yet to know what it may mean," said Marcus, "but even now I begin to see what those profs are driving at. They would rather have us interested in what we're doing than cram for grades in the tests. And, believe me, that's what I like. I'm no good in examinations, but I've got a whale of a lot of reading done. Yes, even in the football season."

On the Fellowship he let himself go. "Why, Dad," said he, "the students are already talking about a new building,—a sort of clubhouse and commons. The church is too small, and, anyhow, it wasn't built for this sort of work. But we're using it, just the same. I guess it's the most used church in these parts. When I read in the *Advocate* today about a seven-day-a-week church, I had to laugh. Ours has the eight-hour day, all week long, and twelve on Sundays. The janitor hardly finds time to do his stuff. I tell you, that was a great piece of work you did when you got Uncle Peter to start the thing. I've told him so, more than once."

"Have you?" asked Bartelmy, outwardly calm. "And what does he say?"

"Oh, he agrees with me. Says he misses Columbus Avenue, and some of the advantages of a big city, but I can see he's crazy about the work at Tech, and what he calls its possibilities for expansion. One day when I was telling him how glad I was that your Board had a hand in supporting the Fellowship, and that I hadn't always realized how big your job was he said, 'Marcus, son, your father has often done bigger things than anybody thought he intended to do, and this is one of them.' And when I asked him if Bishop Randolph didn't deserve some of the credit, for appointing him, he said Bishop Randolph hadn't nearly so much to do with it as you did, and you had done him a great service. Of course I didn't ask for the particulars—maybe you'll tell me the story if there is one—but it was good to have Uncle Peter talk of you like that."

"It was," said Bart. "Still, there's no need to go into details. I had something to do with making his appointment possible, I will admit. But I doubt if he knows the whole story, and, as for my telling it, I'm not quite at liberty to do that. Other people are concerned, you know, and I must consider them."

"Oh, sure," agreed Marcus. "It's all right; I'm not interested in that part of it, anyway. The main thing is he's there, and Rhoda, and a whole lot of good fellows—girls and boys. Only, if you could get your Board to squeeze a little more money for the work, I know, speaking as a member of the Fellowship finance committee, that it would be most gratefully received."

Bartelmy hastened to assure Marcus that it was impossible, at least for the present. He wished he dared to recommend a decent appropriation for Peter's work, but his boy's report convinced him that the time was ripe for a developing of the

Oxford Fellowship idea, and even when money became available it must not all be given to one piece of work. Blinking the uncomfortable implications of Peter's reported comment, he saw that here was something to be considered with the utmost circumspection. The moment the general idea was broached in official circles, there would be two sets of people to deal with,—the claimants for a share of the funds, and the partisans of the church colleges, who might be expected to counsel patience and a careful study of the whole subject.

By this time Bartelmy was beginning to be confident that his guess was correct. He was going to be made bishop at the General Conference, now only three months away. His candidacy was generally recognized. In every knot of gossipers at preachers' meetings, district conferences, and other gatherings, the inevitable question, "Who are going to be elected bishops?" though it called out a varying list of names, had Bonafede's more often than any other.

III

To most American students, in those first years of the war, Flanders and Picardy were names of scarcely more significance than Tipperary. They were of the current speech, and one saw pictures in the Sunday papers, but that was all. By one of those odd chances which now and then indifferently decide the fate of empires or the flight of a golf ball, Marcus found himself, at the turn of the year, living in the immediate presence of the war. Some of his work threw him into daily association with a student from Canada, Donald Dugdale, whose scholastic interests, never very keen, had scant consideration while there was a map of the Western front to pore over, or a bulletin about the Princess Pats to set his heart jumping.

For Donald's elder brother had gone over with the Canadian Scottish, and the boy was hot with a wrathful patriotism, its fires fed on the stories from Flanders which in that year were taken as Gospel truth.

However little truth they contained, there was enough in them to rouse all Canada. The Canadian Division had been out beyond Ypres in the April of '15, when the Germans sent the first devilry of the gas in yellow clouds across the trenches, and opened a four-mile break in the Allied line.

The gas attacks, unexpected and terror-laden, made all the other stories of atrocity seem consistent; no Canadian and few Americans thought in those days of questioning any tale of German malignity.

Dugdale certainly believed them all; and, though he was not yet eighteen, he grew daily more restless and unhappy.

"I ought to be over there with David right now," he would say; "and I will be, before long. You watch."

Marcus sympathized with his eager patriotism. The war was beginning to seem more real, and he could almost understand that every loyal Canadian felt the urge to be "over there." He told himself he, too, was a Britisher's son, and, anyway, America would have to get into the thing before it could end. Day by day the two boys fed each other's zest for battle. It needed only a touch to slip Donald's leash; and when Donald went, Marcus knew he would find holding back the most difficult of disciplines.

The touch came in March with news of David Dugdale; he had been taken prisoner. The fragmentary story which first came to Donald in a Toronto paper said that he had been captured when the Germans counter-attacked after a British advance at St. Eloi, just below Ypres. Little knots of Canadians were holding isolated shell craters, under direct observation of the enemy. Communication was cut off; the wounded could not be evacuated, and David, with a shattered foot, had been pulled out of the mud and carried back to the German second line.

"That settles it," said Donald; "David is out of the fight, and I'm off to take his place. There's a forwarding office in Iliopolis, and tomorrow they'll have a chance to tell me whether I'm good enough for the kilts."

He went, and they were not long in telling him he was good enough. The next night he burst into Marcus's room, aflame with war. "I'm enlisting, Marcus, man; I'm enlisting! What's college along o' this? My dad's consented; I wired him last night from town, an' I'm off tomorrow. I'll tell you what; you come with me, Marcus!"

"My father wouldn't consent," said Marcus. He was not so unmoved as his voice sounded; the staid, phlegmatic Marcus he had always been would never have recognized this new self.

"You don't need his consent," said the day-old warrior;

"you're turned eighteen, and the Canadians will take you as you stand. I asked particular about fellows like you. Naturally, they won't enlist you in Iliopolis, but they'll direct you to Canada, and you can join up as soon as you are across the border."

War-eager Marcus had no defence against anything so obvious, and the two of them were out of Great Meadows by the early morning train. Marcus had enough sanity left so that, though he ached for a last word with Peter and Rhoda, he understood well enough that his only chance of getting away on so demented an adventure was by taking French leave.

Once in and out of Iliopolis without being seen by anyone he knew, he sent back from Detroit two night letters, one to Bartelmy and one to Peter. They differed little in their wording; he was too excited for careful composition. "Am off to the war," he wired; "after thinking about it a lot. Please don't try stopping me, even though you may have the right. Will be in the British Army, ready to welcome first Americans Uncle Sam sends. Would have told you direct but feared objections. Do your best to bring America into this war to end war. Love."

Viola took it hardest, at the first. She shut herself in her room, and for two days would see no one. Bartelmy could not analyze his feelings; his son's recent visit had fed his fatherly pride, though it had also driven him on himself, and for the first time in years he had looked squarely at the purposes to which he had yielded his life. The boy was playing the war-fevered fool, of course, but at least his folly was generous and uncalculating.

When Viola came out of her seclusion, whatever marks the shock had made upon her had been effectually hidden. Bartelmy essayed to comfort her, and she did not repel him, but he saw that she needed little that he could give.

"I've been thinking of what he wired, about our stopping him," she said. "Do you think we can?"

Bartelmy had made guarded inquiries, but found little encouragement. The boy was of military age, and any attempt to get him out of the Canadian army, in these early months of '16, would be misunderstood in the Dominion, especially since his father was British-born. Canada's private advices from the Western front did not justify slack recruiting methods. "Your King and Country Need You" brought men to the colors, but never as many as the replacement staffs in London could use.

Bartelmy, as usual sparing of unpleasant facts, merely told his wife that there was little or no chance of preventing Marcus from enlisting. She said, "I didn't suppose there would be. Since father died there's nobody to give us any advice about using influence. Besides, he's in Canada, and even father would not know much about politics over there. Anyway, I'm not as scared as I was. Marcus is big for his age. And he doesn't lack brains. If they know what they're doing they'll make an officer of him, and he's sure to get leave to come home for a few days when his training is ended. He's not in France yet."

Her words were sturdier than her heart's assurance, but her frankest critics never thought of Viola Dimont Bonafede as a coward. Unfortunately, the event proved her wrong in one important respect. Marcus was still in the ranks when embarkation orders came, and there was no such thing as leave. Haig's preparations for the Battle of the Somme called for as many men as the Empire could give, and time was the one thing which could not be spared.

Bartelmy remembered another part of his son's telegram; "will be in British army." Something more than memory stirred within him; something deeper and stronger than his memories of Thornlea and its poverty; a thousand years of English men back of Marcus and himself quite overslaughed his less than forty years of the American scene. His eyes filled with sudden tears as he thought of his son serving under the Union Jack.

Peter Middleton and Rhoda received the news about Marcus with unmixed and unashamed grief. The war was not yet America's concern, and Peter's German blood could not quicken its pace at the news that Marcus would soon be confronting German boys as fine as himself, and no less ignorant about the war and its causes.

By the time Marcus got to the Canadian camp above Montreal, he had been forgiven in writing, though mildly scolded as well, and a steady though lopsided correspondence began. Everybody wanted to write to the first Allied soldier of those Iliopolis and Tech circles in which he had moved. Rhoda appointed herself correspondent extraordinary. At the Easter vacation she went to see Mrs. Bonafede, and told her a group of the girls in the Oxford Fellowship would see that Marcus had everything a soldier could need for his comfort; that they did not know this soldier's preferences was Rhoda's explanation of her call.

She said, "Mrs. Bonafede, I know we Americans ought to be neutral, and Daddy thinks there may be as much to be said for Germany as for the Allies. But Marcus and Donald are our Fellowship boys, so we're for them, whoever is to blame about the war. Won't you tell us what we need to know about Marcus, so when we send him things we shan't send the wrong sizes, or stuff he specially dislikes?"

Viola rather welcomed the request. She was discovering that having a son at the front brought its own distinctions. Most of her club-women friends in Iliopolis were pro-Ally, but she was the only mother of a soldier actually with the colors. He wouldn't be at the front for some time, so there was no use to worry yet about his safety, and she could get a measure of comfort from her distinction.

IV

Bartelmy, after a few unpleasant hours in his study, found surcease from unpleasant thoughts by throwing himself with renewed energy into his campaign.

For General Conference would open on May 1. The Spring Conferences were on, and every day new lists of delegates came in. These must be studied, analyzed, classified, and each one dealt with according to its estimated value. So there was much to be done, although Bartelmy had been able to anticipate many of the election results.

Almost daily there were important men to be seen and talked with. They came to him; the man whose General Conference star is ascending receives calls rather than makes them. That he can help other men's projects, if he will, is reason enough.

In the last week of April it seemed almost as if the whole Board of Special Philanthropies had been transferred to New Salem, the seat of the General Conference. Secretary Bonafede had requisitioned more exhibit space than the committee of arrangements thought he needed, but it was all put to good use, according to a plan carefully worked out in the office at Iliopolis.

Nowhere in all this, of course, was Bartelmy himself exploited, or even mentioned. Naturally, his name appeared, with his title, though in sufficiently modest type, on booklets and other printed stuff; but his orders had been to stress the work, itself. He had faith in the occasional value of underemphasis. Suggestion there was, in abundance, but most visitors went away thinking themselves discerning beyond the common because they said or thought that the man who was back of all these wonderful Methodist activities must be a genius in his way.

The General Conference was well along in its third week when, in an afternoon session, the committee on episcopacy made its most important report. This fixed the number of episcopal residences, at home and abroad. Action had already been taken on a report giving the list of effective bishops, so that, in order to assign a bishop to each residence, it would be necessary to reenforce the episcopal roster by four new names.

Bartelmy had taken no decided stand on any question that came before the committee on episcopacy. Yes; there had been one exception. As a side issue of the discussion about the number of new bishops to be recommended, a rather aggressive member of the committee had spoken of assignments.

"They tell us," said he, "that if we elect too many new bishops we shall have trouble about fixing their fields of labor. I don't think so. If a man is willing to be voted for, he should be willing to take all the consequences, and go where he is sent."

And then, being one of those people who pride themselves on a nature singularly outspoken, he turned to Bartelmy. "Dr. Bonafede, they say you are likely to get a good vote for bishop. What do *you* think? Am I right?"

Bartelmy had met this sort before, and knew that for such a man offense is ever the best defense. "I think there is truth in what you have told about the difficulty of making assignments. However, the largest number of new bishops would not greatly increase the work of the sub-committee on residences, if your principles were rigorously applied. While your reference to myself is highly flattering, I hope you will not think I am over-stepping the proprieties when I say that any man who is being considered should either withdraw his name or, as a loyal Methodist itinerant, be prepared to accept his appointment."

He thought himself reasonably safe. His loose-leaf records indicated that he might expect more than three hundred votes on the first ballot; and, with such a start, it would be strange if sheer momentum did not carry him well towards the two-thirds line in four or five ballots more.

Viola was in her element. She improved on her experience when her husband had been a candidate for his secretaryship. As she had done then, so now she made their suite at the official hotel a place of restfulness and charm.

Every afternoon a group of women could be found there. To meet them was a pleasure for any delegate; for many, an unexpected privilege. In the group were club women of New Salem and its neighboring cities, drawn to Viola by her prominence in the National Federation; bishops' wives who thought, though they were much too wary to say, that Viola Bonafede would make a far more desirable addition to their number than the dowdy and provincial wives of certain other candidates; and women delegates, no little flattered by the considerately delicate attentions which Viola knew so well how to show.

Missionaries and their wives were constantly dropping in, glad to find in America one woman who knew enough to serve afternoon tea; and it was not long before they asked and received permission to bring the nationals from their fields who were delegates to the conference. Most of them were pro-Ally, and what they had heard about Marcus did not make them the less friendly. And many a delegate whose wife had come to the General Conference with him found himself drafted for a call at the Bonafede rooms.

"My dear," he would be told, "I don't know a thing about Dr. Bonafede, though I hear he's one of the big men of the church; but he has the most charming woman for a wife; she was perfectly lovely to three of us women yesterday, though she didn't know us from Adam. She's got a son in the Canadian army, but she's the bravest thing you ever saw. I told her I was going to bring you around some afternoon, and she was so pleased."

In all this, of course, no electioneering. Delegates had been heard to say, "Well, when I get tired of the hotel lobbies, with their noise and their pulling and hauling, I know where to go. I drop in at the Bonafede's rooms in the Cornwall. I know he has a big following for the episcopacy, but you'd never guess it by anything that's said or done where his wife is. It's positively the only place in New Salem where a fellow's safe from being buttonholed."

Viola had seen to that. In the very first week she had come upon a knot of callers standing by a window, and caught enough of their talk to give her the opening she wanted.

"I'm sorry if I'm being rude," said she, "but I am so anxious that there shall be no mention of General Conference politics here. My husband's affairs are his own, and he has no authority in these rooms. You see some people are so suspicious. Why, I can scarcely have a guest to dinner, if he's one of the Doctor's friends, without being accused of sitting in at a caucus. And so I'd be ever so grateful if you would humor me. I'll do my best to give you other things to talk about. Is it a bargain?"

It was a bargain. Thereafter, every other topic of the conference was welcome, but the Bonafede rooms were the poorest place in town for inventions, surmises, guesses and rumors about elections and appointments. The fact soon became almost as well known as Bartelmy's candidacy itself.

V

The first ballot for bishop was, as it always is, a solemn proceeding, befitting the momentous struggle of which it was the opening ceremony. Tellers were appointed, several sets of them. Each lot would be hard-worked before the job was done. Printed ballot slips had been made ready. A bishop of exceptional repute for piety led in fervent prayer, that none but men of God's appointing might be chosen.

Extraordinary precautions were taken to insure that the good bishop's prayer should be nullified neither by ignorance nor by wickedness. No chance of any delegate's voting twice, or being impersonated, or voting for more or less than the exact number to be chosen.

The conference rose to its feet. Each man deposited his vote as the tellers moved through the aisles. The tellers retired. It was known that the counting of this first ballot would be a long and tedious job, for, among the 400 ministerial delegates, at least fifty had serious expectations, and fifty others hoped for and would get a nice little complimentary vote, if nothing more.

It is the etiquette of such occasions that the most prominent candidates shall seem to be the least concerned. This convention suited Bartelmy, with his lifelong habit of protective coloration. He and the others made a point to give more than usual attention to the conference business, though this was harder than running away. If he had dared, he would have left the auditorium and hidden himself from the sight of man. His mind refused to follow the course of the discussions.

Late in the afternoon session the tellers reported. "Bishop," said the assistant secretary who had them in charge, "this ballot is so complicated and difficult that we ask permission to suspend work on it tonight, and to seal it until tomorrow morning. It would not be fair to take another ballot at the night session, because two important committees have unfinished reports, and must be absent from the session to complete them. As far as we have gone, there is no chance even to guess what the count will reveal, so that there is no danger of leakage."

Bartelmy all keyed up for the reading of the vote, slumped a little in his seat. Then he looked up into the balcony where Viola sat in her box. Her head was as high as ever, and, as he caught her glance, he tried to straighten up. But it was hard. No result! Moreover, not even a chance for some friend among the tellers to slip him a reassuring word. He knew from old experience that for a vote once counted there is no secrecy, all precautions notwithstanding; but evidently this ballot was yet a confusion of endless names. No one teller could have handled enough ballots to make an intelligent guess at the totals.

Adjournment came, shortly after the conference had ordered the ballots sealed, and the friends of every prominent candidate crowded about their favorite with words of encouragement and cheer.

Bartelmy accepted his share of these well-meant attentions, but soon he managed to go aside with one of his assistants. "Scout around a little, Fred," he ordered, "and see if there is anything to be had. It's just possible somebody knows more than has been told."

In an hour Fred called him up at the Cornwall. "I've talked to a couple of tellers, Chief, and they're easy enough, but they don't agree. One of them thinks you'll lead the list by a hundred; maybe that you'll have three hundred in all. But the other says the pile of votes he worked on showed Watterson in the lead. He guesses you will have a hundred and fifty on this ballot. Myself, I think neither one has any idea of how it's going. They did say that the number of names with a fair starting vote is bigger than usual, and that looks like a long fight. I'll call again if I hear anything worth repeating."

After dinner Viola and Bartelmy talked it over. There was no chance during the dinner hour; the hotel dining room, where everybody could see and many could hear, and where people were forever stopping at one's table with words of hope or consolation or veiled commiseration, was no place to speak freely. The Bonafedes played the game, Viola no less competently than her husband, and the sharpest eyes—they tried it, never fear—could not detect that any struggle was on.

Once in their rooms, Viola said, "What sort of stupidity was that ballot-sealing idea? I wonder if anybody is trying any tricks? Father would have known what it meant, if he had been here; he's seen too many shifty politicians not to realize what such a move as that means."

"He never saw a Methodist General Conference in action," said Bartelmy.

"But what do you think it is?"

"I'm stumped, and that's the truth. Anything else I could find ways of handling, but a sealed, uncounted ballot— No, I don't think anybody is trying to pull something off. It's just one of these unforseen natural mixups."

"And there's nothing you can do?"

"Nothing. The ballot is there. Either it is favorable or it isn't. If I knew which, I might keep myself busy at the session, tonight. As it is, I'm not going. I've got all I can do to get through the next twelve hours. I should be poor company for you, so I'm calling the hotel office in a few minutes, and asking for a single room somewhere off the main corridor. There's no reason why you should be kept awake by my tossing and tumbling all night long."

"You don't suppose I'll be much inclined for sleep myself, do you?" Viola asked. "Why shouldn't we face this thing together?"

"Because that will make it harder than it need be. If you're alone, you'll find some way of passing the time. I'll do the same, wherever I am, and if either of us does happen to drop asleep, the other won't spoil it."

Viola saw there was reason in that; for her part she meant to sleep if it could be managed at all.

And so by ten o'clock Bartelmy was settled in a little room at the back of the hotel, high up, out of reach of everybody, and was digging in for a hard night. He had sent down to the lobby for some time-killing reading matter, and here it was all about him on the bed—*Popular Mechanics*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *American Magazine*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Vanity Fair*, and a little pile of the easiest-reading books he could think of—Zane Grey, Phillips Oppenheim, Peter Kyne.

If he could sleep, very well. If not, he would need distraction from his thoughts. Already his mind was turning about in circles. New legislation affecting his Board would make the next four years more dfficult than, even without it, they were sure to be. He knew, none better, that a reaction from the high-pressure results of his four years' work was due. He had expected to turn that problem over to his successor. He had gone into the race for the episcopacy with his eyes open; in every way this was the most propitious year. But what if it turned out that he really had only about a hundred and fifty votes on the first ballot? Half-a-dozen others would be in the neighborhood of that figure, or well beyond it, and only four bishops were to be elected. A thousand influences might operate to keep the half-dozen ahead of him, all through the voting, to say nothing of the dark horses which might show up on any ballot.

With a sour smile he thought of what a light this would throw on pre-election promises. A hundred and fifty! Why, easily three hundred delegates had definitely assured him they would give him their votes, and more than a hundred others were as good as pledged, if assurances meant anything. These delegates—was it possible that two hundred of them were liars?

It was not possible. He was in the lead, as the ballot would show. The tellers would be at work by six, and their report might be read right after the devotional exercises at eight-thirty. At least some one would know how it was going, so that by nine-thirty he could begin strengthening such of his lines as seemed weakest. His first vote would be four hundred or thereabouts, and he would need five hundred and twenty-five to be sure of election. Where were those extra votes to come from?

And yet, what folly to assume so easy a triumph. Probably his vote was low, not high. What could he or anybody do to start a tide of votes in his direction? He could not safely make new arrangements on the strength of the succession to his secretaryship. Already that asset had been used to point of danger. Each of four or five men believed himself Bonafede's choice for the place. Then, again, if his vote were high, and he began operations on the supposition that it was low, how could he explain himself?

So through the night he oscillated between assurance and despair. He sat half-upright in bed, with the electric light over his shoulder, fitfully reading, dozing, then coming broad awake to all manner of panic fear. He picked up a book, and at the end of ten minutes he was holding it open at the same page. The contending forces pulled him now this way, now that. In between he thought of Marcus, slogging away at his training in the Quebec mud. Then another set-to of conjecture, calculation, the alternation of confidence and black doubt; another spell of reading, followed by an uneasy doze, but always with utter wakefulness close on the heels of sleep.

At long last it was day. He dressed with unusual care, and, at breakfast, though he knew he showed the marks of the night, to Viola's "How did you sleep?" he could say, "Oh, not so badly, considering. And you?" It seemed unnecessary to ask if Viola had slept. Any observant passer-by would have seen that she was far better prepared than her husband for what the day might bring.

It brought the best. Often in the night he had feared the worst, and now he saw, with surprise at his own folly, how impossible the worst had been. Why, as he admitted to himself, in his most hopeful moments he had not been sanguine enough! Before the devotions were ended one of his lieutenants who passed him in the lobby whispered out of the side of his mouth, "Away in the lead!"

At ten-thirty the tellers filed in, and the bishop arose to read the long list of votes. He faced his duty with immense deliberation, while every delegate and almost every visitor sat tensely listening, expectant pencil in hand. Here it was!

"Whole number of votes cast 825; defective, 6; necessary to a choice, 546. There is no election." The bishop paused a moment, and asked, "What is your pleasure?" He knew quite well what their pleasure was, and shifted his feet for an easier standing position, as the Conference in strident chorus shouted, "Read it! The vote, the vote!"

The chairman smote the table with his gavel, and began; the controlled silence of three thousand listeners made each clear-cut syllable audible to the farthest corner of the great room.

It was a silence which lasted only while the bishop read the first name and its total: "Bartelmy Bonafede, 448." Out roared the 448 voters, quick to applaud their own wisdom. To their cheers were added those of whatever spectators agreed with them, and of the many who are always ready to cheer any result, if it is of decisive quality. Delegates left their places and converged upon Bartelmy, with congratulations and assurances of ultimate victory. Up in the boxes women waved their handkerchiefs at Viola.

The rest of the reading was a long and, presently, a most tiresome business. Only two other candidates were above the 200 line; and, as the custom is with a first ballot, it was necessary to read every name, including the hundred or so which had received each a single vote. The conference got a measure of mild enjoyment out of this part of the reading. It could laugh at the one-vote men, and taunt them with having voted for themselves.

But everybody knew that the next ballot, or, if not that, the third, would elect Dr. Bonafede. He needed less than a hundred votes. So far in the lead was he that the partisans of other men would vote for him just to get him out of the way; for three more bishops were yet to be chosen, and with such a lead it was easier to push Bonafede up than down.

So it befell. The second ballot was taken immediately, and the second set of tellers retired to count it. The work was easier now, and early in the afternoon session the report came in. Bartelmy Bonafede, still far ahead of his nearest rival, was only 26 votes short of election. He got these on the next ballot, with some to spare, and at the close of the session Viola looked down from her box with shining eyes, as the little ceremony of escorting a bishop-elect to the platform was enacted for the first time in this General Conference. Bishop Randolph and another were sent down to conduct her husband to his place among the fixed stars of the Methodist firmament. Bartelmy Bonafede had arrived at the goal old Judge Dimont had set for him. He was Bishop Bonafede, now and forever!

VI

The Bonafedes had a few minutes in their room before they must go down to dinner. Viola showed signs of her long day in the box, for she had stuck as if it had been an observation post and she the soldier on duty there. But fatigue could be disregarded; this was one of the great moments.

"Bartelmy, my dear, you've done it. Father knew you would, long ago, and he never let me forget it. Well, now, I want to tell you I've believed it myself more than ever these last few years. And I've tried to help, whenever an election was on. Haven't I been of some use?"

Bartelmy could not at once trust himself to speak. He held her close; he could not help the swift reflection that she had cared little for his work; and he remembered, too, that this was the first time since his election as Secretary that she had shown herself happy in her husband's success. But, he thought, after all, her afternoons in these hotel rooms must have cost her something, and beyond cavil they had won not a few votes which had helped to swell that magnificent first ballot of his. If she were glad, why question the springs of her exultation?

He kissed her, once and again; and her lips came to his with a readiness which aroused long-unaccustomed ardors.

"My dear, my dear," he said, "you have helped more than I had any right to ask. I'm proud of you, and grateful, past all words."

"You needn't take it all, though, you know," she said with a touch, in her tone, of the old mocking Viola. "I wasn't doing it all for you; it was as much for myself—and Marcus," she added, the mockery dropping out of her voice as quickly as it had come. "That boy! We must send him a wire to camp. You don't know how proud of you he seemed that last day he was at home. And this will make him prouder still. But we must keep him feeling sure that we're proud of him, too."

The wire did not reach Private Marcus Bonafede until the next day at noon. He was marching with his unit into Montreal, and private telegrams to privates are notoriously subject to the fortunes of war.

When it did come to him, from the last of many intermediate hands, and his sergeant said, “Telegram for you, Bonafede,” the outfit had halted for dinner. Marcus read, “Your father elected bishop today, first one chosen. He and I reciprocate your love and pride. Mother.”

He was unable to wire back either questions or congratulations. The powers had ordained that troops on the eve of embarkation should not communicate with their people at home. That would be attended to after they were safe on the other side of the Atlantic.

VII

To the uninitiate, the election of bishops is General Conference high tide. The more devout among them, perhaps, may look forward to the consecration service, on Sunday. Of this, the Methodists, with native pragmatical inconsistency, make as formal and impressive a ceremony as though their bishops were true prelates. They are not, of course; Methodists being two-order Episcopalians, not three. But to most people a bishop is a bishop; and a solemn, ritualistic consecration to a lifetime work is to the unobservant quite indistinguishable from ordination.

But the real moment of interest, after the elections, is the reading of the report by which each bishop’s residence and major field of labor for four years is first made public. Few people know of the sub-committee struggles which precede this reading. Bishops, like other ministers, are touched at times by consideration of place and prominence; and stories are told of tense moments in the room where a few select members of the committee on episcopacy wrestle with men of like passions with themselves who are under abnormal strain. Every bishop who has anything to say about his own case is invited to say it; and no man is assigned without first being consulted.

Bartelmy’s turn came well down the list, though first among the new men, precedence in these matters being sacredly observed. When he appeared, the chairman was most courteous, if somewhat apologetic.

"Bishop Bonafede," he said, "of course you realize that in our work we meet some of the difficulties you will have to face by and by in dealing with the preachers; we have fewer desirable assignments than we have worthy men to fill them."

"Yes," spoke up one of the committee, "but Bishop Bonafede is not going to make us any trouble. I remember two weeks ago hearing him say that any man who let himself be voted on for the episcopacy should be willing to go anywhere; and if he wasn't he ought to withdraw his name."

"I did say that," Bartelmy agreed, "and it is my opinion now. Of course there may be exceptional circumstances, and no doubt adjustments must be sought, sometimes, which were not foreseen to be necessary. But I think I can say that I am quite at your service."

The chairman beamed. He had been a little worried over what it seemed necessary to offer Bishop Bonafede, and felt a corresponding relief that the task was going to be easier than he had feared.

"Well, Bishop," he said, "your highly commendable attitude does make our work a little less difficult. The fact is that because of family circumstances which must be considered in assigning two of the newly-elected bishops, only two places are available for you and Bishop Adamson. As you were elected before him, we are presenting the matter to you first. The two places are Rangoon, in Burma, and Salt Lake City. Each offers peculiar and even remarkable opportunities for such service as you are specially equipped to render. We do not intend to make a final decision today, but we should like to know, before our meeting tomorrow, whether you have any preference between these two places."

Bartelmy's heart was suddenly heavy within him. He had been steeling himself against the probability of an undesirable assignment—for a southern city, or even Panama—but nobody had warned him how narrow the choice would actually be. And now, he thought grimly, it was either "on the road to Mandalay," or the middle of the great American Desert.

The committee members saw in his face, as they had seen in the faces of other bishops, that he was something less than elated over his chance to choose. After a moment longer he straightened up. "Brethren, this is not the sort of preference which may be stated quickly. Nor can I do it alone. I must talk with Mrs. Bonafede, for she will be as greatly affected as myself by your assignment."

"Certainly, bishop," said the chairman. "As I told you, we do not need to decide today. You and Mrs. Bonafede will have tonight for consideration; all we need to ask is that you inform us in the morning what you would like. Then we have only Bishop Adamson's desires to consider, before reaching a decision and bringing in our report."

VIII

Many a time Bartelmy Bonafede had been forced to tell Viola some story of disappointment or unpleasantness. But never, he thought, had he been shut up to so bald and so unwelcome a statement as he must make this time. Long practice had made him adept in putting the best face on disagreeable facts; today he had precious little material with which to work.

He found Viola just back from a reception; obviously uplifted. It was her first social appearance as Mrs. Bishop Bonafede, and she had found it good.

"Well, my dear, and where have *you* been?" She kissed him with much more than her usual warmth. Was he not her bishop-husband?

"I've been with the committee on episcopal assignment, and they are asking a hard thing of us." He thought he might as well get it over with.

"Hard? What do you mean? You're used to hard work by this time."

"I said hard for *us,*" her husband repeated. "You have as much interest in this as I have."

"Still I don't get what you mean," said Viola. "If the committee had asked me, I'd tell them that some of the old bishops need to make way for the younger and more active men. What is it they want you to do?"

Bartelmy made one effort to put the best foot foremost. "They say there is urgent need for the sort of work I can do, in just two places, and they have given us until tomorrow to say whether we prefer one or the other. Not that they will be bound by what we say, of course. They have the last word."

"Is that so? And what two places?" She was still thinking in terms of those important cities in which resided the few bishops she knew.

"One is Salt Lake City; and the other is Rangoon, in Burma."

Viola stared; then she laughed, but without mirth. "Rangoon? Never heard of it in my life. Salt Lake City I know; it's impossible, of course. The other—where in the world is it?"

Bartelmy tried a feeble jocularity. "You'll think it isn't in the world at all. It's the capital of Burma, in what used to be called Farther India. It is under the British flag. We have a very large work in Burma and the countries near by, and I understand that the British make a good deal of fuss over our resident bishop. In England bishops are personages, you know."

"Maybe so. But Bart, is it possible that you have no other choice? Are you compelled to go to one of these two awful places? Isn't there some chance of a protest? You have influence in many quarters. Can't you get somebody to tell the committee how ridiculous it is to think of sending you where nobody could amount to anything?"

"I'm afraid I can't. This committee has large powers; its decision is not likely to be questioned. Other men who have more influence than I are powerless before it. All we can do is to say which we'd like. I guess it's settled that we go to one of these two places."

"For how long?"

"Well, of course, no assignment is made for more than one quadrennium."

"Four years!" Viola was beginning to get angry. Bartelmy recognized the signs, in her half-closed eyes and straight, thin lips. "And is this what I've worked for; to be stuck in a foreign fever-hole or out among the Mormons? I've kissed fat sisters and flattered fat-headed brethren all this month until I could shriek; I've toadied for days to people my father could have bought body and soul with a round-trip pass to Denver. And it was my father who told me, 'Take my word for it, Bonafede will be a bishop some day.' Sure enough, you are. Bishop of Salt Lake! Bishop of Monsoon or Borneo or whatever the other horrible place is!"

She stopped for breath, and when it came she started again. Bartelmy stood dully before the storm; Viola in anger always dismayed him, and this time he had no evasion, no equivocal word, which might serve to abate or turn aside her wrath.

"You're Bishop Bonafede, all right. And what's the use, if you're to be buried? Is this what you have been scheming for, and running all over the country for, and playing one man against another for, and begging votes for, and using me as bait for? How does it happen that you could get five hundred delegates to vote for you, and yet you can't get a handful of men to give you a decent assignment?"

"But, my dear," Bartelmy put in, "the work in these places must be done. We have missions and missionaries in that part of Asia about Rangoon, and we have churches and pastors in all the intermountain country around Salt Lake City. Somebody must go to supervise all that work."

"Work? Rubbish! All work has to be done, by somebody. I know that well enough. But it needn't be you. Let the people do it who love it, or the people who can't do anything else. Why didn't you fix this long ago? Didn't you know beforehand that it would have to be faced after the elections?"

"Why, yes; everybody knows that," said Bartelmy. "But no man who's being mentioned for bishop dares try to pick out his assignment before he's elected. It would be the end of his chances. His enemies would jump at the story, and he would be done for." He was speaking the simple truth, and even Viola saw the force of the explanation.

"Well then," she asked, still angry, "why do they insist on sending a man like you to one of these jumping-off places? You were the first man elected. Isn't there something in that?"

"There would be, my dear, if nothing else had to be considered. But one of the new bishops has children to educate, and the family of another is very young and sickly. Adamson has his old mother to care for; you and I seem to be freer from personal and family obligations than these others. The chairman of the committee told me that this was the situation, though of course I knew it before."

Viola pulled herself together. After all, she was the wife of a bishop, and if she could find a way out of this initial difficulty she could still have her career. If circumstances made a difference, the thing to do was to discover some. That would take thinking, and you can't enjoy the luxury of anger if you want to think.

"Well, see here, Bart," she said, "I consider the whole business is a rotten shame, but some of it can't be helped, and some of it can. We've got to find some good reason why you should be given a better assignment, that's all."

"What reason can we offer? Our affairs are well known. Marcus is in the war. We have nobody dependent on us. How can we find any excuse that will hold water?"

"I don't know," she snapped. "But quit being so helpless and so meek. You've got brains, haven't you?"

Bartelmy would not deny that, but his opinion of his own cleverness had never been so low.

"Children; we can't use that," she prompted him. "Go on. Marcus is off to the war, and it makes no difference to him where we go. Parents? Nothing in that, now that mother and father are gone. Which reminds me. Has father's lawyer written you lately? He should have."

"Why, yes; there was a letter came during the elections; I meant to show it to you, but we've been so occupied. It's in my portfolio at the exhibit."

"What does he say?"

"He wants me to come to Kansas City and go over all the records with him; sign papers and all that. Says he can't act alone, since I'm co-executor under the will, and there are complications."

"Well, we can think about them later. Does he say it will take long?"

"He seems to be anxious about that. I guess we ought to go as soon as we can get away from here, and have a good long session with him. We can get a much clearer notion of what's to be done than by letter. He says things are pretty badly mixed."

"I'm not surprised. Dad was always careless about his own business affairs, and he was in a good many. But they'll untangle."

"If we find we must go to Rangoon—"

"WE go to Rangoon!" Viola blazed up again. "Bartelmy Bonafede, you must be crazy. Don't think for one minute that I'm going out there. *You* may have to be bishop in Rangoon, but I'm not intending to go to a place like that, even to be the bishop's wife."

"I was just about to say, dear," he interposed, seeking to mitigate the storm, "that if we find the committee seems inclined that way, perhaps we might ask for some considerable delay, so that I could settle your father's estate before leaving the country. And that might be the deciding factor. If Bishop Adamson can leave his mother at all, he might be sent to Asia rather than keep the Rangoon place vacant for several months."

"There's some sense in that," said Viola, quieting down again. "That may be our way out. Are you sure that it's a choice between this Rangoon and Salt Lake City?"

"Why, yes; that was the way they put it; they'll decide on one or the other, tomorrow."

"Well, I could stand it to go to Salt Lake City for a while, maybe; because after all it's possible to get back to civilization now and then. Of course I take it your own preference is for Utah? Or does it stir your English heart to think of being a bishop in a country where you might be called 'my lord'?"

Bartelmy ignored the sneer. He had been trying to lead up to a recognition of Utah as the lesser evil, and Viola, with her usual directness, had voiced the precise reason which to him had seemed most cogent. But it was better to let the decision be hers.

So he said, "Why yes, my dear, I do think it would be better for us to stay in this country. I very much doubt the wisdom of sending middle-aged men to foreign stations, anyway; we have seen some unhappy results of that policy. Adamson is younger. All things considered, I am sure you are right in preferring Salt Lake City. It will give us both a considerable opportunity for travel. I shall be away a good deal on church business, and it makes a good impression, when a bishop has the right sort of wife, if she goes with him to some of the more important functions."

Viola's imagination needed no broader hint. She had not often chosen to travel with her husband in his secretarial journeys, because there was nothing for her in the endless committee sessions and other purely business or mass-meeting affairs to which he had given himself. But a bishop's travels are different. With Burma out of the way, she could see instantly how the desert isolation could be tempered. She cared nothing for Oriental travel; it had always seemed more trouble than pleasure; and the American scene had not yet bored her.

"Then we may as well call it settled. I hope you'll make it your business to convince the committee tomorrow that your special gifts are needed in Salt Lake City."

IX

Not in those words, naturally, but quite as convincingly, Bishop Bonafede on the morrow presented his case to the subcommittee.

"I had not thought it necessary to mention, heretofore," he said when he faced the little group with the large powers, "that I am one of the executors of my late father-in-law's estate. But Judge Dimont had many and rather complex interests, and the work of settling up his affairs, in which, of course, my wife is directly concerned, is likely to be rather tedious. It will be most desirable, for several months or a year, that I should be within call of Kansas City, which would be impossible if we set out at once for a foreign residence. Please remember that I hold to my original pledge, and stand ready to obey the orders of my church. Not only that, but my interests in the foreign field is second to that of no bishop in the Board. I do not asked to be excused from Rangoon. But, if you do decide that I should be assigned to that residence, I shall be compelled to ask permission, in fairness to Mrs. Bonafede, to remain in this country a reasonable length of time, so that I may attend to the business I have referred to."

Most of the committee took this little speech at its face value. One said, "Of course we do not desire to do anything that would embarrass you in your duties toward your wife's interests. I wonder if Bishop Adamson has anything as important as this to keep him in this country."

To which the chairman, "I have seen Bishop Adamson, and he assures me that his mother will bid him God-speed. He asks only to be told where we think he should go. He says he is ready to start within a month if need be."

That was all. Except that one member of the committee, later, confided to a friend, "You've got to hand it to Bonafede. I know he hated like sin to go to either of those two places. But did he say so? Not much; he made the committee think he was denying himself a privilege and bravely shouldering a duty. He's the same old Bonafede, only more so."

Bartelmy Bonafede was at his office, busy with the packing up of his personal effects, when the postman brought a card from Marcus: "Dear Folks: This card will be mailed to you when our outfit has landed at a European port. I am well, and will write at the first opportunity. Much love. Marcus."

The bishop called Viola on the telephone. Immediately after the election she had begun to worry about the absence of any word from her son. It was not like the boy, to pay no attention to her messages, and anyhow he would have answered that telegram about the honor that had come to his father. Not yet had she learned that the war, not his people, now possessed her boy, and other mothers' boys.

When she heard the card's brief message read, Viola was not satisfied. "Is that all? It doesn't sound like Marcus. Too short. Have you any idea where he is?"

Naturally, Bartelmy had no idea. He did make a guess, having read a little about the Canadian contingent in the British army. "He's in a training camp in England somewhere," he said; "not far from the south coast, probably; maybe on Salisbury Plain. He'll hardly get to France until late in the summer. We're sure to hear from him in a week or so."

Which Viola, nowise content, must needs accept as the best comfort available. It was as much as other mothers got; though why that should be adduced as a consolation none of them ever understood.

Advices from Salt Lake City assured Bishop Bonafede that he and the work would be just as well off if the formal advent of the Bonafedes were deferred until early September. That suited him well, and Viola better. She had no intention of spending large portions of her time in Utah, and was quite willing that Utah should assume the responsibility for as much of her absence as it would, if that could be arranged without loss of official favor.

She wrote once a week to Marcus, though his letters to her came at much longer intervals. He was in France, somewhere near Havre, (she conjectured), and thought that soon he would be up at the front. It was the summer of the Somme and Verdun, and the Allies were needing men.

Of all this of course he wrote little, and for two reasons.

He knew only so much as he was told, and if he guessed more he was taking no chances with the army censorship. He wrote cheerfully enough, filling the pages with abundance of light but not undiscerning gossip of his comrades in arms as they lived the life of the civilian-soldier in the last stages of training.

To Viola each letter was a respite; her boy was not yet under fire, and anything might happen to save him from that ordeal. The war might even be over soon; there were those who saw in the Battle of the Somme, at first, the beginning of the end.

Bartelmy, recognizing that Marcus had something of a knack with his pen, passed parts of his letters over to two or three newspaper men of his acquaintance, and thus began the modest vogue of a new writer. Editors here and there soon recognized behind the signature "Marcus Bonafede" one of the young fellows who were finding new and refreshing ways of writing about the incidental aspects of the war.

X

With most of Tech closed for the summer, the question before Peter Middleton took acuter form than ever. What of the future? Money, and ever more money, must be had. This thing to which he had given himself had little if any place in the thought of the church. By some educators, themselves driven to desperation by the mounting costs of their church schools, it was looked upon with no small jealousy. It was deemed an interloper, a diverter of contributions sorely needed by the colleges over which the church had more or less control.

And yet Peter saw that unless he could get a building, he had gone almost as far as he could go. The old church was not simply inadequate; it was repellent. Only a student who could ignore his surroundings for the sake of something not so obvious, though more precious, would endure the cramped and crazy quarters which were all that the Fellowship could boast.

When the new building came, as it did, Peter was the most astonished individual of them all. He had everything to do with it, of course, but, on the surface, the actual capture of what at last became one of the most beautiful buildings on or near the Tech campus seemed largely to be Rhoda's achievement. And even she did not know how it happened until the impossible had become a certificate of deposit for a sum never to be mentioned save in awed and tremulous whispers.

She had gone home for a visit with Marie Leyton, classmate, and devoted member of the Oxford Fellowship; and found herself in a "perfect duck" of a farm home near Archerville, in the heart of the Corn Belt.

Rhoda had not known many farmhouses, but this one seemed, even to her, much above the level of farmers' homes. Still she had other things to think of, and easily followed Marie's matter-of-fact acceptance of these better than comfortable surroundings.

Marie's father she found well worth talking to. In a day the two of them had discovered themselves kindred spirits. Rhoda delighted in the range and alertness of Mr. Leyton's interest in life, and he went out of his way to set her going on the subject of the Fellowship. He assumed the blankest ignorance of the whole matter, and insisted on detailed explanations of its every ramification, from the theory back of it to the smallest incident of its daily contact with the Methodist students at Tech.

"I can understand religion at a Methodist college," he said to her one day, "but what right have you, young lady, to be imposing your ideas on a state school?"

"Not on a state school, but on the students in it who came out of Methodist homes and churches, and who ought to go back to them when they are done with school."

"Yes, I see. But I went to Ohio Wesleyan; it was in the great days, too. What's the matter with putting a little more religious influence into our own colleges, where we have nobody to say we mustn't?"

"Sure," said Rhoda. "But there's nobody at Tech to tell us we mustn't, either. And what if we should stop with our own schools? In your time maybe we could. But how about your own girl? You didn't send her to Ohio Wesleyan, or any Methodist school. Does that mean you accept as final that Methodism is done with her?"

"Well, there's a matter of circumstances to be considered when you talk about Marie," said Mr. Leyton. "I wasn't asked, if the truth must be told, where she should go. She wanted some work she can get at Tech, but not in any Methodist school she could hear about; you know better than I do what it is; and Mother and I sort of like to let her have her own way when we can. But no; I'm not ready to consent that Methodism is through with her, or she with Methodism. She's a good girl; and she's all we have."

"She's a darling. Dad depends on her for help I'm no good at. I've got a sort of dumb religion; can't talk about it to anybody. She can, and she does, in a perfectly wonderful way. There's many a girl at Tech who has found out what personal Christianity is and what it means, just by talking it out with Marie."

"I'm glad of that," said Marie's father, "but I'm not surprised. Her mother's that way; always has been. You should see the hold she has on Archerville. But I'm like you. I never could talk five minutes about what I know better than I know anything else."

"Well, Mr. Leyton, there you are. At Tech we have nearly a thousand students from Methodist homes, who've gone there for much the same reasons as Marie. You can't tell them to stay away; Tech belongs to the whole state, and Methodists are citizens. So the church is following them. And—Oh, I wish you could see what is beginning to happen already. Won't you come over some time this fall and see for yourself?"

But then Rhoda thought of the stuffy little church, with its cheap and battered furnishings. "No; I'm not sure we want you yet. Somebody who has more money than he needs is going to give us a building before many months; he's got to. We can't wait much longer. And when he does!—I'll send you a special invitation, signed by Dad—and myself. I'm his partner, you know."

"Not his silent partner, either," chuckled Aaron Leyton. "But you certainly pull your own weight in the boat, and more. I wonder who will be the happy man to give you that building."

"So do I; but there is such a man. There must be. If there wasn't, there would be a terrible vacuum in the history of the Oxford Fellowship, and you know nature abhors a vacuum!"

XI

Soon after Rhoda's return, Peter Middleton received a mystifying letter from Aaron Leyton of Archerville: "Please keep this dark, but when can you come over and talk about something in which we are both immensely interested? Don't say anything to your daughter about it, or to anybody else. Just come."

Peter could travel anywhere, on short notice, but the letter's reference to Rhoda disturbed him for a moment. Not that he had any fear of anything she had done or said. But she might even have met somebody who was showing too great an interest in her future. And, though he would not interfere, the very thought distressed him. How could he do without his Rhoda?

The cheeriness of Aaron Leyton's welcome as Peter stepped from the train was reassuring. Nothing serious could be the matter. He led the way to a large touring car, of much better make than most farmers can manage, and they were soon at the farm. Peter's practiced eye saw a good deal more than Rhoda's "duck of a farmhouse;" improvements and equipments far beyond the needs of the farm, as a farm; the marks of so leisurely and opulent a country life as no farmer could support by merely farming, no matter how wisely.

The thing was over in half an hour. Peter thought, later, of Browning's "two points in the adventure of the diver;"

> One, when a pauper he prepares to dive;
> Then, when a prince, he rises with his pearl.

Aaron Leyton went straight to the heart of his business. "Mr. Middleton," he began, "your daughter Rhoda said she'd not ask me to visit your work until you had the assurance of a new building. But she was too late. I've visited it twice already, when you were away. Nobody knew I was there, not even Marie. I went to the President of Tech, and he told me some things. Several professors told me more. And so did one or two students, who let an old fellow pester them with questions that seemed foolish. I've put everything I found out alongside Rhoda's philosophy of the Oxford Fellowship;—and now I'm ready to talk wth you about investing in what you are doing. There's money enough. I've owned some poor land in Oklahoma these twenty years, and about five years ago it began to produce a crop I never suspected. Yes; oil. I'm not yet used to the way oil means money, and because I'm naturally a poor talker, very few know a thing about it. What I've seen of other people who got rich quick and got no fun out of it has scared me. Now the wells on my land are not gushers, and never have been, but they don't stop. And Mother and I have been uneasy in our minds about it. We didn't earn that money, and we can't find ways of spending it on ourselves, even if we were sure we had the right. But we think, Mother and I, that we've found one way to spend it that nobody can fault; and that's for your Fellowship. Now *you* talk; it's years since I made a speech as long as that."

What could Peter say? Meeting difficulties had been no special trouble; but to meet this situation he had no precedents whatever. So he said, simply, "Your thought is most generous, Mr. Leyton."

"No, not that;" demurred the farmer. "It seems to me sort of selfish; and yet a good sort of selfishness, maybe. I guess there are good ways even of being selfish. I'd enjoy having a hand in this business. But let's get down to the next thing. What should we do first?"

"Most people would say that we need a church building first of all. What we have is hopeless."

"I know. And if you say so, a church it is. But I'm not so sure that comes first. I've talked with Marie, and still more with Rhoda, and with those students who told me more than they thought. I've come to wonder if the thing you ought to have first isn't just a real good place; something like a big 'Y' building that's been fixed up by folks instead of secretaries. I mean a place you can make homey and friendly and useful all day, every day; with two or three big living rooms, and study rooms, and rooms to rest in, and an assembly hall with a stage, and all sorts of other fixings that the students don't get in their boarding houses or even in the fraternities. And, though I'm just a farmer, with no claim to any skill, I'd like to have a hand in the business of getting such a building planned and put up. I'm not stubborn, so the architect wouldn't find me in the way, nor the contractor; but I want to see something like this done for these young folks, and working at it off and on would sort of mean more than just signing checks. Do you see what I mean?"

Peter did, and trembled with the vision. If it was not some momentary delirium it was something else unreal that was happening to him; even to think about it brought an exhilaration touched with exquisite pain.

When he came down out of this third heaven, the actualities, so far from dimming in the light of sober day, became yet more glowing and alluring. A middle-aged farmer was proposing to the Oxford Fellowship the erection of a clubhouse to cost anything from one hundred to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. And the offer was backed by real money. It did not seem true; it merely was true.

Peter had expected that Rhoda, when she heard what was to come, would take refuge either in hysterics or cold incredulity. Instead, after the first joyful outburst, in which Peter's hair and collar and necktie suffered shamefully, she merely said, "Well, Dad, you may be a preacher; but I'm a prophet. I told you this thing had to come. And I told Mr. Leyton, too. I wonder how much of it he knew already? Not that I dreamed he was the man. Still, it does no harm to talk about your hopes, if people want to listen, does it, Daddy?"

Which was the nearest Rhoda ever came to claiming any credit for "Leyton Center."

With the promise of the great gift, in the fall the Fellowship took on new life. Money brings money; better still, it brings confidence. People who had stood aloof when the venture was merely a venture, now took heart of grace and began to believe in it.

XII

As a rule, a bishop is hardly a bishop in his first conferences. He is self-conscious; he tries to seem at ease and succeeds only in showing what an effort he is making. He is pathetically anxious not merely to produce a good impression, but to be different from all the other bishops. In the nature of things this is difficult, because all the bishops deal with a regimented and routine procedure, and inevitably he reminds the more seasoned preachers sitting before him of some older bishop whom, in his attempt to escape from the levels of episcopal mediocrity, he is copying unaware.

Because the chief interest is focused on the assigning of the preachers to their posts of duty, all new bishops announce that their administrations will be democratic. They will not play the tyrant. One says that he proposes to maintain an open shop. Another avows his readiness to see any brother, layman or minister, at any hour of the day or night. Another fixes a deadline. "Until Saturday at six, I am open to any suggestion or request whatever. After that I must be permitted to reach my own conclusions." Another says that no brother's appointment will be decided upon until after he has been consulted. And so on.

This worship of democracy is, necessarily, lip-service. The church, autocratically organized, is a democracy just so long as there is no need for the exercise of the autocrat's powers. But because democracy often fails, and cannot help but fail, there is the episcopal prerogative, and, with no matter what show of regard for the individual, the great iron wheel turns, as turn it must.

This explains why Methodism does not fall into fragments. Also it explains why every conference has more than one man with a grievance; a man who could not or did not get out of the wheel's way when it began to turn. These men think and say it was the bishop's fault. A machine has the defects of its qualities, and because Methodism, ecclesiastically, is a most efficient machine, of necessity it seems often to be cruel. But machinery is not cruel; it is—machinery.

Bishop Bonafede had a somewhat easier time than the other bishops of his year. In his two conferences of the fall he displayed the facility of an old hand. He had not been picking up unconsidered trifles at conferences these twenty years without profit. The smoothness of his work in the conferences which gave him his tryout was observed of all. The older men gave outspoken praise to his ease and readiness. They heard, without quite placing them, a hundred tags of conventional episcopal speech; they saw without recognition a hundred professionalisms which were the quintessential residue of Bonafede's borrowing from every bishop since Newman and Fowler.

Bonafede had observed episcopal technique through the years until he had become familiar with its faults as well as its excellences. He had watched his bishops tirelessly; he had noted in their public address the phrases, tones, postures which seemed to him most episcopally effective, and, no less carefully, those which he saw were useless, and especially those which affected people unpleasantly. He would know what to avoid.

The only case which gave him any concern in his first conferences was that of a rising young preacher named Mellish. Mellish had been three years in a small suburban church, and the district superintendent reported him a success in every way. "But he's a trifle radical in his social and political views, Bishop," said the superintendent in the cabinet meeting, "and he's quite a leader among theological school graduates in the conference."

Bishop Bonafede was writing, as he often was in these cabinet sessions. He thought it good policy to let the superintendents do as much of the spade work as they would, reserving his interference for the cases on which they did not find agreement easy. He heard the first part of the superintendent's comment without heeding it, but the closing sentence brought his mind to attention.

"What's your difficulty about young Mellish? Doesn't he go back?"

"That's the trouble, Bishop. He can go back all right; his people like him better than any preacher they have had these dozen years, and he's their sixth. But a committee is here from St. Edwards, in my town, and the committee is greatly taken with Mellish. Burghamann is leaving, as you know, and they say they'll not consider any other man if there's any chance for them to get Mellish. He'd be a good man for them, too, even though he does seem a trifle young. But the young fellows from the seminaries—well, you know what boys talk in their first ten years of the ministry, and often they take their cue from Mellish. I fear that there would be unpleasant things said by some of the older brethren if you appointed him. Won't you have a talk with him, and see if you can get him to see that St. Edwards is a little too big for him just yet? If he'll say he thinks it best he should not go, the committee will not be able to insist on his appointment. That should make them less difficult to persuade that your man Cavendish is the preacher for them."

Bishop Bonafede sent for Mellish. He felt that it would be one of those uncomfortable interviews which he avoided whenever he could, by whatever specious device was handiest at the moment. But already he had learned that there was no evading an occasional encounter with a difficult preacher or a pertinacious committee. When it must come, he put on for the occasion his best manner, almost pontifical, and with a show of man-to-man frankness that worked admirably with most of those to whom he must speak on unpleasant subjects.

He guessed that Arthur Mellish could not be fitted into any of the classifications which the bishop found useful in sorting the men he had to deal with. He was not susceptible to the ordinary allurements. Bishop Bonafede saw himself almost forced to speak exactly as he felt, and that was a compulsion he never enjoyed.

When Mellish came into the room, the two men exchanged greetings pleasantly enough, though neither expected warmth from the other.

"Brother Mellish," the Bishop began, most abruptly for him, "do you know why it is not easy to give you the promotion which your friends think you ought to have?"

"No, Bishop," Mellish said, "I don't, though I have my theory. But what does it matter? I don't need to know. You have your way of doing things, and I have mine. You happen to be my official superior, and if my ways don't suit you, the power is in your hands."

"But, Brother Mellish," the other protested, "for your own sake I think you ought to be told just what the trouble is. The Methodist ministry, as you have always known, is a genuine brotherhood, and we are members one of another. If I have the power, as you say, is it not my duty to use it for the good of the whole body? So I feel that I must have this talk with you."

"As you please, Bishop."

It was as the bishop had feared. Mellish was not inclined to be placable. Very well, he should be told what the trouble was, though even now it would be spoken kindly. Kindness of manner was never incompatible with the Bonafede purpose.

"You do not make it any easier for me, Brother Mellish. But the fact is that people have a good deal to say about the way in which you express your somewhat radical views. Your views are not so very dangerous, in themselves. Since my first pastorates I have held opinions not unlike your own. Before their expression could interfere seriously with my work, however, I had found that it is not as simple a thing as I had thought to get immediate results, and I began to modify, not my opinions, of course, but my methods of making them known. That seems to be the point at which you have difficulty."

Mellish was too surprised, at first, for any inner adjustment to this approach. He had known of the bishop all his ministerial days, and lately had been trying to study him at first hand. But here was a Bonafede he had not seen before, a bishop with his guard down, confessing to the possession of advanced ideas, and admitting that he had denatured them for public consumption. As Mellish got his wits together, he began to feel that he would enjoy this interview, after all. So he merely nodded, while the other paused to note the effect of what he had said. And then he took up the theme again. "I have all manner of sympathy with the working classes. Perhaps you do not know how much I had to do with the bishops' pronouncement on social and industrial conditions."

"No, I don't," Mellish admitted. "Was that statement yours?"

"Well, not as it finally appeared, of course. I cannot say I think its published wording entirely judicious. My work was done while the first outline was under consideration. The last revision was entrusted to the hands of one of the brethren who, I regret to say, has too little consideration for the judgment and even the feelings of important people. He was injudiciously specific, while I had confined myself to abstract principles."

"You mean that he talked straight, as I have been trying to do?"

"I must not be drawn into criticism of my colleagues, especially to you; but I mean, Brother Mellish, that when we are considering questions which are in controversy, questions on which we are not experts, and about which there are divergences of view in the church, we cannot afford to wound and antagonize some of our leading laymen. We depend on them for large support of our church and its enterprises, and naturally they wonder why their gifts should be welcomed when their ideas, yes, and their sacred convictions, are so needlessly flouted." Here the bishop felt he must be quoting, but the author's name did not occur to him.

"Of course you understand, Bishop, that I don't seek their money, in any church I serve, if they have the notion that

I am no more than a hired fiddler, and that they can call the tune because they pay."

"Your metaphor is ungenerous, Brother Mellish, but you have touched on one of my embarrassments. I could send you to St. Edwards, but the new enterprise there, and the special missionary work which the church has long supported, depend largely on the interest and favor of a few generous men of large means. You would be acceptable in almost every way, for you have a pulpit ability which such a church knows how to appreciate and to reward. But it is the uncertainty about what you might say, and how you might say it, on industrial questions and similar subjects, which makes your appointment difficult."

Mellish tried a straight question. "Are you intending to tell me that I ought to modify my ethical and social standards for the sake of an appointment?"

"Brother Mellish, that again is ungenerous. I am not asking you to change your opinions, and certainly not to offend your conscience, for, as I have intimated, I have much sympathy with some of your views. In fact, I share them, at least in part. The difficulty is one of method. I could send you to St. Edwards, as I say, but in your present mental condition I know you would not be happy there. If you would make up your mind to be cautious, to phrase your criticisms of the present social order in more conciliatory and perhaps more courteous terms, men who do not see things as you do would not be so inclined to take offense. And you know well enough that you cannot do much with people who are offended at your teaching."

"No," said Mellish; "that is an old difficulty."

"It is," the bishop agreed, ignoring the allusion, if he saw it, "but it can be overcome. I think I can say, without undue egotism, that I have nearly always found a way."

"Bishop"—Mellish spoke, the other thought, with uncalled-for feeling—"at that point I agree with you absolutely. You have always found a way. But you beat me there, as at many another point. I can't. If that is what St. Edwards or any other new appointment means, I can't take it, that's all. I'll stay where I am. I'm happy enough there."

"Well," the bishop's voice took on once more its honeyed accents, since he saw a chance to take Mellish's admission as his cue to end the interview without a scene; "well, Brother Mellish, you must learn. I am sure you have capacity enough. I can see how it would be impossible for me to compel you to go to St. Edwards, now that I have it from your own lips that you would not be happy there. But in a year or two, when the memory of last year is not so fresh, I can do something for you, either in this conference or some other, which, with your unusual ability and your commendable habits of study, will more nearly satisfy your ambitions. I shall be glad to do what I can next year, even, if the situation improves. Come and see me at any time;" and he rose and held out his hand, softly plump and beautifully groomed.

Mellish took it, but that was all. He had wanted to speak boldly, even defiantly, or else to watch the bishop entangle himself in one contradiction after another. And somehow the initiative had slipped away from him. Perhaps it had never been his. Even if he had found the opening, what could he have said that would have pierced through the protecting folds of this man's complacency?

The next day Bishop Bonafede saw the committee from St. Edwards. "I am sorry," he said to the brethren, "but I have talked with Brother Mellish, and he practically told me he would be unhappy to leave his present work. I do not feel it wise in view of that to urge the St. Edwards appointment on him. There are conditions into which I am not at liberty to go, which, he believes, and I am more than inclined to agree with him, would prevent him from doing his best work there. You see how it is; I would be glad to comply with your wishes, and perhaps next year the situation will be such that I can. You know you may count on me to do my utmost. But Brother Mellish himself has put his name outside the range of possibilities."

And with different emphasis, two men who scarcely knew one another, Austin Mellish, the preacher, and Beechwood, the lawyer from St. Edwards, were saying, each to himself, "Score another for Bonafede. How does he do it?"

XIII

In the matter of "Leyton Center," desire, among the people of the Oxford Fellowship, trod close on the heels of caution. Peter and Mr. Leyton were as anxious as the most eager freshman to see actual construction started, but there was a sort of haste which above all other mistakes they feared.

Wonderful to see was the fine agreement of these two. Not in the little things, but in the large; general architectural form, equipment, furnishings, scope of activities, flexibility of plan, provision to utilize new wisdom as it might be vouchsafed,—on all this they were of the same mind. And they knew it would take weeks and months to find their architect, study with him all the aspects of the problem, and make decisions which must be expressed in a building to stand long beyond their time.

While all this was being done, the Fellowship flourished, not so much in spite of its present limitations as because of them. Its cramped quarters and crowded schedules, soon to be numbered among the things that were, could now be endured with something more than fortitude. The Methodist students at Tech in '16-'17 looked on themselves—and do to this day—as pioneers, living in the great days of privations which tried men's souls. Some day their reminiscences may become even a little boring.

But even these pioneers felt that it was possible to have too much of a good thing, and grew impatient at the delay in beginning actual construction. In the early months of '17, protracted study and consultation had resulted in a plan for Leyton Center,—it was to be a noble pile in collegiate Gothic; hollow square in ground plan, open on one side, surrounding a quad.

And then, with April, War! Up to the last week of March many scarce believed that the threat would become actuality. But when it did come, the country made innumerable quick decisions; one of which was that war was the order of the day, and projects of peace must give place. Which meant, among larger matters, that Leyton Center would not be begun that spring, nor, indeed, until a time, then in the unguessed future, "after the war."

The war itself, for most of those directly concerned, took off the edge of disappointment. Their minds turned to this new, this unbelievable, this romantic American adventure. From the start, most American youth thought they saw the war's purpose single and clear. Not without result had they been exposed for two years to the steady pressure of high-powered propaganda. Belgium was a martyr; France, a passionate defender of *la Patrie's* sacred soil and still more sacred honor; England, the chivalrous neighbor, unwilling to stand by and see a friend's house harried by a braggart and a bully

There was only one militarism in the world, and, because without our help it could not be crushed, the United States was being called by its leaders into the last of all wars,—the war which would end war by making the world safe for democracy.

It was a fair and moving illusion; and to it the whole country gave such allegiance and support as America had given to no previous war. Those who could not fight could work; those who disliked either occupation could become protectors of the country's patriotism. Each picked up the current tag of English slang, and in his own way set about "doing his bit."

Now, Peter was not happy about the war. He would not admit, even to himself, that the blood of his German father accounted for more in him than did his inheritance from his Yankee mother. Like most preachers of his age, this was the first time he had been forced to think strongly about war. The Spanish War was a twenty-year-old memory, though even in those old days he had been amazed by the swiftness with which this easy-going nation could be led through the successive stages of an artificial crisis into a mood which called for blood.

The chief result of his doubt and questioning was to drive him the harder to his work. Though he did not offer for such obviously patriotic services as attracted many of the ministers of his acquaintance, the plethora of volunteers saved him from all but a few embarrassing invitations.

When once he realized that the building of the Center must be indefinitely postponed, he went over to Archerville to talk things over with Mr. Leyton.

"I don't know what to do," he said. "Next fall we are likely to be more crowded than ever. Of course, many of the boys will be in camp, but Tech is an ideal place for the first training of men now too young for service, who will be in demand, if the war lasts as long as some think, for junior officers. My guess is that the government will encourage as many of them to come to us as it can."

Mr. Leyton said, "I think you're right. But it looks as though our hands are tied, as to the building, even if it could be put up inside of a year, which it can't."

"There would be only one way out that I can see," said Peter, "and that is barred to us, as things now stand. It would take money, even it could get around all the other obstacles. If nothing but money were in the way, it is so important that I'd almost suggest that you take a small amount from the sum you intend to put into the Center, and use it as an emergency fund for a temporary building that could be put up in a month."

"How much do you think would be needed?"

"Oh, perhaps ten or twelve thousand dollars. I hate to think of it at all, in a way, for I'm going to be jealous of every dollar that the Center might have had which is spent for anything else."

"If that's all, my friend, you need worry no more. You show me how such a temporary building would take care of the work next year, no matter how crudely, and we'll both use what influence we have to get past the other difficulties. The money won't come out of the Center, except indirectly; I reckon that fund as no longer mine, and this first outlay will come from the interest on it for the duration of the war."

Whereupon Peter sketched his plan, over which the two talked far into the night. With the money in hand, the building might possibly get priority, as in some sort a war job.

Peter came back to Great Meadows and set himself, with ultimately complete success, to get the permissions he needed.

XIV

Bishop Bonafede had seen, well ahead of most Americans, that the United States must get into the war. The country had rapidly rid itself of the neutrality and peace which had made Woodrow Wilson his own successor in the recent election. And Bonafede was fully prepared for the about-face in public sentiment which he felt must come. When it did come, he lost no time in unlimbering all his homiletic and hortatory guns.

He could not ask for—nor desire—any but a speaking part. So he made sure that he would have a war oration ready for immediate use when war was actually declared, and speakers were in strong demand. Much usable material had come to his desk; he was an assiduous reader of the English periodicals, whose shocked denunciations of German frightfulness persisted long after the allies paid the Germans the compliment of a whole-hearted imitation.

Few orators of that time care to remember what they said; it was much of a muchness, but Bishop Bonafede is entitled to such honor as belongs to a pioneer in that form of passionate propaganda.

Into the speech, by way of illustration, he put a rich collection of atrocities, told in ghastly detail, as recounted by "eye-witnesses." He held the Kaiser up as a boastful military mountebank, and with fine scorn of logic showed how terrible was his threat against civilization. He glorified all the Allied powers, from Britain to China; not forgetting "brave, suffering, little Belgium," "the spirit of Lafayette," and "the sons of Garibaldi." He paid his respects to the German-born in America; more than hinting that few among them were sufficiently Americanized so that their loyalty could be taken for granted. He warned against spies, and recounted some of the more colorful stories of their successful and unsuccessful exploits in slowing up America's contribution to the war.

The speech abounded in the current phrases of war-propaganda,—"the plot of an entire nation," "Germany the ravisher of civilization," "baby-killers," and all the rest. It was of its kind a masterpiece, and was so acclaimed; other preachers may have had a wider hearing, but in the circles in which he moved Bishop Bonafede's war speech was accounted the utterance of a patriotic and pious soul.

His engagements multiplied, and of course the speech, in its several variant forms, made good newspaper copy. Often he was quoted at length, for the public he served, having had its taste of a hate justified by Scripture and sanctified by God's ministers, was beginning to like it, hot and strong and often. Marcus, somewhere between Arras and Albert, could not be kept in ignorance of such a famous speech; two of his many correspondents sent him papers which contained not only copious extracts from the speech, but pictures of the bishop himself.

Unfortunately, as Marcus viewed the incident, he was not alone when the first paper reached him, weeks later. To his great surprise, he had come out of the Vimy Ridge show not only alive but unscathed, and with his outfit was in rest billets well back of the lines.

The spring's experiences, which had made him a seasoned veteran, had been the worst of all possible preparations for the contemplation of his father's effort at winning the war by denunciatory eloquence. Especially since Jock Huntress got his eye on the American newspaper before Marcus could dispose of it.

Three days after the American declaration of war, the day being Easter Monday, Marcus had been one of the atoms in a queer conglomerate of British Empire man-stuff which in successive waves swept up and over the rise of land called Vimy Ridge, which had so long been a German rampart and observation post. At the zero hour, five-thirty a.m., the heavens began to crash and the earth to open under a British barrage of unprecedented ferocity. Behind that storm of steel the advance moved slowly, fighting doggedly forward through a continuous horrible leprosy of the earth, scabrous with craters and shell holes, until by afternoon, the ancient town of Douai, twelve miles to the southeast, was visible in the clearing air.

The Ridge had its ready-made caves, deeper than dug-outs, in which, so tradition says, the Huguenots took shelter, long ago. When Marcus and his pal, Jock Huntress, a thick-knuckled Canadian Scot from the Kootenay country, acting as "moppers-up," found themselves at the mouth of one of these caves, the signs of recent occupation seemed too many to be ignored. The place was worth a smoke bomb, at any rate; but the two were as much surprised as the men they had trapped when a score of Germans came coughing and sputtering up from the gloom of the cave.

For that both he and Huntress were decorated, somewhat to their disgust. In 1917 the British soldier was less impressed by decorations than he had been in the earlier war days; he had seen so many conferred in blank ignorance, and many more bestowed as kisses are, by favor. Marcus and Jock told each other that what they had done was neither heroic nor important, in which opinion they had the support of their frank and discerning comrades. By June it was ancient history, but Marcus could still blush helplessly when someone would ask, quite casually, "I say, Bonafede, let's have a look at your good conduct badge."

Jock Huntress was the one man of his outfit who should not have seen that newspaper from home. Because Marcus had turned first to his letters, the paper lay unprotected long enough for Jock to glance over it and to grasp its significance for his fellow-hero.

"Shame on ye, Bonafede," he said, "that ye ne'er tell't me yer auld man was a Methodist Peter the Hermit. Here's the finest worrd picture o' the Hun a body could desire, painted by yer ain father, an' him a bishop o' the kirk. It's grand propaganda, to ma thinkin'. Listen at this bit; 'Conscienceless ogre o' German militarism.' An' this; 'stern judgments from an avengin' God.' An' here's a fine trifle aboot yersel', Marcus me lad;—'we send them on their holy mission morally equipped and approved by the church.' Man, the Pope himsel' couldna bestow a properer blessin' nor that! If on'y we'd had it afore we went across Vimy we shouldna' ha' stopped this side o' Mons."

By a combination of muscle and diplomacy Marcus rescued the paper; not that he wanted it, but still less did he care to hear Jock read further extracts. And Jock, to do him justice, was not the man to carry a jest too far; he knew Bonafede for what he was, and, like most men at the front, could make allowances for the foolishness of those civilians who, at safe distances from the war, thought to improve on the imprecatory Psalms.

When Marcus sat down to a letter, his first hot anger had cooled somewhat. But even so his father wondered, and would have wondered more if he could have read between the lines. Marcus wrote as much as he dared;—it was all he could hope to get past the censor—"I wish you would not make that speech again. I saw parts of it in some papers somebody sent me, and I greatly doubt its value. The chances are you will have to revise it, and the less you use it now the less unpleasant it will be after a while to admit that you have been misinformed." Even that much would not have got through if the officer who read and passed it had seen the speech itself. For, while at the front they knew much, it was not counted good for morale to let the people at home share their knowledge. The war must go on, and the men engaged on the job would see that it did; only it was no use to tell the home folks that the really competent soldiers had no particular hate for the enemy, seeing that he was doing only what they were doing, and in the same spirit.

All this was hidden from Bartelmy Bonafede, and his son's letter merely mystified him. He could not know that the war front was a different world, with its own scale of values. He could not even guess that the complacent national egoism which his speech reflected grew out of a combination of ignorance and remoteness from the actual struggle. More discerning men than he missed the fact that the nearer you got to the front the less men hated, and the less they cared for the thing which the orators called glory.

XV

Midway of the fall, the first building of the Center had been ready for the Oxford Fellowship. Obviously it belonged to its era, those crowded months when hastily-thrown-up buildings broke out over the American landscape, huge cubical wens of pine, clean and resinous from the sawmill.

To get it at all, in a time of embargoes and commandeered industries, had taken both contriving and diplomacy; but with the Leyton gift in hand, the Fellowship was now something other than a mere suppliant for the crumbs that fell from the Methodist table. Besides, with the great influx of students coming to enroll in the S. A. T. C., the college and army authorities were pathetically glad to encourage any enterprise that offered sensible and supervised relaxation for a considerable number of students.

Mr. Leyton turned over, as he had proposed, something more than a year's interest on what he intended to be his major gift, and by early October Peter had a crude and unlovely but eminently usable "hut." Its lines and floor plan were those of a thousand Y. M. C. A. and other huts built all over the world during those feverish times, in American camps from Massachusetts to Texas and Puget Sound, on the Strand in London, and everywhere back of the Western Front, from Brest and St. Nazaire to Gievres and Neufchateau.

From the beginning there was more work than anybody expected. Rhoda worked every minute she could take from classes and study. Peter put in from ten to twenty hours a day, as needed, with the assistance of a group of volunteer helpers who came and went in two hour shifts. With one day's practice, the newest assistant, if at all fit for the job, behaved like a veteran. His or her duties were simple, and quickly learned; the main thing was to deal as a human being with a mob of youth suddenly thrust into a world of new freedoms as well as new disciplines.

In the slackest hour of a Monday morning Peter sat behind a counter of the hut, and watched Rhoda overseeing the policing of the place. At her behest, half a dozen students scrubbed, washed windows, or carried away Sunday's litter of newspapers, cracker cartons, pop bottles and miscellaneous rubbish.

He caught her eye, and beckoned her to him.

"Well, daughter, I'll admit you don't look so very tired after yesterday; but I'm afraid you're drawing pretty heavily on your strength."

"Of course I am," said Rhoda, "who isn't? But it's great. What's our strength for, now, if not to do anything that needs doing? There's a war on, you know."

Peter knew. Some of his knowledge was bitter to the taste, but he knew. "I've been thinking of that. Have you any news from Marcus lately?"

"Yes; Saturday. I've been too busy to show it to you. He's all right to date, and I've a notion he's been in some hot fights, too. You know he was at the storming of Vimy Ridge last spring, and his outfit seems to have been busy most of the time since. He writes a great letter. I'll get it for you when this cleaning job's done."

"No hurry," said Peter. "How about it, Rhoda; does he write a great love letter, too? Forgive me if I'm a nuisance."

"You *are* a nuisance, Daddy Peter; always will be. But I'll tell you, since I know you're eaten up with curiosity. If Marcus writes love letters, he doesn't write 'em to me; for which I'm truly thankful."

"Meaning you don't want love letters from him?"

"Not from him, nor from anybody. I've no time for love letters just now. I'm enjoying something I like better."

"You mean all this war excitement and work?"

"Yes; that's part of it. But Daddy, don't you see? It's the Fellowship. It's this darling ugly hut of ours, and what we're doing with it. It's the Leyton Center we're going to have after the war. It's—oh, Daddy, it's the first time I've really felt I was coming somewhere near what Mother meant when I was born—and she—died; that I should be working with you as she had dreamt of working."

Peter glowed as he looked into Rhoda's eyes. Effie, dead these twenty years, seemed to be looking back at him out of her daughter's brown, healthy face. Then a swift wave of futile rebellion swept over him. What a partner Effie would have been! But here was her child, not merely alive but giving out vitality with every word and movement. The other workers, older as well as younger, depended on her as much as they did on him. Without her, the place would have been horribly drab and ordinary.

"And is this what you really want? Just to be my 'colleague'?"

"I don't want anything else, yet. Some day there'll be an end to it, so far as I'm concerned; when it's going good, and you'll need the sort of help I can't give. Then I hope I can find something else; maybe a man, if the right man turns up. But, Daddy, if only I could shut my eyes to the knowledge that all we are doing is getting our boys ready for war, I'd be the happiest girl in town. And I can't help it that there's a war. So I'm happy anyhow. And here I stick. I'll get my degree, all in good time, and you are sure to need me for a while after the war is over, and the Center is being built. The girls will want somebody of their own age and size to help them fit into Leyton, with all it ought to mean to them. I'm applying for that job right now."

"Your application is hereby approved, young woman. But you're quite sure about Marcus?"

"Don't you worry about Marcus, Daddy. He loves me, and I love him; that's an old story—the man I could love better or differently isn't in sight. But we're the sort of lovers you and Bishop Eberle are, if I may presume to compare small people with great."

Peter pulled her ear, and then kissed it. "Your mother would have been proud of you," he said. "And I'm so proud it almost chokes me."

To hide the swift tears she had dropped her head on his coat. In a moment she said, "Daddy, dear, isn't it lovely?"

CHAPTER VIII

I

The Boulogne-Folkestone boat had its usual mixed and various-minded company. The Channel was its normal troubled self, and even the pudgy General who sat in the lee of the deckhouse could not look military, either in his periodical hurried trips to the rail or in the intervals between his acuter agonies. Civilians similarly preoccupied did not notice his lack of smartness, but it did not escape the quite impersonal attention of a half dozen Tommies lounging in the passage way under the bridge, themselves mysteriously immune from seasickness.

They had seven days leave, and the day itself was December 18, in the third year of the war. One of the privates commented on that sinister conjunction of the calendar and their week of freedom.

"We're goin' to Blighty, reight enough," he said, "but Ah'm ommost as sick as t' general theer when Ah remember Ah've got to start back early o' Christmas Eve, or get wot for when Ah do report. It's a fair mess, that's wot it is. Wheer Ah come fro', Christmas Eve's summat to think on; an' Ah'll be gettin' on t' train to London juist as t' fun gets started. Ah've nivver greeted yet, i' all this war muck, but Ah'll greet then, if Ah dunnot sweer. An' sweerin's aht o't question; mi mother'll be too near. Soa Ah'll greet an' all, an' soa wod onny lad i' my place. Dooant yo' think so, mate?"

He nudged his neighbor. They were total strangers, which did not matter. The other laughed a little dryly. "I'm sorry, but I don't know. I think I get you, but you're from the North somewhere, and I'm a little slow to pick up your North-country speech. What do you mean by 'greet'?"

" 'Course Ah'm fro' t' North. Yorksher; West Ridin'. Mean by 'greet'? Why, greet. Cry. Blubber. Rooar. Like wheer it says i't Bible, 'weepin' an' gnashin' o' teeth.' Yo' Canadians 'ave a lot to learn."

Marcus admitted it. "Though I'm not Canadian myself. I went over to Canada from the States to join up. And, now I know what 'greet' means, I think you're right. I should greet too, if I had to say goodbye to my people on Christmas Eve. But, even so, you're better off than I am. I've nobody on this side to greet for, or with."

A third soldier of the group broke in. "I say, that's rotten luck. It oughtn't to be allowed. Where are you going for your leave, if you don't mind my askin'?"

"Oh, not at all. But honestly I don't exactly know. I haven't seen much of England yet. And all Americans want to see London. So I suppose it will be London first. Maybe a day at Oxford. Stratford, of course. I'll get along. I shan't give myself time to be lonesome."

"But, I say, that's not good enough. Joe here may greet, but he'll have a human welcome first. And so shall I. Why not you? Look here, I'll make you a sporting offer. You don't know me, and I don't know you. Risk the same on either side, not? What's your name?"

Marcus told him.

"Fancy! That's one of our familiar names in Yorkshire, isn't it Joe?"

"Ah," said Joe. "Theer's plenty o' Bonafedes. One on ahr street, I mind."

"That's interesting," Marcus said. "My father came from Yorkshire; went to the states when he was a boy, from a place called Thornlea."

"Thornlea!" The two, genuinely surprised, spoke as one. And Joe added, "Eh, lad, that's wheer we come fro'! Why, tha must be Thornlea thisen!"

And the other confirmed it. "Joe and I are both Thornlea boys. You must be one of the Thornlea Bonafedes, in spite of your American tongue. And that only makes my proposal so much the easier. London's a washout this time of year, with a war on. Lots of soldiers about, of course; and Piccadilly Circus and the Euston Road are full of girls looking for colonials with more money to spend than we Tommies have. You come on down with me to Thornlea. I doubt if you will find any of your ancestral halls, but you'll be sure of a fairly lively time at our house. The heir of the Jessops invites you!" And he bowed low, with a grin on his face the while.

Marcus demurred, vigorously. “The Thornlea Bonafedes are nothing to me,” he said; “nor I to them; and they as well as your people have better things to do than taking in a chance-met soldier. It wouldn’t be, as you say, cricket, for me to think of it. I’ve no claim on anybody in England.”

“No? Not cricket?” queried young Jessop. “You’re fighting for England, when you’d no call to do it. America has come in, but you didn’t wait. That’s enough to open to you any door in England. And, more than ever, I hope you’ll come.”

“It’s not a bad nooation o’ Willy’s” commented Joe. “Ther’ll be rare gooin’s on at Norfolk Lodge, wi’ Willy back on leeave, an’ they knaw ha’ to mak’ fowk welcome; they do that.”

Before the boat came into the quiet waters of Folkestone Harbor Marcus’s scruples had been overruled. For he liked this young Jessop. The boy ought to have been an officer, and would be, before long; there were reasons, he said, why he had gone into the ranks at first.

Once the arrangement for Thornlea had been made, Willy Jessop would brook no tarrying. “We may taxi about London a bit, if there’s time,” he said, “and I’ll show you as much as you can see from the cab window. But we move North today.”

At Charing Cross, Willy sought first for a time table. After a brief search he announced, “There’s a train for Leeds at three. That will put us in by eight-thirty, and Thornlea is only half an hour away.”

They fed, and then Willy said, “Now for a ride. We can do a lot by three. Keep your eye out, Bonafede, for the glory that is London. The place is a bit run down just now, due to the town’s handy men being absent temporarily, on urgent business in Flanders and Picardy.”

The taxi driver was one of the old guard. Not so long ago he had cruised up and down the Strand at the back of a hansom. Said Willy, who recognized the type, “You know London pretty well, driver, I fancy.”

“Like the back o’ me ’and, that’s all,” the modest driver said, and heard with an approving grin Willy’s detailed directions.

“I want my friend to see all we can do in the time we have; but don’t be in a hurry. Pay by the hour, you know. First, then, a look at Trafalgar Square when you turn into Whitehall, then past the Horse Guards, and Downing Street, to the Houses of Parliament and Westminster. Then along Victoria Street and around Buckingham Palace, skirting the Green Park to Hyde Park Corner and along Piccadilly. Down the Haymarket to Trafalgar Square again. Then the Strand to Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill, St. Paul's, the Mansion House and the Bank. That's as far in that direction as we'll have time for. Come back by Cheapside to Holborn and Oxford Street, turn up by the British Museum, out to the Euston Road and so the station."

Marcus heard with unconcealed pleasure the familiar names of his boyhood reading, and the driver said, "That's a goodish drive, sir, but if the traffic's not too heavy we can make it. Pertickler for men on leave. 'Ad a boy of me own at First Wipers. Got the king's letter on his photo at 'ome."

Willy said, "Ah, yes; you've done your bit, too. I had a brother in that show. Well, we're not getting on with the war job very fast, but we've got to see it through."

" 'An' will," said the driver, as he and Willy shook hands, their one concession to the bond with which Death had joined them.

II

Darkness fell within an hour after the train slipped out of St. Pancras. Joe Bellamy had enjoyed his two hours' nap in the station, and promptly showed that he could do with more. In the front line, sleep is a sketchy and irregular privilege.

The other two talked; mainly of life as they had known it at school. Willy Jessop, after a little sketch of his education, thus far, was keen to hear about the technical schools of the States, being rather on the technical side himself. What Marcus told him of Tech suggested something on the order of the University of Leeds and Sheffield University; and, in a smaller way, his own college of Bradford, where one could get a sound scientific education, with as much of "the other stuff" as one cared to take. But shortly he began to deduce from something Marcus let fall that the Tech at Great Meadows was on a scale of its own.

"How many students did you say were in residence?"

"Oh, I suppose six or eight thousand."

"You suppose! How on earth are they housed? You can't have hostels for so many."

Marcus gathered that "hostels" might mean dormitories. "Many students live in private houses," he said. "They rent rooms, and eat wherever they please. Many are in fraternity houses—sort of clubs, you know;" and he tried to explain the Greek letter societies. After that Willy made him tell about football, and the laboratories, and the general equipment of Tech. He even told of the Oxford Fellowship. By its name it should have some interest for an Englishman.

But Willy showed little concern about it. He was thinking of the size of things educational at such an institution as Tech.

"Ah, well, you've got the money. We haven't. And we shall be poorer than ever when this job over in France is finished. But if you'll go over to Bradford with me I'll show you as neat a laboratory"—he came down hard on the *bor*—"for dyes and all that, as you could find even in Germany. We're learning from our friend the enemy; a little late in the day, some of us youngsters think. But that's English, too."

Marcus, not knowing that Willy had wired on to Thornlea, was unprepared for the reception that awaited the three mud-smeared heroes at Thornlea station. Joe Bellamy faced a welcoming committee of his own, into whose embraces he vanished, unheeded of the other two. Marcus found himself shaking hands with total strangers; two girls who had descended in force on Willy and then had released him to a stout gentleman in gray. "Here, dad," said one, "take the blighter."

And then they took possession of Marcus. "You're a Thornlea boy, we hear," said the other girl; "though you've not quite got the look. But please be resigned. You're one of us for a week—nearly." She choked a little over the "nearly." Recovering, she went on, "Willy wired us your name;—Marcus. It's not so bad. Well, Marcus, I'm Jeanette—Jane to my friends—Depledge—and this is Judith Jessop, sister to your comrade in arms. The only way you can tell us apart is that she's J. J., and I'm J. D."

Which was a pleasantry, for Judith, rosy with the happy excitement of the moment, seemed to Marcus just what he had thought the perfect English girl must be—tall, slender, glowingly white and pink and golden, and, naturally, blue of eye. Jane was of Norman blood, if Norman blood is dark, and if blood does tell. She seemed a trifle more generously proportioned than her friend.

And so up the stairs and over the railway bridge into Thornlea. A taxi in waiting, its dim lights scarcely visible in the unrelieved darkness of the street, took them a good fifteen minutes of slow driving through gloom which Marcus could not think concealed a town. "How dark it is!" he said.

"There's a war on," observed Jane. "We've had the Zepps even up as far North as this. But our driver knows the way."

The car turned through a gate, and up a long winding driveway. Then one felt a few stone steps, and a door. Once inside, and the outer door shut, some one parted the hangings, and Marcus felt, as quickly as saw, the warm brightness of a Yorkshire drawing room with no nonsense about it. Yorkshire is not given to period furniture.

"Welcome to Norfolk Lodge," said Willy, in the lead, just before a woman with silvering hair took him into her arms.

"That's right," said Mr. Jessop, "but suppose you girls let go of Mr. Bonafede, so that we may show Mother her guest." Willy, emerging from his mother's embrace, turned to rebuke them. "Is that the way to treat a Transatlantic cousin?" he asked. "For shame. He's too young and friendless to be taken prisoner. Mother, dear, this is Marcus of the Bonafedes. I hope it's the branch of that family with which you are on visiting terms."

Mrs. Jessop gave Marcus her hand. "Never mind this scamp," she said. "He's trying to hide his feelings. I know him. Ten years ago he would have cried. Now he makes everything into a jest. That's better, of course, but sometimes it calls for explanation. You are very welcome." And Marcus, looking into her eyes, knew that he was.

Mrs. Jessop had given one son to her country, as Willy had told on the way down. Howard had been in a roadside trench in the Ypres salient when, with a huge uprush of mud, chalk, wire, war-debris, human, animal and road-metal, it had become in an instant a mine crater, forty feet across. The boy's body had never been found.

Marcus was puzzled. He could guess, in the tenderness with which the mother had embraced her son, as well as in the careful gaiety of the girls and in the shadow on the father's face, that they were thinking of Howard, the firstborn. His picture stood on the mantel, differing little in the main from tens of thousands of such pictures which stood on other English mantels. But nobody spoke of him. Nobody spoke of the war, except incidentally.

Mrs. Jessop touched the edge of it when she said, "The first thing you boys need is to get out of those dreadful clothes. What mud! It fair smells! Off with you to the bathroom. You have half an hour before supper, and you will need all of it. Put your dirty things in the hamper, and shut the lid. The clean things are all laid out for you. Mr. Bonafede—or will you let me call you Marcus? You'll find some clothes that I think will fit you fairly well. The geyser's lit, and there's plenty of hot water, so I shall expect both of you to come down without a sign of French soil on you. We want no war mud for supper."

When they came down, after prolonged operations in the bathroom, and a briefer interval for dressing, Marcus felt queerly like a stranger to himself. He was wearing a dinner suit that had been Howard's, and yet it fitted him as well as his own at home, new last fall.

Freed of khaki and khaki-and-mud, the family was really seeing him for the first time, and, so far as anybody reported on it, he passed the inspection well enough.

"I can see he's English, now," said Jane; and Marcus, much to his disgust, felt the hot blood rise in his cheeks. "Doesn't he blush beautifully?"

"Jane! How can you" Judith protested; but it was a mild rebuke. That blush *was* worth seeing.

The supper—such a supper as never an English home of those years could serve save when its soldier sons came home on leave—at last was done, and around the fire in the library there was chance to talk. Mr. Jessop lit his pipe, and Willy, to everybody's surprise, declined the cigarettes. "I like 'em," he said, "but Marcus, I find, is not ready for 'em yet. Too young. Go on with the other conversation."

"How old would your father be when he left Thornlea?" Mr. Jessop asked Marcus. He had a British interest in family.

"So far as I can judge, though I am not very well up on the story, he must have been no more than fifteen. Just a boy."

"And now he's—?"

"Forty-six or seven," Marcus supplied the figure.

"Don't think I'm merely inquisitive. I'm trying to fit him into our Thornlea. He would have left about '81, then. Surely I should remember the family. I'm a little older than he. Do you know what was his mother's maiden name?"

"Yes; it was Oldroyd."

"Ah, yes; that would be it. Well, then, I did know the family. I knew your grandmother a little, by seeing her at the old house, though I must have been off at school when the family went to America. But I knew your maternal great-grandfather very well indeed. He died while I was out in South Africa—the Boer war, you know. He was Jonas Oldroyd, and one of Thornlea's characters. He did not share much in the prosperity which came to some of his generation, my own father among them; but he had qualities, had Jonas; he had qualities. I wonder if you know that Thornlea is a great shoddy center, has been so for at least seventy-five years? We came up from shoddy ourselves; it's nothing to be ashamed of in Thornlea. Good honest shoddy has its place. But old Jonas would have naught to do with it. He had a small mill, even for those times, but you should have seen the cloth it turned out. My father would not wear any other Thornlea cloth, least of all his own. I must have worn a lot of it myself when I was a boy."

"I've never heard father say much about his grandfather, or about his father, either," Marcus said. "You see, he went west from New York when he was only about seventeen or eighteen, and it is easy to lose track." He was queerly feeling that he ought to be apologetic in behalf of his father.

"That's right," said Mr. Jessop. "Much slips out of the mind, amidst new scenes and new interests. But the old gentleman was worth knowing. We are not as good Wesleyans in these days as we ought to be, but I remember him as one of the pillars of Brunswick Chapel. My mother often took me to class meeting, and I can still hear your great-grandfather's testimony—it was always put into the same words; 'I thank God for an open Bible and a free Gospel' he would say. Not a bad thing to keep saying, or thinking, either."

"We haven't altogether broken away from his religious ways," said Marcus; "we're still Methodists." He could not quite bring himself, yet, to say, "My father is a bishop of that church in America."

"As I wish more were," said Mr. Jessop. "The world has never realized its debt to the Wesleys. This part of Yorkshire is full of Methodist memories. I suppose your grandparents are not living?"

"No, sir. Grandfather Bonafede died in America, and Grandmother came back to Thornlea, or somewhere near. But I think she must have died ten or twelve years ago. Father told me she made her home with two of her distant cousins; he saw that she was comfortably cared for, so far as he could."

Mrs. Jessop spoke up, "My dear, I believe I knew her. Do you know the name of her cousins?"

Marcus was at a loss. Why hadn't he paid more attention to his family tree? And why hadn't his father told him more about it? "The name was not Oldroyd, I know, or anything like it." Then, as he cast about for some clue, he recalled that his father had once spoken a name that at the time struck him as peculiarly English, though he did not know why. "Are there people in this part of the country with a name that ends in 'thwait', or something like it?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Jessop. "It's the same family. I was just thinking of them. The name is Braithwaite. You knew of them, Samuel, I'm sure. Those old ladies who lived far over in Upper Thornlea, on the way to Bewley Bridge. And if Mr. Jessop can remember Mr. Oldroyd, I can come nearer, for I have often talked with Mrs. Bonafede, your grandmother. When Mr. Jessop was in South Africa, I had plenty to do, with my young family, but I ran away from them sometimes for long walks, and one of my favorites was around the old church in Upper Thornlea. Many a time I stopped to rest at the Braithwaite cottage. She was a keen old lady, Mrs. Bonafede was, and so proud of her son in America, and of his advancement in the church. That would be your father, wouldn't it? Though you haven't said he's a minister."

"Yes; he's been in the Methodist ministry over twenty years."

"Your grandmother called him 'Bart,' I remember."

"That's dad," said Marcus. "Bartelmy Bonafede."

"No wonder Willy invited him here," said Jane to no one in particular. "Bright boy, Willy, at intervals. He just knew that Marcus belonged to us."

Willy mussed her hair. But Judith said, "Well, if he doesn't exactly belong to us, isn't it nice to find that some of his people and ours have been friends?" Whereupon she blushed more hotly than Marcus had done, and Marcus wondered how her blushes could be so lovely when his were so shameful.

If Bishop Bartelmy Bonafede could have looked at the outside of Norfolk Lodge as Marcus saw the place the next morning, he would have thought that it had changed very little since the dreary day, long ago, when a grubby little boy had come up the hill and had gone down again, thinking strange and bitter thoughts about those who dwelt in Lodges.

To Marcus, with no suspicion that the place meant anything to any Bonafede in the world save himself, it seemed just a good, substantial English house, standing in its own grounds, and affording a fine view of the Thornlea valley, with its captivating alternation of clustered houses and small mills and stretches of farm land, much of the pasture still green in the mild December sun.

III

The days flew by, with Bartelmy Bonafede's son giving himself up to the generous and gracious hospitality of the place.

The young people begrudged every minute unoccupied; sleep could come later, but the present had more important claims. Every night there was a party somewhere; every morning, excursions along the crest of the hill to the old ruins, or down by the river, whose banks still retained some of their ancient loveliness, in spite of the polluting waters which the mills emptied into the stream. If there was rain, a billiard room and a music room offered entertainment. And some sort of company always coming and going.

No one could say either that the thing was planned, or consciously sought, but day by day it was easier to pair off Marcus and Judith together, until at length the arrangement was taken for granted. Nobody had time to ask or think what it meant, or what might come of it; though Mrs. Jessop took to following them with her eyes, as she saw them in the garden or hurrying down the drive, or dropping innocently into the back seat of the Jessop motor.

Certainly these two did not stop to take their feelings apart. As most young things of that day must, they were living in the moment; and, for the moment, they were radiantly happy.

What else but today mattered, when you could for a little forget the big guns thundering in France, and the long casualty lists coming out in every paper?

The day before Christmas Eve! By a fiction to which all gave assent, it *was* Christmas Eve. Leave was up in the morning, so the calendar was advanced a day—for one last fling!

The young people had planned a masquerade. The elders said, "But what about Christmas Eve, and the carols, and the tree?"

They negotiated a compromise. First the masquerade, from dinner until near midnight. Then the carols, to "sing Christmas in;" then the tree, the presents, the Christmas greetings,—and as few hours for sleep as might be.

An expedition to the great attic was organized. Costumes being in demand for the party, the stores of two generations must be made to yield their treasures, Mrs. Jessop surrendering at discretion. And what treasures they were! In these trunks and boxes the pageant of English fashions since crinoline needed only to be set in order; every vogue had its authentic examples. All this for the women, of course, the men found less plunder available for their use.

Judith and Marcus, leaving the riflers of trunks at their hilarious task, strayed about under the rafters, Judith explaining this and that of the family's relics.

"Here's the table-chair daddy had when he was a baby; it has served for the boys, and last of all it was mine. This is the family cradle, with the same history. Daddy says it was his father's, too, but that's going pretty far back."

The tall secretary which stood behind the cradle looked as though its glass doors had been closed but yesterday; all its books and shelves were in order. "This was Grandfather Jessop's," said Judith, as she lifted the cover. "He never would have any other. You know, he was the founder of the family; that is, here in Thornlea. He came from Leeds as a boy, to work in the mills, and became a mill-owner himself. I remember him a little, though he died when I was seven, and I loved him. But daddy says he was a hard man to get along with, especially when he was building up his business. Perhaps he had to be."

"He seems to have been business-like," observed Marcus, pointing to the pigeon-holes behind the writing-table. "If these papers are his, they testify to a careful man."

"Yes," Judith said, "but I think that is Daddy's doing. All the papers of any business value were taken out long ago. And Daddy has said he didn't know why these need be kept, but he's queer about destroying such things. Though they're no earthly use."

"They might tell a story about the business life of the last half-century, maybe," conjectured Marcus; "if they were put together by years. That would be interesting, seems to me."

"Yes; perhaps. Showing how business was managed before typewriters and adding machines and all that came into use? I suppose grandfather had dealings with hundreds of firms, big and little, all over this part of Yorkshire. Ooh! Marcus; I have an idea! What if he and your grandfather—I mean, perhaps there is something in these old files that will tell of those two doing business with one another! Why not? They were—what do you call it?—contemporaries, you know. Let's look!"

Marcus thought it might be a good idea, but not for him. "I wasn't thinking of anything like that, when I said those papers might be interesting."

"Certainly not; I know that, stupid. But what's the harm? They're nothing but old papers, useless for all these years. I'm going to investigate."

"All right, Judy, look away. This is your attic, but it isn't mine. I'll take a peek at these books while you rummage. Books are not private."

He took a book from the shelf, while Judith ran her eye along the row, and pulled down a box whose front bore the letters, "Bi to By." "Here's the place to find the Bonafede-Jessop transactions if there were any," she cried. "Wouldn't it be priceless, to discover that those two old worthies did business together?"

There was silence for a space at that end of the attic, broken only by the rustling of the papers which Judith turned over. Marcus was deep in Lover's "Handy Andy," when a cry from Judith called him back from his enjoyment of Lover's impossible Irish blunderer.

"Why Marcus, there *is!* I didn't really expect to find anything, and it's only one bit of paper. But look!"

She handed him a single sheet folded once. "Read it."

Which he did, since she had unearthed it, not he. It was a tradesman's bill. The type was old-fashioned, centainly, but the writing was beautifully clear and shapely.

Thornlea, 1st. December, 1880

Samuel Jessop, Esq.

To MARK BONAFEDE, Carpenter and Joiner, Dr.

To bill rendered,	£ 1. 17. 6.

A settlement would oblige.

"Isn't that one of your grandfather's bills?" asked Judith.

"It must be," Marcus admitted. "That's his name; I'm named for him, you know, though Mother thought Marcus sounded better than Mark, and chose that form. And he was a carpenter, though I don't know about the 'joiner'."

"It's much the same thing," said Judith. She paused. Then, "But there's something queer about this, Marcus. That bill isn't marked paid. It says, 'A settlement would oblige.' I wonder why your Grandfather Bonafede didn't mark it paid."

"Maybe he did," Marcus ventured; "on another bill."

"Then why was this kept?" Judith wanted to know. "I don't believe grandfather ever did pay it. Look at the date. Didn't your grandfather go to America in 1881? You told Daddy so. Why, Marcus, we owe *you* that money. Or your father."

"Not me," disclaimed Marcus. "Maybe my grandfather, unless he got his money later. Anyhow, the thing is outlawed, long since."

"What do you mean by 'outlawed'?"

"Why, no longer collectible. With us, anyway, the law says that after a certain few years, a bill is dead; outlawed. Can't be sued for. And that thing is thirty-five years old."

"What of it? I'm sure it wasn't paid. It's a debt. It ought to be paid, even now. Honest people don't take advantage of such laws."

Straightway the tempter entered into Marcus. He deliberately put "Handy Andy" back on the shelf. The attic was suddenly quiet, the rest of the rummagers having just clattered downstairs with their booty, one of them shouting as they went, "Come on, you laggards; we've got our work cut out, to fix these old things up."

But these two gave no heed. And Marcus said, "I'll tell you what, Judy. If you are so insistent that the bill be paid, will you pay it, yourself, and to me?"

Judith was puzzled. And just a little hurt. Why should he ask payment of her? Still, she had said it ought to be paid.

"Why, ye-es, if that's best. But—I don't quite understand. Do you mean today, now? I haven't the—"

"Yes, Judy, I mean today. But not all of it. By instalments. The first payment now, on account." And he took her face between his hands.

Her eyes widened; at least he wasn't asking for money. Then came quick understanding of just what he meant.

He kissed her, and she did not move, nor return his kiss. She was too busy thinking.

"Received of Judith Jessop," he said, slowly, "one instalment on account of bill rendered. With thanks, and anticipating further valued favors."

"Oh," she said, recovering a little, "so that's your idea of payment, is it? And how many will be necessary to pay the bill in full?"

"Judy darling," and he put his arm about her, "so far as I am concerned, I'm prepared to accept instalments indefinitely, though I've got to be honest and admit that I've already got value received, with interest. But what do you say? You don't know much about me. But what you don't know is fairly decent, I hope. If I throw myself in, along with whatever it was that Grandfather Bonafede was charging for, will you let me collect another payment on account, now and then?"

And Judith, all smiling as to the lips and all brimming as to the eyes, said, "If you truly mean that, Marcus, I think—I think—that is, would you mind taking another payment now, while I happen to have it with me?"

And thus it was that the bill which a little hungry boy had carried up to Norfolk Lodge so many years ago, and had left there to wait the debtor's convenience, at last began to be paid. If only it could have been settled in time to save little Bartelmy Bonafede from going to bed—and to the battle of life—hungry!

As they stood there, clasped in their first embrace, up from the road came the strains of a hymn. The waits were setting out on their all-night round, and here, under the Jessop windows they were singing as only in Yorkshire can the tune which bears the county's name be sung.

> "Christians, awake! Salute the happy morn
> Whereon the Saviour of this world was born."

IV

It was February before any letters mentioning the Thornlea Christmas reached America. Marcus, back in the horrible winter trench-and-dugout life, put off writing until he could do it under less cramped conditions. Rest billets came short of the ideal, but a fellow had daylight, such as it was; and shelter, as far as it went.

With variations, his story, naturally, was the world-old pæan of the lover who knows that the fates have made special interposition in his behalf, to bestow upon him, by what the profane would consider pure accident, the dearest girl on earth.

In this wise he wrote to Rhoda, sure that she would understand; as she did, though not without a quarter of an hour's self-examination, to make sure that she had no lingering regret. She came out of her reverie quite clear on that score. Marcus was a dear, but she had never thought of him as a lover.

He had written, "Please ask Uncle Peter to consider this his letter, too, if you are willing to share it; it's pretty long, and I've a harder one to write before turning in."

He could not have told why he felt that writing to his mother would be more of a task. It almost seemed as though he must be on the defensive. Necessity constrained him to make Judith desirable, not to himself, but to his mother. So his rhapsodies, flowing easily enough in his letter to Rhoda, became more than a little forced when his mother's letter was under way. Not that he consciously feared or even envisaged her opposition; it was just that he could not think of her as easily understanding what had happened. As he wrote, he tried without success to imagine what sort of lovers she and his father had been.

The result was a rather stiff and inane epistle, which narrowly avoided the appearance of a veiled apology for some stupid blunder. Thus it came to Viola, and thus it was ticketed in her mind.

The Bonafedes had gone out to Salt Lake City for the interval between Christmas and Bartelmy's two spring conferences, and were settled in an apartment hotel. It was understood that Viola would go east with her husband. That she would not return, at least until fall, had not been announced. But she was giving up the apartment, and arranging to have another reserved for them at some indefinite date, by promising a week's advance notice.

"Have you a letter from Marcus, too?" she asked Bartelmy at breakfast, as she looked up from her own letter.

"Yes. "I've merely glanced at it, as yet. I suppose he's told you the details of this love affair of his."

"Such as it is. He doesn't write as if he were carried away with it. Of course it was one of these silly war-romances, that flare up in a day and die down in a week. I understand they're more common in England than here, and ours are bad enough. Do you happen to know anything about the family? It seems they live in the town where you were born."

"So Marcus says in his letter." It was one of the two facts it had disclosed which, even with his one hasty reading, were crystal clear. "I might have; no telling. But it's a long time since we left Thornlea, and even in England things and people change. I do remember that Jessop was one of the names we often heard; there must have been several Jessops in Thornlea then."

"But he writes as though they were something above the common run. What do you think? Says their house is called Norfolk Lodge, and is on Abbey Ridge. Does that mean anything?"

Norfolk Lodge; Jessop; Abbey Ridge? There was no mention of Norfolk Lodge in his letter, but now, putting house and family and Abbey Ridge together, they spelled something in his memory. But certainly it was nothing to talk about, now.

"It may, and it may not. Most English houses of importance have names; but I understand that lately all sorts of people have taken to putting names on all sorts of houses. As I remember, Abbey Ridge was as near being an aristocratic section as Thornlea could boast."

"Well, the girl is not bad looking, if this picture is any indication." She passed it over to her husband. "Do you suppose they have any money?"

"Very likely, living on Abbey Ridge. But in England nowadays people with money are not wealthy, as we think of wealth. England is paying for the war, as much as she can, while it is going on. That means taxes; big taxes; far beyond anything Americans would stand. We're not up against it as they are. I suppose the fairly well-to-do must be paying a quarter of their income in taxes."

In all this he was sparring for time. He had not been able to think carefully, yet, of the other important paragraph in Marcus's letter. He must find out if she knew what it seemed to say.

"Does he tell you how he happened to propose?"

"Why, he raves a little about the house party they had at Christmas, and a masquerade. Talks of himself and the girl slipping away from the others; the usual stuff. You may read the letter if you like."

It was many years since they had fallen out of the way of reading each others' letters, and Bartelmy was strangely unwilling to resume the habit now.

"Oh, no; I was just wondering how the affair came to a head. I suppose it was just the old combination of the time, the place and the girl."

"Well, I should say, from the way he writes to me, that it won't last. If it does, there's time enough to make inquiries, before anybody need think about a wedding."

To Bartelmy's relief, Viola evinced no curiosity about his letter. She had the essential facts, and she would go over them at her leisure. She knew well enough, by this time, that Marcus intended to make his own choices. In her heart she had deeply resented his enlisting without so much as a by your leave, though circumstances had forced her to overlook that. Nevertheless, she would approve of this, his latest folly, only if and when she so decided. Should she choose not to approve, Marcus—and Judith—would not be kept in ignorance of her displeasure.

Bartelmy had an engagement with a church official, who was passing through on his way to the Coast. He went to the station ahead of time, Marcus's letter in his pocket. In the waiting room he took it out and read it with deliberate care. One page he read twice.

"And, Dad, there's one part of this thing that seems like a fairy story. It belongs to you, so I'm not writing it to Mother. You tell her. Up there in the Jessop attic, while the others were digging out costumes for the party, Judith and I came across some old papers. She dug into them, and—what do you suppose? Found an old bill, dated nearly forty years ago, made out by your father for work he had done for her grandfather! It called for one pound seventeen shillings and sixpence. And it wasn't marked paid. Judith said it ought to be paid, even at this late day, by somebody to somebody. And at that I got up my nerve to do a thing I had been afraid I'd have to go away without chancing. I said, 'All right; then suppose, as Mark Bonafede's grandson and namesake, I collect something on account.' And I kissed her. Well, Dad, when I found she wasn't exactly unwilling, I could have given the Tech yell if I had thought about it, which I didn't. I was busy telling her why I kissed her."

An old bill; nearly forty years old. Let's see; this happened at Christmas, 1917. Forty years ago would be 1877; nearly forty years might be thirty-eight or thirty-seven;—say 1879 or 1880. Yes; it would be rather an old bill now, though when he took it up to Abbey Ridge that dreary night it was scarcely dry from Mark Bonafede's careful pen. It would look strangely familiar even after all these years. He could see again the floridly ornamented letters of his father's name, and the brief formula which in those days he had not quite understood:

"To MARK BONAFEDE, Dr."

So the bill had been preserved. The bill which his father would not try to collect; on which he himself had vainly hoped to write his own name and the cheerful words, "Settled, with thanks," was at last to be settled in another way. Was it better so?

Samuel Jessop owed Mark Bonafede thirty-seven shillings and sixpence, with interest. And from that bit of paper—it must be yellow with age by now—to which a hungry boy had fixed his hopes of supper long ago, had sprung new hopes, new bonds, uniting his family with that of the man he once had envied and hated,—who, unwitting, had shown him a philosophy. He did not agree with Viola that the affair would not last. Marcus's story had not so impressed him.

It was a whimsical fancy; "I wonder if those two old men can know what their grandchildren are up to."

V

For more than a year fragments of the letters which Marcus wrote home to friends had been finding their way into print. His father began it when he showed one of the letters to a newspaper friend, who took it and asked for more. He also asked for the names of other people to whom Marcus was writing, and the Bishop referred him to several, including Rhoda Middleton and the assistant football coach at Tech.

There was no special reason for holding back such extracts from the letters as the paper wanted, for these parts were quite impersonal in content, though not at all in form. Marcus had a nice faculty for writing with each recipient's distinctive traits in mind, so that each letter, fitted to its reader, had a quality much sought after in modern newspaper practice.

Before long he had a letter from a New York syndicate to the general effect that it needed such stuff as he was writing to his friends, and asking for a series addressed to such groups as the boys in the camps and cantonments, the old folks at home, the industrial workers, the college students, and the business men who must put over the Liberty loans.

Naturally his range could not include active fighting, either present or recent. Lieutenant Blythe, the censor who passed on his work, so far from discouraging him, went out of his way to enlarge the boy's market.

"Bonafede," said he one day, "I assume that in the States they really print these letters of yours."

"Yes sir, so far. There seems to be something about the stuff which they like, though it's just what anybody might write if he cared to."

"Quite. But, you know, few people seem to care to. And your work is not half bad. Even I can see that, just by reading it straight from your pen. I've been wondering if it might go, in England. Fresh touch; new point of view, Anglo-American approach; if you follow me. Mind if I tip off a friend of mine in Fleet Street?"

Marcus did not mind, and in a month he would have begun a series for a group of provincial dailies, but for the fact that he was back in the trenches, a mud-colored atom among the many thousands who were grimly holding against the first onset of the big German push from Ypres to the Somme.

During that not altogether glorious exploit of British arms, Marcus's good fortune failed him at last, and with what seemed sheer perversity. A raid into the German lines impended, and the Germans, more than suspecting it, began, forty-five minutes before zero, to send a barrage across. Marcus, stepping over the splash board of his dugout at the right—or wrong—moment, emerged in perfect time with the arrival of a shell which barely cleared the parapet, and buried him with two others in a smother of mud, filthy water and miscellaneous wreckage. One of the two came out unmarked; the other died where he lay. Marcus, struggling free from the debris, found that something was wrong with his left arm. It turned out to be a shell splinter, with complications.

The dressing station, dealing with him shortly enough, because business was unexpectedly brisk, gave him hasty first aid, and directions to the better facilities far to the rear. Thither he made his way, cautiously, with several others whose legs were still able to carry them.

Hitherto Marcus had looked on the walking wounded as lucky men; they were out of it, and yet a long way from being as dead as they had expected to be.

It is different when one joins that drab procession. Mind and spirit are let down. For the man who has been wounded in action, the furious grim joy of the fight is past. The man who, like Marcus, had hoped for a modest share in some bedevilling of the enemy, is half relieved, half jealous, that for the moment he can have no more part in whatever may be afoot. Certainly there were some not at all depressed. To them, months of war-weariness had made their wounds welcome. Others, with smaller excuse, spoke without shame of their chance of Blighty.

A week of surgical treatment and observation sufficed to show that Private Marcus Bonafede's arm could not be patched up for further war use. Though hand and fingers were as good as ever, the arm would be stiff for months, perhaps years. Therefore, in the usual course, he would be invalided to England, and ultimately to Canada, the place of his enlistment. Meanwhile, he began once more to use his pen.

But Lieutenant Blythe had thought of a better way to dispose of a casualty who could write such useful letters home. Naturally, the high gods of the staff must first be propitiated, and the customary rites performed; but when all this had been attended to, in the sketchily careless way of the English, and when Marcus had wormed his way through labyrinths of red tape and had done obeisance before dozens of brass hats, he found himself with a second lieutenant's commission in the Blankshires, a ten day furlough—which he spent in Thornlea—and orders which attached him for escort duty to the Ministry of Information.

His job, when it was explained to him, seemed as near a perpetual holiday as one could ask, though in practice it had its difficult moments. He was assigned as one of the escorts to American newspaper visitors whom, in the last year of the war, the Northcliffe genius for propaganda was bringing, Cook's tourist fashion, to England and the Western front.

Blythe had written, in effect, though with due use of official verbiage, to the appointing powers, "This boy knows how to write, and he should be useful to press men, especially Americans, being an American himself. He's no more use at the front; give him a lieutenancy, and attach him to the ministry for service with the American journalists." The facts were so obvious that even a Whitehall functionary could take them in.

VI

Tech was in full war paint. In that spring of 1918 it was much more like a military camp than a vocational university.

The atmosphere of the place and time affected all its activities, in the churches as well as in the class rooms and on the campus. Sermons were preached on texts chosen mainly from the Old Testament. The imprecatory Psalms came in for a new season of popularity. God had become once more the God of battles, the Avenger, the Destroyer of the proud. Preachers exalted the righteousness of war, though most of them insisted that it must be a war without hate. There was much talk of the clean sword, and of the war against war, and the stand of the Western powers was lauded as an uprising against militarism.

Scarce a preacher of them all but said, or implied, that once this war was won, there would be universal beating of swords into plowshares; nations would learn war no more. Peace, world-wide and lasting, was to come. In the meantime the Potsdam Gang must be exterminated, the Hun driven from whatever gate he was assumed to be hammering at.

This was Peter Middleton's hardest year. People began to notice that he was not furiously preaching the Crusade. He had no lack of themes, nor did he want for a hearing; his congregations were limited only by the size of the hut, and, in good weather, by the width of its open windows.

Some of the boys in khaki frankly said, when, as often happened, Middleton was being informally discussed, that they liked to hear him, because after you'd been next to war talk and drill and K.P. and fatigue duty all week, it was not so bad on Sunday to go to church, where maybe you could forget it.

"And how can you, if the preacher is damning the Kaiser, and telling us we're the saviors of civilization? Me for Middleton, and at least a trace of the Christianity we used to hear in most any church up to last spring."

"That's me, too. We're all in this, now, but how are we so sure this year that France and England are lily-white innocents, when only about a year ago half the United States thought Germany had something of a case? How much worse is she now than when Wilson was telling us to be neutral in thought and word?"

"Shut up, you! That's rotten talk from a man in uniform. You'll land in the guard house if you ain't careful. Germany's the enemy, and don't you forget it. Your man Middleton better remember it, too, or he's in for trouble. They do say he's pro-German, and is afraid to come right out and admit it."

With such talk going on among the soldiers, Peter could not expect to escape attention from those always more militant citizens whose only outlet for their war-energy was talk. With the exception of a professor or two, all these were outside his constituency; he was not nearly so much troubled by them as he would have been if he had been pastor of an ordinary town church. Students have a great capacity for toleration.

It was his friend Aaron Leyton who reported some of the more damaging accusations which were passing from lip to lip.

"I met the district superintendent yesterday," he said, being in Great Meadows on one of his frequent visits, "and he seems to be worried about you."

"Yes?" said Peter. "What's up?"

"Oh, nothing new. But he's afraid the talk about your being of German birth, and your changed name, coupled with the fact that you don't preach the usual brand of patriotic sermon, is going to embarrass you; and, incidentally, of course, himself as your supervising officer."

"So I'm of German birth, am I?" queried Peter. "Well, I am German on one side, though I never changed my name. That was done before I was born, and when the only prospect of war in sight was with the Sioux and the Apaches."

"Of course; I understand," said Mr. Leyton. "But it's what is being said."

"I know," Peter sighed. "What I'd like to know, though, is who told the superintendent my name had been changed, now or ever."

Mr. Leyton didn't know. "The fact itself is news to me. I said I understood only because I take your explanation as it stands."

"The fact is news to everybody," said Peter. "I hadn't thought of it for years. But here it is. My father's name was Heinrich Mittelstadt; he ran away from German militarism after the troubles of 1848, in which as a very young man he was somehow involved. Before he had been long in this country he changed his name to Henry Middleton, just because he wanted to show himself an American through and through, name and all. And my mother—well, some of her people came over in the Mayflower, and you'll find names of their descendants among the first students of Harvard. She was from Cape Cod. How does all that make me a pro-German?"

"Not nearer than three thousand miles, I should say," answered his friend. "I don't understand how the story got started. The district superintendent told he he had been meeting with some sort of a commission in Iliopolis, and that it had been talked there."

"Would that be the Commission on Cooperation with the Food Administration?"

"Yes; that's the very one."

"Was Bishop Bonafede there? He's the Chairman."

"Why, yes, I think he was. In fact the superintendent told me as much, now that you ask."

Peter changed the subject. He did not need to ask more, and was not inclined to explain his question about Bishop Bonafede. So they spent the rest of the evening talking about Leyton Center; plans were going forward in spite of the war. There was no embargo on plans and planning, though actual building was out of the question.

After Leyton had gone, Peter could not sleep until he had written a short note to Bartelmy Bonafede.

"My dear Bart," it ran, "couldn't you have found something else to talk about than what you learned when you were my father's guest, more than thirty years ago? It doesn't seem to have much to do with today's affairs. There's nothing I can do, of course, if you insist on keeping it up. But you know the exact truth. Will you tell it? You know the man my father was. Will you tell that? Perhaps it is foolish of me to remind you that he was your friend when you hadn't as many friends as you have now."

To which the bishop made prompt answer. "Somebody has been grievously misrepresenting me," he wrote, "though I can't imagine why. The only time I have ever mentioned the matter of your German name was at lunch the other day, during a meeting of the Commission. A remark had been made about your ability to find sermon subjects that had nothing to do with the war, and I merely happened to say that you probably inherited a disinclination toward things warlike, because your father, though a German, was a pronounced hater of war, and that the family name was changed partly for that reason. Of course I know that the thing he hated was the German militarism which had grown up especially under Bismarck. I cannot believe you are ashamed of these things, but if you feel sensitive on the subject I assure you it will not be mentioned again by me."

Peter read the answer with mixed pity and wonder. It depressed him. He knew there was nothing Bart had done to which he could take open exception. The facts were there, and in ordinary times they would do no harm. But in times like these the most innocent fact could take on sinister meanings, and Bart, even to him, had made it seem as though Peter were trying to conceal something damaging. There was no significance, as Bart very well knew, in his promise, if it was a promise, not to say more about the matter. Once was enough. Tongues would not be lacking to carry the ugly-looking thing where it would do the most harm.

As a matter of fact, it didn't go very far. It almost came to a head within the week, and got a check from which it did not recover.

The trustees of the Oxford Fellowship came to Great Meadows for a stated meeting; among them Bishops Randolph and Eberle.

Said Bishop Randolph, during Peter's temporary absence from the room, "What's this I hear about Brother Middleton being luke-warm toward the war? We can't stand for that, you know. I'm quite ready to acknowledge the good work he has done here, especially since he has had the generous assistance of Brother Leyton. But it will all go for naught if the people, and especially the government, should be led to believe that the Oxford Fellowship is not one hundred per cent for the war, the nation, and the Allies."

Brother Leyton rose to speak. He was angry. But Bishop Eberle checked him. "If you please, Brother Leyton. I think I know what you want, and I want it, too. There's a way to get it." Then addressing Bishop Randolph he said, "I suggest that this matter is not before us officially, and until it is we have nothing on which to take action. And let me say, lest anybody should think it advisable to raise the issue, that I know where the rumors about Middleton originated, and I shall not hesitate, if the business does come up, to open it out in all its ramifications, wherever they may lead."

Because Bishop Randolph knew his colleague, without necessarily being passionate in his fondness for him, and knew that he would undoubtedly be as good as his word, he chose the prudent course.

"I have no desire whatever," he said coldly, "to stir up trouble. I was merely seeking to protect the good name of the Fellowship."

"Quite so," said Bishop Eberle. "And, if I may say so, I am merely seeking to protect the peace and quietness of the church, including the episcopacy. As for Brother Middleton, you can make me personally responsible for his good behaviour, if you wish."

Bishop Randolph would have liked to ask who could be made responsible for Bishop Eberle; but second thought kept him from uttering what everybody knew was in his mind.

VII

Marcus stopped in London just long enough to get one of the thrown-together uniforms of the period, and was off for Yorkshire, wiring ahead the news that Norfolk Lodge was in for another visitation from the trenches.

All the Jessops welcomed him; he was becoming part of the huge drama in which the English lived, and wondered how; he was the more readily accepted because he brought a touch of love and hope into the grim tale of the days.

Willy Jessop was in the worst of the fighting; but no news is good news, until suddenly it isn't. At any rate, no bad news had yet come. And the amazing English could work, and entertain guests, and read newspapers, and look each other in the face without flinching. It cost; but the price was paid in private.

And the romance which had suddenly bloomed at Christmas seemed almost too free of flaw, in days like these. The Jessops, though they were familiar with war time's swift courtships, were something dazed by the speed of this one which involved their girl. But from the first Mrs. Jessop had taken to Marcus, and her husband could find no fault in him. All they wanted to know now was that his people would be equally ready to approve the engagement.

Marcus airily waved away the possibility of any objection from the Bonafede side.

"Though I must make a confession," he said one night when the family were gathered after dinner before the fire. "I am not what you think I am—that is, my father is not; I mean, I didn't tell you, when I was here before, anything about him except that he's a Methodist minister. Well, he is; but that's not all. He had been for several years one of the church's general officers, and two years ago the General Conference made him a bishop."

"A bishop? Why, Marcus; and you never told us!" This from Judith; the others took the news less explosively, but it was clear that they were no little impressed.

"Please, now, don't be so shocked," Marcus said, half seriously. "A Methodist bishop is not so bad; and not so wonderful, either. I've known several of them. Of course he's not like your English bishops. As a matter of fact, he's not that sort of a bishop,—just a general officer of the church. Only, for the work he and the others of his group have to do, they're called bishops. I don't know much about it, but I've heard them often at conferences and such places, and being a bishop in our church seems to mean a lot of work and responsibility, more than anything else."

Jane Depledge was the first to recover. "Bishop Bonafede," she mused. "Sounds well, don't you think? And then, he's from Thornlea. The *Recorder* will love that."

Mr. Jessop nodded. "Why not?" he asked. "Thornlea has not had too many opportunities to congratulate itself on the success of its sons. But of course we shall not say anything about it that might embarrass you, Marcus, my boy."

"Oh, that's all right," said Marcus. "It's almost as new a thing to me as it is to you, you know. I've never seen him since it happened. But it's nothing to be ashamed of. Only don't tell anybody until I get away. I know something about these newspaper men."

This visit there was no merrymaking. Holidays were past, and Willy Jessop was in Gough's army, from which not much good news had come of late. The great German *friedensturm* was raging in full fury, and all England seemed to know that the supreme crisis was at hand. Deep soberness of mood had settled on the people. They were far removed from despair, and yet,—if only America were a little nearer ready.

Judith and Marcus took long walks in the spring fields and woods, and all about the town. They were able, by dint of a little investigating, to spot Balaklava Terrace, and the little house in which Bishop Bonafede was born. On another day they found Mark Bonafede's old shop, at the bottom of the Cliff Road, and, in a neighborhood now decaying, the former home of the bishop's grandfather, Jonas Oldroyd. The registers of the parish church yielded treasure, and many other evidences of the Bonafede share in Thornlea life were found, until Marcus said, "I feel as if you and I were celebrating Old Home Week all by ourselves, Judith."

Whereupon he must needs explain Old Home Week and its customs. Judith could not quite see it.

"The idea of people in such a new country as America," she said, "coming back to any one spot in it and thinking of that spot in terms of ancient times. Why, I thought it was *all* new!"

Again Marcus had to explain, offering bits of history, with dates, to show that the thing could easily be, until Judith laughed and said, "Why, of course, I see. Even that Parkerville you told me about must seem ancient, to you, because you were only a child when you lived there. Do you suppose that Norfolk Lodge will be like that to me, when—" she had the grace to blush—"when I've become an old woman in America?"

To such a question there could be only one answer, an answer which put Old Home Week quite out of the conversation.

VIII

Life became to Marcus a continuous business of arrivings and departings. The American journalists who came under his wing were surprised to find an American boy in a British officer's uniform, and, what was more, a boy who knew something of their trade and its jargon. They took him to their hearts.

The Northcliffe idea of dealing with these Americans was perfect newspaper diplomacy. They were the guests of the government, free to ask questions, to think what they would, and, within bounds which were never mentioned, to go where they pleased.

The successive groups were shown the London Docks and told about shipping control. They walked through miles of munitions works. They were wined and dined by Lord Provosts, Lord Mayors, lords without portfolios, and other expert hosts. The more literary were given an evening at the Cheshire Cheese with such men to meet them as Owen Seaman of *Punch,* Lionel Curtis of the *Round Table,* the Editor of the *Times,* Leo Maxse, A. G. Gardiner, and Sir Gilbert Parker.

The political minded drew a luncheon at the Criterion, with men like Lord Bryce, Lord Robert Cecil, and Walter Long to talk to them. They discussed drink control with Waldorf

Astor and his sprightly Virginian wife, education with W. A. L. Fisher, hands-across-the-sea with Evelyn Wrench, the founder of the English-Speaking Union, and religion with Stuart Holden, Robertson Nicoll, and the Archbishop of Canterbury. If, after all this, they still were unable or unwilling to write good stuff for their papers, then Northcliffe had so far failed. But there were few failures.

Of course they went as near the front as was sensible, and they admitted that what they saw of the war was "a-plenty". They had Paris for education and diversion, and the American army showed them Gievres and Romorantin and a German prisoners' corral.

All this Marcus saw, heard and shared. He bought tickets and reserved rooms and worked out routes of travel over every British railway from Southampton to the Forth, and criss-cross on the distracted French railway lines. In between, he gave good advice about how to behave in England to those Americans who would take it gratefully from a fellow-American, though they would have cast it in an Englishman's teeth.

The private joys of his job came on the British north and south journeys,—the trips to Gretna and the Clyde and the Grand Fleet off Rosyth. For these trips must needs take him and his party through Yorkshire, and always there was at least a five-minute stop at some railway center not too remote from Thornlea.

It needed only a wire to Norfolk Lodge, and Judith would find some way of being on the station platform when the train slipped in. Marcus always gave his American charges advance notice that he was not responsible for what happened at this stop. "Look out for yourselves, fellows," he would say; "I've a girl waiting to see me when we pull into Leeds."

What mattered it if Jane Depledge came with Judith? Marcus would kiss her, too, no one objecting; but the time was the lovers' five minutes, with his own girl to take in his arms, his girl's blue eyes to look into, and his girl's dewy lips to kiss.

"You're becoming famous in Thornlea," said Judith after the first greetings during one of these glimpses of Paradise. "The *Recorder* prints your articles, and always speaks of you as a son of Thornlea. Bonafede has become an important name in the town, and people are remembering that your grandfather was a well-known employer in his day, though

Dad says he may have had one helper, no more, if the old shop we found at the bottom of the Cliff Road was really his. They want to see you; they're sorry they knew nothing of all this when you were here at Christmas. They want to see your father, too. If he would come over from America, the town of his birth would give Bishop Bonafede a great welcome."

Marcus was not interested in his own Thornlea fame; and still less in the thought of his father's return. Once that might have been pleasant, but now he was bothered by too many questions about his father. Thornlea, like every other town in Britain, was a place of universal but reticent suffering. Scarce a home but had paid its footing in the war, in the bodies of its best beloved and in its own soul. With all his eagerness to be loyal to his father, Marcus could not help thinking what the Bishop's war talk, or any probable variation of it, would do the raw nerves of Thornlea.

"I'm too busy to come, dear, until after these newspaper trips are over, and it's astonishing how many American newspaper men are willing to endure the necessary hardships. It's wonderful that we can have even a minute like this, now and then. As for father, he has his hands full at home. The church has made him something or other connected with war work over there, and he's on the go continually. So Thornlea must carry on without the Bonafedes, for a while, I guess. But let's not talk of that. We have three minutes left for more important business."

IX

When the Armistice came, some of the Government's war activities were too tough to be immediately affected. But on November 11, the Ministry of Information realized that its excuse for being had vanished. For a couple of months it functioned, but with increasing clumsiness. The heart was gone out of it. Why not? Who cared for propaganda, when, partly as a result of its work, the enemy had sued for peace?

Engagements entered into, however, must be kept. And the Americans whose itineraries were not completed at the Armistice had nothing to complain of. They saw as good a show as the changed conditions had left on exhibition; munitions works still producing on uncancelled contracts, the Grand Fleet anchored under the Forth Bridge, the British Front in process of being cleared of its most obvious war stuff. And they had their appointed tale of dinners and luncheons, *with*—in England—their ration books, and week-end visits to country houses.

The visitors' chateau, somewhere back of Boulogne, was still in commission, in charge of a Major who wore the Mons button, two other officers who like him, by reason of wounds, were long ago off the combatant strength, and a few privates serving as orderlies.

From this center, such of the front as was at the moment accessible to non-combatants could be seen in three days; one day for the Hazebrouck-Ypres circuit, one day for the regions about Vimy Ridge, and one day for the Somme. The details of each day's tour depended on Major Biles' judgment, the weather, and the visitors' capacity for punishment. Most of them saw as much as was good for them, and said so.

Marcus had taken a group over in mid-December, and that night, after dinner, they were looking over the O. C.'s little collection of souvenirs—mainly propaganda stuff which had been fed out of the sky to the German trenches by British aeroplanes. A captain whom he knew slightly, that afternoon back from a bit of official hospitality in Paris, took Marcus aside.

"I say, Bonafede, did you know your pater was over here?"

Marcus looked incredulous. "I certainly did not," he said. "Are you sure?"

"Not an earthly doubt. I was introduced to him and several other clerical gentlemen, just in from their ship. But I had no idea then that he was related to you. Found that out afterwards."

Marcus felt that he must say something. "Well, if dad's here—. And yet, I remember he said in his last letter he hoped he might be sent across on some demobbing mission or other. Evidently that's what's happened. I wonder if I can get off to see him?"

As soon as he was able to make his excuses he sought his room in the chateau tower. What was he to do? Get away to Paris, of course, and greet the father he had not seen since before he had run away and joined up. And something else. Had his father come over here to repeat that awful speech, or any other like it? If so—

A month ago he would have been unable to do anything, except perhaps to write a note and take the chances of its reaching the bishop. But now, since the work of the Ministry had visibly relaxed, he might actually get to Paris for a few hours.

The next morning early he went to Major Biles and put as much of the case before him as was necessary.

"Well, Bonafede," said the Major, "I suppose you have as much right to see your father as any of us, and he probably would like to see you, after these three years."

"I hope so, sir. And I have my own reasons for wanting to talk with him. Of course I have no right to ask for special favors."

"Quite," said the Major, who had heard of the girl in Yorkshire, and who, like most Englishmen at the end of the war, was foolishly sentimental about any romance which might now have a chance to culminate in the good old conventional way. "But, as it happens, you are under my orders while here. And also, by good luck for you, Captain Kennedy is ordered home. He is guide for today's drive to Vimy, and so will strike up an acquaintance with our guests. Suppose I put him in charge when they go home on Friday, and let you take two days' leave before you are due to report at the Ministry? Will that serve? Your father's time is doubtless limited, too."

"Thank you very much, Major," said Marcus, which was utterly contrary to regulations. But life at the chateau under Major Biles had always been shockingly informal. Its entire staff was composed of men who were here because the war could no longer use them.

The Major shook hands and smiled. "Consider yourself relieved at once. You can get the train for Paris which passes through Abbeville about noon. Do you know where to find your father?"

"No, sir; but the Y.M.C.A. in the Rue d'Aguesseau will know. I've been there several times, and they keep a record of all American religious workers coming to France. I shall go there direct."

"And give my compliments to your father. You may say to him, if you like, that for an American his son has made a fairly satisfactory British soldier."

Marcus blushed as no second lieutenant ought to blush, and made his escape.

At the famous Y headquarters they told him, "Yes, Bishop

Bonafede arrived yesterday, and is still in town, stopping at the Grand, in the Boulevard des Italiens. He is leaving to-morrow night."

These two had not met since the day, almost three years before, when Marcus, home from Tech for Christmas, had gloated over his father's share in the setting up of the Oxford Fellowship.

But since then there had been an election to the episcopacy, and, that terrible speech about which Jock Huntress had ragged him so unmercifully. Now that they were face to face, it was the soldier who was self-conscious and awkward; the bishop, taken by surprise, could not contain his joy. He sprang forward, and took his son in his arms.

"Marcus! How come you here?" And, without waiting for any answer, he held him at arm's length a moment. "My dear, dear boy;—what a man you are! Why, the pictures you sent us are caricatures. You look as fit as a fiddle, and a soldier if ever I saw one."

Marcus could not resist it, nor did he want to. His father's exuberant joy in the meeting warmed his own heart. This *was* his father, after all. Nothing else mattered; at least, not now.

They were in the bishop's room. "Sit down, Marcus, and let me look at you again. There's a story, of course; but it can wait. Two years in France, and you are still alive. Thank God for that. Oh, yes; your arm; how is it?"

Marcus showed him. Stiff, a little yet, but not hopelessly so. "See, here's the mark the bit of shell made that did the mischief. I got off mighty easy."

"You did, my son; you did. I'm devoutly thankful it's no worse. Your mother and I have worried a good deal for fear it might cripple you permanently. The pictures have reassured us somewhat, though, as I say, they could be much better, as portraits. But they've been a real comfort. And your letters—private *and* public—do you know you are a public character at home?"

And so he talked. At intervals Marcus got in a word, or a question about his mother and people in general.

"But, how did you manage to get over here?" he contrived at last to ask. "You said in your last letter that you would like to come, but I never supposed you really would."

"It's a long story," said the bishop. "The gist of it is that every American soldier wants to get home. Getting them home is almost as difficult as was getting them here, and some will be here for quite a while yet. So I offered to come over and take a month's speaking tour among the troops—helping to maintain morale, and all that sort of thing, you know. I wanted to have some slight share in this great adventure. You left rather abruptly yourself, if you remember; though we long ago decided to say nothing about that. I hope you don't grudge me this month's experience, even though it is post-war."

"Grudge it—you? Why, father, it's just the thing, if you can help keep the boys from getting blue while they're waiting. The next three months will be hard on them, whether they stay in France or go into Germany as part of the Army of Occupation. Anybody who can hold them steady will be doing a big piece of war work, even if the war is over."

"Well, my boy, I'm glad you think so. You helped the morale at home, at first by enlisting and this year by your letters. It will feel good to me to take up something of the same task."

There was that in his father's tone which brought Marcus squarely up against the reason for his hurrying to Paris. Yet how could he say what he knew he must, or run the risk of worse things to come? Here he was again assuming to sit in judgment on his father—a man of vast experience and entrusted with great responsibilities.

He would feel his way about, first. "What is your program, father?"

"Well, I'm to go about under the auspices of the Y among the camps and other places where troops are stationed, and talk to the boys; inspirational speeches, you know. Sort of combination of religion and patriotism."

"That's all right, father. But you'll be able to give them some speeches on religion, straight, too, won't you? Since I came on to this job I've been among the boys a good deal, both the British and our own; and I think I know what they would like."

"I see; but Marcus, don't you think that religion must be taken for granted, a little? I must talk first about the great cause in which they have been engaged, and how proud we all are of them."

"Yes, I know. And that's a subject they have had talked at them ever since they registered for the draft. But religion, real religion, they've not had so often that they can't stand more. And soldiers don't care how straight religious talk is. They like it that way."

"And nothing about patriotism, Marcus?"

"Well, religion *and* patriotism, as they usually get it, make a rather unpopular mixture for our doughboys. And for the Tommies, as well. They don't need patriotism preached to them; they've *been* in this war. They've seen their buddies die for their country. So they know pretty near as much about patriotism as anybody from home—forgive me, father, I don't mean to be personal—can teach them."

"Possibly so; but do you think they know the implication of the Armistice and of the peace which is to follow?"

"I can't say. Me, I don't understand those things, a little bit. But I do understand that the boys know the war's over. Since they didn't go to Berlin before the Armistice, they have no special longing to go now."

"And do you think," the bishop asked, "that they would be impatient with a man who tried to tell them something of the great issues involved?"

"Excuse me, father, but I certainly do. They're fed up on issues; think they've made some themselves. They've won the war—the soldiers of all the Allies, I mean. They know they won't have much chance at making the peace. That will depend on public opinion and the politicians. Public opinion is the job of people with influence at home, like yourself."

"But what, then, do you think I ought to speak about?" The bishop seemed perplexed.

"What I said, religion; the boys want something as far removed from war as possible. Give 'em undiluted religion. They'll thank you; not in words, maybe, but in the attention they give you. If I may be bold, talk about Jesus Christ. They'd rather hear about following him than hanging the Kaiser. The Kaiser's through, and they know it."

Bartelmy looked at this soldier, who indubitably was his son. What had happened to him? He used to be such a quiet, easily satisfied youngster; always obedient and respectful, until that astonishing day when he ran off to the war. And now he was talking to his bishop-father, man-to-man fashion, and not over respectfully, either.

"I wonder if you realize, Marcus," he said, "the situation in which I am placed. Two weeks ago, when I was assigned to duty over here, the appointment was made because of what the appointing powers knew about me. They knew I had been in demand as a speaker on war subjects. They knew that I was one of the first to realize America's full duty in the war. And, because I was also a bishop of the greatest Protestant American church, they thought my words would carry weight among the soldiers."

"Forgive me, father," said Marcus, slowly, "but the Y knew better than that last thing you've said. They had other reasons, of course; good ones, but they never thought of sending you here because your being a bishop would cut any ice with the boys. They've had experiences, both with bishops and with other folks. Some of the bishops have been positively great, and some have been absolute flops. The title has nothing to do with it. I'm proud you're a bishop, all right, but you don't catch me talking about it, not to soldiers. I'm sorry; but that's just how it is."

"Marcus, my boy, you're overwrought. You have had experience, but so have I. And it seems to me that the services my training and position have enabled me to give to the country during the past eighteen months would not be altogether unacceptable to my country's soldiers."

"Oh, dad,—" Marcus broke in, forgotting that he had intended to say "father"—"please dad, listen to me. You won't have anything but trouble if you start out on that line. I tell you, I *know*. The boys are fed up on all that. Why, they've been *in* the war! Don't you see? Fought it, hungry and muddy and bloody and all smashed up, and dead set on getting the job done and over with. The men who've come out of it are through. They may say—I've heard 'em—'It was a bum war, but it was better than none.' But they say it just because the business is ended. The war is fini! They'll walk out on you, sure, if they do nothing worse, the moment you begin the sort of thing that went over big at home a year ago. The world's changed since then; and the men who helped to change it have spoiled that speech of yours. It won't go so good, with them."

The bishop, greatly hurt, held up a protesting hand.

"Please, Marcus, don't let your feelings get the better of you. You misjudge me. I'm not intending to disrupt anything.

I have talked to soldiers, great audiences of them, and with no small success. But let's not discuss this any further. We have our own interests to talk about. I want you to tell me about that strange love affair of yours, and how it prospers. We have only tomorrow morning, and it's midnight now. We mustn't spoil our first meeting since you went away."

Marcus was tired, and knew he ought not to yield to this half-savage mood, so he readily agreed to his father's plea. He had taken a room near by, in which he slept badly. The two spent the morning together, looking about Paris a bit, but did not resume the conversation of the night before.

Marcus did talk about Judith. When he came to descriptions of Thornlea, and Abbey Ridge, and Norfolk Lodge, his listener followed more keenly than he guessed. Bishop Bonafede was on the point, more than once, of interrupting and saying, "I know; I was at Norfolk Lodge myself, once." But he put a guard on his tongue. One question he almost let slip; for a moment it seemed as if he had really spoken; "Do you remember whether they still have those bright rows of cooking utensils on the kitchen wall?"

In the early afternoon Marcus went with the Bishop to the Gare d'Orleans, and saw him off to his first assignment. Then he turned his face again Londonward.

X

Within a week Bartelmy Bonafede realized that he was wasting his talents on this assignment. The secretaries and other workers did not seem to grasp the importance of his mission. They put him on to speak before or after a movie, or a vaudeville turn, just as it happened. Their introductions when he did speak were brief to the point of curtness, and they proffered neither apologies nor praise. It almost seemed as if they considered him just a part of the day's work, to be handled with as little concern as they would chocolate or cigarettes or writing materials.

Nor did his audiences respond as he had expected. A few passages of his speech usually drew scattering applause, but the purple patches were unheeded, the flamboyant tributes to the never-defeated and ever stainless spirit of America, the apostrophes to the flag and its defenders, the maledictions on

Prussianism—all these not only failed to get a hand, but seemed to produce a mild distaste.

As Marcus had foretold, many in his audiences "walked out on" him. What sort of men were these soldiers, anyway? They might have done good service so long as their superiors did the thinking for them. But certainly they were sadly deficient in that ready intelligence which is the orator's chief dependence.

There was no doubt, also, that he was physically below par. He had not spared himself since the war began, and perhaps the coolness of his reception in these camps was nothing more than the last straw of his mind's burden.

At all events, he suddenly gave out. He could not go on. The thought of another day in a Y hut had become unbearable. Backed by the wholly sincere testimony of his last Y secretary, he notified Paris that severe indisposition would prevent him from meeting his remaining engagements. Paris had dealt with such ailments before, and no longer made the mistake of classing them as deliberate avoidance of disagreeable work. They had a genuine and easily explicable, if remote cause, and almost any form of frustration would bring them to the surface.

A wire to Marcus, and within a week the bishop was in London. Marcus chanced to be in town, winding up the last of his personally-conducted excursions. The war-pilgrimage of this group of Americans was ending with a luncheon at the Savoy, tendered by the English-Speaking Union. A civilian member of the Union, hearing that Bishop Bonafede had just arrived from France, said, "By all means bring your father, Lieutenant Bonafede. I fancy he'll enjoy more of the proceedings than you think."

What his friend meant Marcus had no idea, but that troubled him not at all. He was rather pleased that somebody had remembered to invite his father. The bishop would discover that his son stood level with men of affairs, as well as with his military superiors. And it would not be wholly unpleasant that this last American party, as well as those who were acting as hosts, should meet, in the person of his father, an American not unknown to fame.

The only set speech would be by a celebrated English novelist and war historian, but even if Bishop Bonafede should be asked to say a few words, Marcus, in spite of what had passed between them in Paris, felt sure his father would rise gracefully to the occasion. It was one of the things he did well.

If only he had known of the plot! The group had commissioned two of its number to select something appropriate, and with much secrecy a small silver coffee service from Mappin and Webb's had been agreed upon.

The table, spread in a room overlooking the Thames, had about it as choice a company as one could seat at so modest a board. Because the guests were newspaper men, each of them was sandwiched between two British fellow craftsmen. An editor of the *Illustrated London News*, a leader writer on the *Times*, the conductor of a ponderous but most influential quarterly, a younger poet, and one of the four or five front-rank novelists of the day, had not disdained the occasion. Then there were two generals, a rear admiral, and some officials of the Ministry of Information. One of London's best-loved clergymen was included, and Bishop Bonafede was charmed at having him for a neighbor.

The speaking at such affairs is much of a piece, but the historian-novelist gave a touch of freshness to the thinking of the hour by a graceful recognition of the United States, not as "our cousins across the Atlantic," but as a sovereign and distinctive nation, deriving much from England, but much also from other and diverse sources, and making her own mould for the civilization of the West.

Then instead of a general movement into the adjoining reception room, Marcus was surprised to hear the chairman call on one of the Americans, "Who will say a few words on a personal matter."

Whereupon a grizzled veteran of the trade press, who controlled four or five technical journals of enormous importance in their fields, rose to his feet.

"We should have been quite content in our travels," he said, "to have been in the care of a British-born guide and protector, but by singular fortune our conducting officer, though in the British army, is one of our own boys."

Marcus, breathed hard, paled, and then went rosy, as his shameful habit was. Whatever was up?

"We are sure," went on the speaker, "he has not been more gracious nor more self-forgetful in our behalf than a son of Britain would have been. But, knowing our tribe and its peculiarities, he has been able to interpret our experiences to us, and at times to interpose himself between our ignorance and its otherwise inevitable consequences. We owe him a debt, not only for what he has done, but also for what he's averted. And so I take great pleasure, in the name of us all, in presenting him with this slight reminder of our appreciation and gratitude.

"A vision we saw in Yorkshire—and it was marvellously worth seeing—made us think that he has excellent prospects of carrying off another memento of his life on this side, and therefore we make bold to suggest that he put this coffee service away until such time as it can be displayed among the wedding gifts. It is not as fine a remembrance as he deserves, but it is in one respect like our estimate of his character; it is sterling!" (Applause.) Much pleased at the success of his impromptu play upon words, Mr. Blanchard sat down.

The chairman looked at Marcus. "May we have a word from you, Lieutenant Bonafede?"

Marcus had known, with a sinking at the heart, as soon as the other's purpose was revealed, that this call would come. He knew, too, that the merest expression of thanks would be quite sufficient, but something prompted him to say more, despite his shocking nervousness.

"I can only say," he began, "that I am astonished and taken aback and more grateful than words can tell. British military regulations are still much of a mystery to me, and I am not sure but all this is sternly forbidden. If so, it is one of the blunders of my countrymen, just alluded to, which as their conducting officer I ought to have prevented. But I was kept in ignorance. Since Mr. Blanchard has spoken of my rather inconsistent position, being of American birth and yet a British officer, may I add this one word? I have served under the British flag, and I have seen some of those nine hundred thousand young men die whom Britain could not afford to lose. Our American loss is more than Americans like to think about. But if your dead and ours could have known, as we were told and hoped, that we were really fighting the last war, the war to end war, these would have offered their lives even more gladly than they did. And I should have been yet prouder than I am that I had fought with them. But some of us who have come out alive are beginning to wonder just what the outcome is to be—the new day for which they died."

Some of the company smiled at his young seriousness, but that did not interfere with their applause.

Then the chairman said, "We must adjourn in a moment, but I crave your indulgence long enough for me to introduce Bishop Bonafede, father of our friend, the lieutenant. The Bishop has come within the last twenty-four hours from a mission to the American soldiers in France. Though British-born, he has long been an American, and has won high distinction in his adopted country as a clergyman and a citizen."

Bartelmy Bonafede would have liked more latitude. To speak before such a company was an opportunity as would never come again. He discerned, far more than the Americans could, the compliment their hosts paid them simply by being willing to come. But he saw that he must do no more than barely acknowledge his introduction.

"I understand, of course," said he, after a few words of thanks for "this unexpected recognition," "that I am an outsider, here on sufferance. This is the day of the distinguished speaker who has so felicitously spoken of my adopted country; and it is the day, if you will forgive a father's prideful interest, of my soldier son. I think I understand what prompted his allusion to the soldier dead, but I know also that when he is once more an American civilian, if his country should call again on her youth, he will be numbered among the first to offer her his sword."

Which also was cheered, but afterwards one man said to his neighbor, "The bishop would have shown himself a better father, as well as a better bishop, if he had played up a little more closely to his boy's bold lead."

XI

It amused Marcus that his father displayed a readier facility than himself with the current coinage, the prevailing idiom, and the customs of the English. The bishop explained it: "You see, I learned all this before I knew anything else; the astonishing thing to me is that so much of it pushes up from beneath nearly forty years of purely American experiences."

The bishop called one day at the Methodist Central Buildings in Westminster, where, in addition to a great hall for public meetings and Sunday services, are some of the offices of connexional Methodism. Here he met several officers of the church. Another day he journeyed eastward to the Missions House, and met others. As these gentlemen always are, they were most gracious; they have no bishops of their own, but are fairly familiar with bishops from America.

Preaching appointments are not made quite so casually as in the United States, but Bishop Bonafede's contacts with these church executives indirectly produced one invitation beyond price. The minister of Wesley's Chapel in the City Road invited him to preach in the Cathedral of Methodism.

That night, as he and Marcus sat in the hotel lounge, he spoke of the honor done him in this invitation. He said, "It's more than I deserve. But after all there's something of romance in it. Who would have thought, when I left Thornlea, that one day I should come back to England and stand in John Wesley's pulpit? Certainly not I, nor any of the people I knew when I was a boy going to Sunday School at the old hill chapel in Thornlea."

To Marcus the mention of Thornlea touched off another set of responses. He had been less than keen for his father to visit the place, and was ashamed of his reluctance. Now that the bishop had no official duties to keep him away, it would seem strange if he did not spend a day or two there.

"Speaking of Thornlea, Dad, I suppose you will take it in before you go home?"

"Why, yes; I had hoped to. I am somewhat surprised that you have not run across some of our kindred; they must be fairly numerous in and about Thornlea. You'll go, too, of course?"

"Oh, yes; I couldn't let you go alone, when there's a young woman I particularly want to introduce to you."

The bishop lay awake long after he was in bed; City Road was something not to be easily dismissed. And the next day, while Marcus was off on some business of the Ministry, he set off from the hotel in Holborn towards Fleet Street. Once in the Street of Ink, a few judicious inquiries disclosed that the Thornlea *Recorder* still appeared once a week. He thought he knew how to word a letter to the Editor, and he was right. In the next issue of that steady-going journal appeared a paragraph of which it must be said that the sub-editor had enlarged, but not unintelligently, on the facts which the bishop had supplied. The paragraph read:

DISTINGUISHED SON OF THORNLEA

"We are informed that Bishop Bonafede, of the Methodist Church in the U. S. A., who is to preach in Wesley's Chapel, London, on Sunday week, is an old Thornlea boy. Bonafede is a familiar name in this part of the West Riding, and our older readers may remember Mr. Mark Bonafede, who forty years ago was an employing joiner and builder in the town. His son, the Bishop, was born here in the late sixties of the last century. The family emigrated to America when the future bishop was a schoolboy just finishing the sixth standard. By his determination and ability, and his devotion to the work of the ministry, which he entered a quarter of a century ago, he has risen to the highest place in the gift of his church."

The *Recorder's* tactful reference to the Bonafede name did not go unnoticed of the Thornlea Bonafedes. One of them, lessee of the Thornlea Arms, and a born organizer, passed the word to others, and one of the earliest of the Friday-to-Monday cheap trips from Leeds to London, resumed after the war, took on new attractiveness to as many of the Bonafede clan as had the necessary cash. Yorkshire dearly loves a London excursion, and money beyond the usual was in circulation during the first months following the Armistice.

Said Joe Bonafede, the publican, to his siblings, "Nah then, we mun do this business reight. Theer's a cheeap trip to London next Friday, an' it's t' furst chonce we've 'ad sin' t' war began. An' then theer's this piece in t' *Recorder* abaht Bishop Bonafede. He's uncle or cousin or summat to all on us, an' t' furst Bonafede as Ah knaws on to win a title. Soa Ah'm i' favor of takkin' advantage o' this trip an' then gooin' to Wesley's Chapel Sunday mornin', to hear t' on'y Bonafede as ivver got to be a bishop. It'll mak' them London Wesleyans stare, when they see soa mony fowk fro' Yorkshire cum walkin' in an' they find aht we're all t' preycher's relations. An' t' bishop will be pleeased, as well, or 'e's noa Bonafede."

It was so. City Road was impressed; and so was the Bishop.

His very ease of utterance, born of perfect familiarity with the sermon's outline and most of the actual words, captured the visitors from Thornlea. Sprung from a race voluble enough at need, but hampered by large remnants of a dialect which is far too much of the street streety for platform or pulpit use, they were carried away on the oily wave of the bishop's flowing homiletic diction.

" 'E's a bishop, is yon," said Joe Bonafede in a hoarse whisper to the cousin who sat in the pew beside him; "an' still it's queer; we can understand 'im as easy as if 'e wor talking just to us two, i' t' Thornlea Arms snuggery."

And the cousin nodded his vigorous assent.

In the vestry, the minister of City Road thanked and complimented Bishop Bonafede in half a dozen polite commonplaces; he could do no less, and he would refrain from more.

But the clan Bonafede, waiting for its bishop in the open space between the chapel and Wesley's statue, felt no such sense of constraint. It had been decorous, as Yorkshire well knows how to be, during the service, but when *the* Bonafede, after his brief occultation in the vestry, reappeared with Marcus by his side, all the inhibitions of the sanctuary were loosed, and Thornlea took proud possession of its own.

The worshippers at Wesley's Chapel are inured to visitors, but years of training could not quite repress their amazement as they cast discreet sidelong glances at this impromptu Bonafede reunion. Some of them heard one of the remoter and less urbane of the clan speak the mind of all; "If ony man 'ad towd me Ah'd goa to t' chappil on a trip to London, *an' like it,* Ah'd thowt 'im silly i' t' heead. Bud, lads, it's trew!"

Marcus came in for his share of the adulation; he too was a Bonafede, and he had been a British soldier. Only with the utmost difficulty did father and son win free of their admiring kinsfolk, and not at all until Bartelmy had given his positive promise that he would see them all when he came to Thornlea.

XII

Now Thornlea is not all Bonafede, and few of the older people of consequence could remember any figure which answered to the *Recorder's* "Mr. Mark Bonafede, employing joiner and builder." But a bishop, even an American bishop, does not appear in those parts every day, and certainly not in a Wesleyan chapel. So Bishop Bonafede enjoyed both a good press and a good hearing when he came down under

Marcus's guidance to preach in King Street Chapel and visit the Jessops. The Bonafedes, naturally in ampler numbers than at City Road, turned out to the preaching, and heard another great sermon. At Marcus's special and, to his father, strangely importunate request, the bishop said nothing at all about the war, and thus acquired more merit in Thornlea eyes than he could ever understand.

Bartelmy Bonafede recalled, as from some almost forgotten old story, innumerable boyhood experiences which the mere sight of Thornlea's half-strange, half-familiar landmarks called out of the lumber rooms of memory. But surely there could be no real relationship between himself and the boy of these grubby and flavorless recollections.

Just once the feeling left him, that he was gazing after long years on the scenery of a play momently rescued from oblivion, and he faced a bit of vivid and unmistakeable reality of which he could not bring himself to speak.

Here he was, a guest at Norfolk Lodge, and the daughter of the house was his son's affianced. On several counts it would have been less than comfortable to declare himself. And yet he could not wholly keep away from the dangerous ground.

"I remember Norfolk Lodge very well," he said, on the Monday, as they all sat in the library, "Abbey Ridge was a sort of third heaven to us who lived below the High Street, and I've walked past the gate many a time. Often I used to wonder how one family could contrive to use all the rooms of such a grand house."

"It is a grand house," Marcus put in. "I know, for I've seen it from cellar to garret. Willie showed me the cellar and the garage, and Judith showed me things new and old in the garret."

"He means, Bishop," Judith hastened to say, "that it was there we found that old paper about the money my grandfather owed Marcus's grandfather; nearly two pounds."

"And it was there I collected a little on account, without any trouble in the world," added Marcus.

"You boast too much, young man," said Judith. "Just for that I will see that the next payment is not ready when you call for it."

Mr. Jessop had not heard the bill story. "As soon as you children can be induced to talk intelligibly I should like to know what you mean by an old unpaid account. Is there a financial skeleton in our garret?"

Marcus would have taken the blame for a bit of heedless prying, but Judith stopped him.

"There is, daddy; but Marcus had nothing to do with finding it. It was I who suggested looking in the pigeon holes of that old secretary, just to see if by chance my Grandfather Jessop and Marcus's Grandfather Bonafede had done any business with one another. Marcus picked up a book from the shelves and turned his back. But I looked under the letter 'B', and actually found that old statement of account. It wasn't marked 'paid', or 'settled', or anything of that sort. So I supposed it had never been paid, for some reason or another. Marcus saw it only when I showed him his grandfather's name printed across the top, and the amount, one pound seventeen and something."

"Well," said Mr. Jessop, "I must see it myself. I'd like to know why my father never settled such an account, if he didn't; though I know that at times he was a hard man to deal with. I suppose, speaking strictly, I should pay it to you, Bishop, with interest for these thirty-odd years. You and I are our fathers' heirs, I take it?"

"Please, no; daddy," interposed Judith; "even though the bishop would accept it, and he wouldn't, don't you both think that Marcus and I have found a better way? Every time I let him kiss me—see, he's blushing about it again—I pay something on the Jessop debt to the Bonafedes, though we never agree how much."

Blushes did not prevent Marcus from talking. "It's the finest debt I ever heard of," he said. "Every payment is worth more than enough to wipe out the total, interest and all; and yet there's always a chance to collect another installment—if I'm good," he hastily added, as Judith gave him a warning frown.

"I'll show you all exactly where we found it," Judith offered. "You may as well see the whole house, while we are about it." She rose, Willie and Marcus offering their arms, which she waved away. "Let's start with the kitchen, and work up. You too, daddy; it's your house. Mother can stay here. She hates stairs."

And she led the way downstairs to a room which Bartelmy Bonafede felt certain he would recognize at sight.

As he did; he would have known it in a picture, or even from a description. Once at that table a boy had sat and waited, hungrily. The chair might have been the identical chair. The wall still held its battery of shining brass and copper. The very domestic who, as they entered, rose from her seat by the range, might have been the kindly cook of that elder day, magically preserved against time and change.

"Well," said Judith the guide, "what do you think of this English kitchen? Marcus has told me of your wonderful white kitchens in America, with their what-do-you-call 'ems for the food—oh, yes, I know—refrigerators, and their cabinets and electric ranges and all the labor-saving devices Americans seem to invent so easily. But I like our kitchen, too. Don't you?"

And Bartelmy Bonafede, at once boy and man, said, "To me it will always be the most wonderful kitchen in the world."

"Flatterer," smiled Judith, guessing nothing. "But you deserve something for doing it so nicely. It's an hour before lunch. What would you like, out of our old kitchen? See if you can ask for something to eat—English, of course—that it can't supply."

Bartelmy Bonafede's heart thumped against his ribs, and he knew why. But there was a strange zest in it.

"If you don't mind," he said, with a nervous little bow, "I won't ask for anything unusual. I'd like a piece of bread and butter, with some Scotch marmalade spread on top of the butter."

Mr. Jessop roared. When he could speak, he said, "Just the thing I used to ask for when I was a lad. What a luxury! And I like it yet. Let's all have some."

Bishop Bonafede watched the servant cut the bread and spread it. He saw her take down the white jar of Dundee marmalade. As he took his doubled half-slice he said, to nobody in particular, "I remember a night when a piece like this was all I had for supper, and my two brothers had the other half for breakfast."

Then the little procession followed Judith upstairs, and did not stop until everything had been seen, including the garret and the old desk with its filed-away stories of business transactions in a Thornlea that had vanished from the thought of men.

XIII

By a sort of tacit agreement, Bishop Bonafede and the Jessops had said nothing about the children's engagement, but Tuesday night came, and on the morrow the bishop would be leaving for a few days in Scotland before taking ship for home. No longer could the subject be kept from intruding itself into the foreground of their thoughts.

Mrs. Jessop broached it, as the three sat about the fire after Tuesday's dinner. Marcus and Judith were off at a party of some sort, Marcus having been joyously accepted by the Abbey Ridge younger set.

"You may think me just a foolish mother, Bishop, and selfish beside," she began, "but I can't help wondering about our Judy. Marcus is a joy; you and Mrs. Bonafede have brought him up well. And I'm sure we've nothing to say against the engagement, but—" she faltered, and could go no further.

"What mother means," said Mr. Jessop, coming to the rescue, "is that this is a rather serious business for us. We know nothing of Marcus's plans, or even of his prospects. He'll make his way, I don't doubt, but to us the question is—where? You see," as the bishop showed signs of mild surprise, "we don't say much, being no harder hit than a million others, but ours is already a home with its empty room and its always present sense of loss. Of course, even if Marcus should take Judy to America, we shan't really have lost her; but for old folk like us America is a long way off."

The pity of it touched Bartelmy. It made him feel like Bartelmy, not like a bishop. "I know," he said softly. "It used to seem far away for young folk, too, I remember. But now it's not anything like so remote. Besides, I'm not at all sure about Marcus settling down in the States just yet. He tells me he has had two offers lately, growing out of his newspaper work. One is a chance on one of the two American papers which publish a Paris edition, and the other proposes a year in European capitals, as a sort of traveling reporter for a Philadelphia paper. You know he has made not such a bad start, for a youngster, and the papers seem to like his 'stuff,' as he calls it; though at times it's a trifle radical for my taste. What I'm getting at is that Marcus will soon be making a living, and, probably, for the present, doing most of his work on this side of the Atlantic."

Mrs. Jessop looked the relief she felt. "I was afraid he would ask to take our girl far away from us all of a sudden; and yet neither of us wanted to seem unreasonable."

"I'll tell you what, Bishop," said Mr. Jessop, "the young man and I have managed to endure one another, and you and Judy hit it off famously. Let's ask the youngsters, in the morning, what their intentions are. My prospective father-in-law once did just that, and gave me a bad quarter of an hour; and I understand in these days that it's necessary to question the young woman as well as the young man."

At breakfast the ordeal was attempted. Willie tactfully effaced himself, well knowing what was toward. Marcus and he had had no secrets, from the day they had come to Norfolk Lodge on leave.

"Of course, we shall settle down in America at last," Judith announced, "but if Marcus takes one of the places he's been offered, we shall be running in on you here so often in the next year or two you'll think us a nuisance; won't they—honey?" She was proud of her ability to bring in that word, caught from Marcus in almost her first lesson in American love-making.

"Seems to me I'm that sort of a nuisance already," said the boy. "But honestly, I feel like a burglar, to hold you up this way for all the girl you've got. Still, the wonder is that nobody beat me to it, and I'd rather not take any chances. If we promise to come home as often as every time I can get away, will that do? And maybe I can get a real job, after a while, that will call for commuting between London and New York. It's being done, you know."

The Jessops smiled over his bold humility and his whimsies. Mrs. Jessop, first to think of her own home and its longings, was first also to turn their thoughts to another aspect of the case. "There's your own mother, Marcus. We've been acting as if she had no claim on you. Here you've been away from home three years—and in the war. I know what she has gone through. You must get back to her as soon as you can."

Neither Marcus nor his father would confess it by so much as a look, but they felt that Mrs. Jessop was rebuking them, and rightly. For they had not thought at all of taking Viola into consideration. Perhaps because she had always been so self-sufficient. Perhaps because for years they had known no such home life as that which here at Norfolk Lodge seemed so natural and so gracious.

Once more Mr. Jessop came to the rescue. "It just occurs to me that you children are much too young to think of marrying. Why not wait a year or two?"

Judith slipped around to the back of his chair and pulled both of his ears. "You were a venerable old gentleman of twenty-two yourself when you and the mater set up on your own, I've heard."

"You've heard a lot of rubbish, my dear," her father replied, drawing her to him and taking her on his knee. But his rejoinder lacked conviction. "There were circumstances—"

"Yes, I know," said Judith, "I've heard that, too. Circumstances were part of the game then, just as they are now. Don't you know we've got circumstances?"

"Then I'll tell you what," said Mr. Jessop, retreating at discretion and falling back on his favorite conversational opening, "I'll tell you what. Marcus, when you accept whichever post you think is the right one, put in a stipulation that you're to have a holiday before they take you on. Then mother and I will give you, as a wedding present, a brief honeymoon in that strange country, America, won't we, Mother? That will make it possible for you to see your mother, and to present your bride to her for approval. And confusion to all Income Tax offices!"

"Oh, Daddy!" from Judith.

And Marcus spoke, impulsively, "You are the kindest and most generous people I know. It's wonderful. But may I take advantage of you once more?" For a sudden eagerness had taken hold of him. "I'll tell *you* what. If that's the program, why not have Dad drop in on his way back from Scotland, and let's get it over with? I've no idea I can dictate terms when I go to see about a job; they won't hold the thing open long just because I want to get married. But they might be reasonable. So, you see, there's every excuse for as much haste as your English law about weddings will allow."

"So it seems," said Mr. Jessop soberly. Things were moving a bit faster than he had bargained for. "Still, why not? The sooner you're off to America, the sooner you'll be back. What do you think, Mother?"

Mrs. Jessop, happy in the thought that Judith would most likely be within reach for at least the better part of a year, thought it an admirable plan. Mothers learn to accept such things and appear grateful.

XIV

The wedding took place three weeks later, with Bishop Bonafede and the Chairman of the Leeds District of the Wesleyan Methodist Church sharing in the ceremony. For plenty of reasons it was as private as an English wedding can be, with no guests; Jane Depledge did what bridesmaids are supposed to do, and Willie Jessop gave Marcus his moral support.

The bishop had urged Marcus to reserve passage on some liner other than the Aquitania, on which he was returning. "You won't want to have me always in the offing; the trip is your wedding present, and unless Judith is a poor sailor the Atlantic crossing is ideal for brides and grooms. If you happen to meet other newly-weds, all right; they'll be company enough. If not, you won't need me, anyway. So I'll go on ahead."

Marcus had tried to tell his mother that Judith was not just somebody to be endured, and even her husband had waxed enthusiastic over their new daughter-in-law; but Viola was in no wise prepared for the girl's radiant loveliness. What poor photographers they must have in England!

This winsome creature, all rose and gold and light, who knew enough not to monopolize her young husband when his mother wanted him, and who so matter-of-factly deferred to the older woman in everything, stirred in Viola feelings she had not known for years.

After Judith had taken herself out of the way two or three times, so that Marcus and his mother could be together, Viola protested.

"My dear, he's as much yours as mine; more, really. And I think I should enjoy him better if you were with us." Just why she wanted to make a confidante of Judith she did not exactly know, but there was something quieting in it. "I think we Bonafedes have made one great mistake. We have not cared much for each other's interests. It's too late for me to care about my husband's work. I never could. And he has had no time to spare for my friends or my pursuits. But I think I could begin all over again with you. When you come to America for good, won't you let me try?"

Which quite melted Judith. Her own home life had been so natural a companionship, with only Howard's loss in these last years to break into its perfect community of understanding.

"But you've got Marcus," she said, "and of course you know that Bishop Bonafede's work is after all very important. Until he went to war, you had Marcus all the time. You had the joy of his growing years."

Viola was not ready, yet, to confess to this ardent and affectionate young stranger how she had been rather glad that Marcus, as a little child, could be content with his own company, and how all through his boyhood he had depended on others far more than on his mother.

So she merely said, "Yes, I've had Marcus. But when he left me he was a schoolboy. Now he's a man, a soldier, and a husband, all at once. He has his work and his wife. He doesn't need me any longer. But I'm thinking I must have somebody. Promise me, Judith, that when you come back I can take a little corner in your life for my own. Nobody could help loving you, and I'm not going to try. And I think you'll help me keep in touch with my boy." The desire to keep in touch with Marcus was itself a new thing, which Viola herself could not explain.

And Judith, not in the least guessing what strange, futile longings were back of Viola's asking, said, "The place you ask for is yours now, Mother dear. And I'll take a corner of your heart, shan't I? We wouldn't think of anything else than being as near to you and the bishop as we possibly can. Marcus tells me you go with father on some of his official journeys, so we must settle down somewhere near his lines of travel when we come back to stay. This is such a big country!"

CHAPTER IX

I

Rhoda was graduating. How she had managed her courses, first through the Foundation's early struggles, then through the crowded war months, and at last through the orderly confusion of building operations while Leyton Center was going up she never knew. But here it was, almost Commencement. The Center would be dedicated a few days before the Commencement exercises, and then, all at once she would be out of college, out of the war-time hut of the Fellowship, and—worst of all, out of the Fellowship itself, just when it was coming into its great inheritance. For she had decided that when she graduated it would be time to go out and earn her daily bread.

After she had cried herself to sleep a few nights she took counsel of her good sense. What was the use of lamenting the very results for which you had worked your head off? Hadn't she wanted to be a Tech woman? Hadn't she prayed and worked and contrived in a thousand ways through the four years touching anything that concerned the Fellowship? And here she was, in sight of her degree, with Leyton Center promising to be the finest thing of its kind west of the Hudson. What was there to cry about? It had all happened as she had wanted it to happen.

Still she was not at peace. What to do, after Commencement? Next year? How did girls out of Tech make a living? Some sort of teaching, most likely. She had lived so close to this work of her father's, and had been so held in the grip of its day-by-day activities, that there had been little chance and less incentive to think of the future. But now—?

Aaron Leyton and Peter Middleton had been quite as completely preoccupied as Rhoda. It was not strange that they came to a realizing sense of the same problem at about the same time.

"Middleton," said the old man as they checked up on almost the last of the construction reports, "this building is going to be used to its full capacity the day it's open."

"I know that," said Peter. "You have done far more than you first planned, but at least you'll have the satisfaction of knowing from the start that our Methodist boys and girls at Tech will get a hundred cents worth of use out of every dollar you've put in."

"And what more could I want?" asked the old man.

Then he turned to other matters. "You've got your teaching staff arranged for, haven't you?"

"Yes; two men, one for Biblical work and one for religious education, psychology and all that field. But that's all, though we could give more courses that would earn Tech credit if we could put on a bigger staff. Mind you, I'm not asking anything more from you. I wouldn't take it. This thing has to be supported by the church, or it will fail in some of its most important uses. The money will come, I believe; but just now there isn't enough in sight for more than the two men. I'll take some classes, of course, and we can count on student help for most of the regular chores of the place. The one thing that still really bothers me is a woman."

"What do you mean?"

"Well; it's the thing that Rhoda has been almost doing. She is so wrapped up in the Fellowship that often it has come before her school work. And though we have saved what her work would have cost, she has shown me that we must have a woman here to act as a sort of dean. Nearly half of our student members are girls and women. We shall have three men on the staff, but nobody to start in where Rhoda leaves off. And you know she's graduating this year."

"Does that mean she's leaving you?"

"Only in the sense that she wants to earn her living, or find out she can't. Which is a joke, of course. She has said something about teaching; not much. We've tried to talk things over, but you know how life is in the hut. She says she wants to take a year at Columbia or somewhere."

"And you think you should have somebody for full-time work of the sort she has done?"

"We must, simply must. It's more important than any other one piece of the work we have to do. If Rhoda only felt that she could stay— But I don't blame her. In fact, I want her to get away. She has never been out of my sight, and that's not the way to treat a girl of her age. I want her to have some broader contacts than even Tech and the Fellowship can give her."

"Naturally. We feel the same about our Marie, and she's off to Columbia for summer school, a few days after commencement. I'll tell you what. It's probably easier for me to turn over a little more oil money than to go out and ask other people for it, but I see your point about the church needing to take this Tech responsibility more seriously. So, if I'll promise not to make any subscriptions myself, are you willing that I should try to raise enough for your dean of women?"

Peter could see no objection to that, especially as he had never known how to raise money himself, and the churches were always being assiduously cultivated by representatives of other worthy causes.

"Then," said Mr. Leyton, "since that's settled, what about you and me giving Rhoda her year in New York right away? You can make shift to do with student management for a while, until we see whether I am any good as a money raiser. And you put too much of your own salary into the Fellowship to have much left for a post-graduate's expenses."

"That's like you, Brother Leyton," said Peter, "but it isn't necessary. As it happens, my father left a fund for Rhoda's education, and by now it is more than ample. It hasn't been touched yet. I know you'll leave me this pleasure of seeing my girl spend what her grandfather gave her when she was a little child."

"I will that," said the old man, "and I apologize for even suggesting anything else. It just shows what a snare money can be. A man gets to thinking that nothing else matters, because it's so easy for him to say, 'Never mind about where the money's to come from; I'll take care of that.' And I begin to see how really selfish that sort of thing is."

Peter did find time for talking things out with Rhoda, by dint of carrying her off with him for an afternoon on the river; and everything was settled, so that within the month Rhoda and Marie were in a two-room-and-bath affair just around the Broadway corner of Union Seminary, and all Columbia, with its bewildering multiplicity of courses, was before them.

But Peter was not the only one who had taken Rhoda off for private conversations. Aaron Leyton wanted an effective argument for his financial efforts, and thought he knew where to find it.

When he had told Peter's daughter of what he was thinking, she sat silent for a moment or two.

"Then the idea doesn't appeal to you?" the old gentleman said, and he could not help showing his disappointment.

"Oh, Mr. Leyton," Rhoda cried out, "you make me so happy I don't know what to say. If I could only take time out to cry a bit, I could talk to you like a sensible girl. And I think your idea is the finest in the world. If only I *could!*"

"Well, isn't that one thing you'll be finding out at Columbia? You'll have all this summer and a full regular year to get ready."

"You mean that I could take some courses and special work that would fit me for it?"

"What's a post-graduate school for, if not that? But remember; not a word to Brother Middleton. This is a plot, and he is queer about plots. You have nothing to do now except to tell me that you think well of the idea. Do you?"

"Mr. Leyton," said the girl with quiet intensity, "this is how well I think of it. My mother died when I was born. She must have been a wonderful woman; not only from what father has told me but from what I've heard others say. And just before she died she said that if she could think her baby might some day take her place and do the sort of work she had hoped to do, alongside Peter Middleton, she would not be so sorry to go. Of course she did not guess what sort of work father would be doing when I grew up, but can you think of anything more beautiful than what you are proposing?"

"Nothing except that you might have such a home of your own as she had begun to make. That's your first right, I think, though I know it's an old-fashioned opinion."

"I know. And I'm not modern enough to deny it. If it comes—the chance, I mean—it will come, that's all. But if it doesn't, and so far it hasn't, you know now what I think about your idea. I shall be thinking about it every day until I come home again."

II

The dedication of Leyton Center brought to Great Meadows a company of Methodist notables.

Bishop Bonafede was there because it was under his administration of the Board of Special Philanthropies that the Oxford Fellowship had been established at Tech. Bishop Randolph came by virtue of being in charge of the Area. Bishop Eberle took his place among the trustees of the Fellowship, who were present in force, with perhaps a hundred ministers from the conferences of the region.

The president of Tech was a willing participant, being an enthusiastic believer in the Fellowship's underlying idea. Every church which established a work like the Fellowship made a priceless contribution to the school; discipline was easier, student life was more wholesome, and those religious activities were provided which the state cannot carry on.

The general crowd included the students connected with the Fellowship, and many parents, whose presence their children had secured by those arts of domestic compulsion familiar to the family freshman. Certainly most of the parents had needed little urging; they had heard so much about the Oxford Fellowship and Leyton Center and Peter Middleton and Rhoda that curiosity alone would have brought many of them.

Of all the people associated with the beginnings of things in the Fellowship one was absent, and it is not likely that many thought of him. But Rhoda Middleton did; if only Marcus could have been present she would have nothing more to ask of Providence.

The Center, for a wonder, was finished. The last truck load of miscellaneous debris had gone out of the alley the night before. Everything was very new, certainly, and smelled rawly of plaster and varnish; but, to the last hook in the cloak rooms, it was ready.

The unofficial visitors included an elderly man from Kansas, the unexpected but welcome guest of a Tech professor. Dr. Dailey had known Colonel Burlington as a fellow-delegate at the General Conference which had elected Bartelmy Bonafede to the espiscopacy, and they had kept up the acquaintance by desultory correspondence.

"I'm glad," the Colonel had said when he dropped in unannounced at the Dailey home, "that I could get away in time for this affair. I'm off to New York and Europe for a little holiday, and this is right on my way."

Dr. Dailey said, "So? I'm for Europe myself next week. What's your ship? We may bump into each other on London Bridge." Which thing they did—almost. He made his friend free of the house. When they were settled on the porch, he wanted to know why Colonel Burlington had such a deep interest in the dedication of Leyton Center.

"Well," the Colonel said, "as you know, I'm interested in Bonafede, and not only from the time we helped make him bishop, either. Twenty years ago he and your man Middleton of this Oxford Fellowship were pastors together in Parkerville, where I've lived these thirty years and more. Bonafede was my pastor, as I think I've told you before, and Middleton was in the east side church. I had something to do with getting Middleton kicked upstairs; he was stirring things up too much in Parkerville."

Professor Dailey, from his chair of History in Tech, was one of Peter's strongest supporters in the faculty. So he wanted to know what the Colonel meant.

"Oh, he was a sort of disturbing influence among the factory workers; talked a lot of stuff which is ordinary enough now, but then it sounded almost revolutionary to some of our more nervous capitalists. It didn't fit in with my ideas, either. We were facing a possible strike in the glass works. So I went to the bishop and got him promoted. He was sent to a college town, and I reckon that's where he began learning the rudiments of the job he has now."

"And you seem to like him, in spite of what you did to him."

"Always have. I never had any trouble in liking Peter Middleton. I took a fancy to him at our first interview, even though I did put the skids under him. He had hold of some good ideas. But he was impractical then, as I told him; and I suppose he is yet. His kind is pretty stubborn. He is having his little day of glory today, but when the shouting's over, look what he's up against. Grubbing away here with a lot of students who come and go. He can't ever build up a church; the best stuff he gets hold of goes out in four years or less. It's hard labor for life, if he doesn't quit soon. He may be content to have it so, but, so far as his career goes, I tell you he's shot his wad. No big church will want him, after he's been here another three or four years.

"But Bonafede, now; there's the boy for you. I've watched him all through the years. He never so far commits himself to anything that he can't back out if he has to; and so he never gets where he has to make a false move. I'll bet he had his eye on the episcopacy before he left college. And he went straight to it. Married right. Got his wife's father back of him; and old Judge Dimont was as smooth as they make 'em.

"See what Bonafede did with the Board of Special Philanthropies. Since he was made bishop the Board's not half what it was when he had it. And he knew it wouldn't be. Got from under just in time. But he did good work and made no enemies. When he was elected bishop he was cashing in on twenty years of effort and planning and study of the whole works. It was almost a dead certainty from the start that he'd be bishop in time; he went to it like a homing pigeon."

"Do you know his son?" Dr. Dailey asked, just to stem the tide for a moment. "The boy has made something of a name for himself in the papers since the war."

"No; I don't know him. He was a baby when the Bonafede's came to Parkerville. I've heard about him, and read some of his stuff in the *Outlook* and the church papers. He seems a bright enough boy, but probably he doesn't know yet what he's really after. He'll need to take lessons from his father. For, if you ask me,"—the Colonel was off again—"Bartelmy Bonafede's my sort of man. When he found himself in the church, he began studying it, and learning how to operate its machinery. Lots of men do that, of course, in a way, but Bonafede did it systematically and scientifically. He made opportunities out of what other men thought were hindrances. That's the trick, wherever you are."

"But, Colonel," objected the professor, "don't you think such scheming, if it was scheming, is unworthy of a minister? Isn't the ministry supposed to be above that sort of thing?"

"Nobody's above it, Dailey. Bonafede would have gone the same way about it if he had taken up law, or politics, or business. There's just one method, in the church as well as out of it. You learn how to work with the machine, and not to buck it. I know a minister is expected to be unselfish. But tell me —you've been in General Conference—why did we Methodists build and set going a system like ours if we believed ministers should keep from putting their ambitions and hopes on it? It's all they've got. You and I get our rewards elsewhere, but when we set up great prizes for the preachers to look at, why be surprised when they begin to hanker after them? Besides, we can't object if a man succeeds so well in the jobs the church gives him that he's always right in line for the next plum. Otherwise we'd be putting our biggest failures into the places of leadership. Would that look like business, even in the church?"

"But what about Peter Middleton, then? Isn't he a success?"

"Oh, yes; sort of. He was a success at Parkerville. But he was bucking the machine. So he had to go. He bucked the machine some at Iliopolis, I've heard, and they pitchforked him into this job, with just about nothing to live on."

"Yes," said Dailey; "and he's succeeded here so much that you and a lot of other important people have come to hear tributes to him and his work."

"I know; and you're right, up to a point. Middleton succeeds, as I said. But not like Bonafede. I'm not saying I'm sorry for Middleton. He probably enjoys the life he's had, and I'm dead sure he couldn't play Bonafede's game. But my contention is, if you're after a real success, that is, to get to the top in your line, whatever it is, you've got to take the thing as it is and play your game according to the rules that were made long before you sat in. Bonafede's done that. Middleton can't, or won't. And so Bonafede's a bishop; and Middleton, as I said before, has a sentence to hard labor for life, with once in a while a day off, like today. Well, I've talked a lot of what you may think is rot, and now it's time to go to the performance. We can agree in enjoying that, I guess. And we must look one another up in London."

It was a day to be remembered by the whole Tech contingent. Each of the men on the program spoke after his own fashion, but all must perforce make much of the Oxford Fellowship and the Leyton Center, and that could not be easily done without some reference to Peter Middleton. Which gave the students frequent excuse for blowing off steam.

Dr. Andrews, the president of Tech, was most felicitous in his remarks of congratulation, and in his approval of the Fellowship idea.

Bishop Bonafede recalled the days when he was a college student, harking back to his associations with Peter at Calder College. "Indeed," he said, "our friendship goes further back than that, for Brother Middleton's home was my first and almost my only home in Kansas until I was married and had a home of my own.

"I am proud of being here today, and of seeing what we see, because it was with a small fund, much too small, from the Board of Special Philanthropies, of which at the time I was Executive Secretary, that this work was begun. And Peter Middleton was just the man to begin it." (Cheers.) "In this connection I should like to call your attention to the fact that it is from such modest beginnings we can trace many of our greatest Methodist institutions and enterprises,—hospitals, colleges, orphanages, theological schools, schools and other work for Negroes, and many other activities. These, so modestly begun, so wonderfully developed, are part of the church's answer to the plea sometimes heard that the chief business of the church is to preach the gospel, and leave the concrete application of its spirit and principles to other agencies." (Mild cheers.)

Bishop Eberle was likewise in a reminiscent mood. "I, too, had something to do," he began, "with my friend Middleton's start. 'I knew him when'." And he told the story of the Blue Oak revival.

"The need of such foundations as the Oxford Fellowship needs no arguing," he went on, "but what is not felt so strongly as it should be is that for every such a foundation there must be a man. Peter Middleton was getting ready for this at Calder, twenty-five years ago. Without him, and, I know you will want me to add, without his talented and self-forgetful daughter," (loud cheers from the student section) "no amount of theorizing about the need, and in fact, no amount of available money, would have brought us to this day and this admirably planned Center. We must all acknowledge the great and wise generosity of Brother Leyton," (cheers), "and yet I may be violating a confidence when I say that it was his knowledge of the Middletons which made him sure that his money would be wisely invested in the building we have come to dedicate.

"And our most urgent task now is to find and train many men like Peter Middleton." (More cheers.) "For such institutions as this Oxford Fellowship are every day more desperately needed, as Methodist students crowd into the schools established by the state and supported by our taxes.

"We cannot either abandon or grow lukewarm toward our church's colleges. But everybody sees that the modern tendency is for the public to seek as much as possible of its general education in the great public institutions. And so, even if we had not a single Methodist student in them, the genius of Methodism would send us to these thronging thousands. All the more is the church bound to follow its own children, and not to leave them to the tender mercies of a wholly secularized education."

This was the note to strike. The other men had been heard politely and with a measure of interest, but, except for a few among the official visitors, everybody knew that Bishop Eberle had gone to the root of the matter.

Rhoda they captured from her place in the audience, put her into a chair which was swung up to the muscular shoulders of four young men. The leaders stormed the platform, and captured Peter, lifting him to their shoulders alongside his daughter. Then the procession got fairly under way, with rhythmic trampings, the Tech yell and other noisy ritual, until the room had been circled thrice. With Rhoda back in her place, and Peter dropped again into his chair on the platform, the students felt they had properly shown their feelings, and the program reverted to its formal aspect.

Half an hour later the dedication ceremony, as all agreed, had been well and truly done.

III

The morning papers of a June Monday of that year carried an Associated Press story with a Calder College dateline of the day before. It ran, "Bishop Bartelmy Bonafede of Salt Lake City, one of the best known Methodist ecclesiastics in the country, collapsed today while preaching the baccalaureate sermon at Calder College, of which he is an alumnus. An old friend, the Rev. Peter Middleton, happened to be seated near the bishop, and caught him as he fell. He was carried to the President's house, where in about an hour he regained consciousness. Late in the afternoon he was able to receive a few callers, and assured them that his indisposition had no significance except as an indication of recent overwork. His friends urged him to cancel his immediate engagements, but he insisted on leaving by the evening train for a series of dates in the East."

The Associated Press correspondent told the truth, so far as it was known by the authorities at Calder. One man guessed the rest of it; but his lips were sealed.

Bishop Bonafede had gone to Calder direct from the dedication of Leyton Center. He had been invited, as a son of the college, to preach the baccalaureate sermon. As it chanced, he had never performed that function at Calder before, though, naturally, he had often spoken from the familiar platform.

By way of recognizing the event suitably, he had determined to produce a new discourse. Like most of the bishops, he was used to more or less mild jests at his repetitiousness, though it would be foolish to say that he or the others enjoyed them. For any bishop knows that the jesters would do no better themselves, if they had no more than a bishop's leisure for study.

Since it was his college, and this far from his first appearance there, something self-regardful was in his inclination to offer new material. On the Calder platform he had never quite overcome a feeling of being entirely too well understood. Elsewhere he could be assured—mastery in each pose and movement—before he had spoken a word. But always at Calder the years somehow dropped away, as he recalled the just but merciless student judgment, intolerant to pretense, swift to detect rant and cant, vocally scornful of the first patronizing word.

A new sermon it should be, then. Very well; but what?

It was not the least part of his dismay, after the event, that now he saw himself almost incapable of what his old rhetoric texts had called "invention." This had not occurred to him when casting about for his sermon idea, though he could see it with revealing clearness when it was too late.

Searching for something of a lead, his thoughts had gone back, understandably enough, to the platform at Calder as he best remembered it, the Calder of his undergraduate days. From that far-away time he dimly recalled one baccalaureate sermon which had made something of an impression on him. The preacher, long since lost track of, had seemed in that day the embodiment of all a great preacher should be.

The detail of the sermon he had almost wholly forgotten. What he remembered was that the preacher had gone to an unfamiliar part of the Old Testament for his text, and that the story back of it had seemed most dramatic. It was the story of the siege of Samaria, and the consequent famine in the city. The text of that other preacher had been "Tomorrow about this time," and the discourse, as Bishop Bonafede imperfectly and inaccurately recalled it, told the seniors of its day, with rather more confidence than the outcome had justified, that somehow in the tomorrow they were facing they might be bringing help and deliverance to a hungry world.

For very good reasons Bishop Bonafede could not use that text. It was easily possible that some one of his own generation would remember the former time. So he had gone into the context, to see if the story might offer some other arresting phrase, and the search brought to light just what he was looking for, in Elisha's paradoxical prediction to the captain on whose arm the king leaned: "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof."

The story, as Bible readers know, is almost perfect drama. A foodless city, a helpless king, a cynical soldier, an unpopular prophet, hunger-crazed women, public-spirited lepers, a panic-smitten enemy, sudden plenty after the extremity of famine, an unbeliever's death in the moment of his pride and power.

One might wonder how a man of Bishop Bonafede's discernment had been attracted by this passage and its grim ending. But he saw in it not a little of vivid and attention-gripping quality, and to the bishop it was second nature to look for and use in his speeches what he had once described to Peter Middleton, in a borrowed phrase, as "justifiable quiddities." Well, why not?

What was far stranger to him afterwards, as he reviewed the whole affair, was his complete blindness to the theme's deadly personal implications. Not once, in the fragments of time he had been able to give to the sermon's preparation, had he dreamed that it was possible to turn on himself and say, "Thou art the man."

In retrospect such obtuseness seemed to him incredible. But few preachers see all around their themes. He had been thinking to focus his sermon on the incompleteness of even the fullest lives; Moses missing Canaan; Wolfe at Quebec; Nelson at Trafalgar; Lincoln struck down in Ford's Theater; DeLesseps beaten at Panama; Roosevelt denied command of a division in the Great War; Leonard Wood kept back from leading the officers he had trained. History, ancient and modern, was full of examples.

And all the time he did not in the least suspect that his own best illustration was himself; the life-fabric he had been weaving, thread by thread, all through the years since he had listened to that other preacher talk of Elisha and the Syrians and the lepers. Even the few significant comments of Peter, the evening before, had no meaning to him until it was all over.

The bishop and Peter, having come from Great Meadows by diverse routes, had met at a little informal dinner on Saturday night. Peter was on hand for the twenty-fifth anniversary of his class.

After dinner they found themselves in a corner alone. As always, they talked briefly, but quite as old intimates. Bonafede had never been able to carry himself episcopally in the infrequent meetings with Peter since his election; nor did Middleton so much as think of saying "bishop" to the man he had known so long.

With a touch of harmless jocularity, Peter asked, "Which sermon have you for tomorrow, Bart?"

And the bishop, not concealing his satisfaction at having an answer, said, "Peter, it may surprise you to know that I've actually worked up a new one."

"Good for you," said Peter, and meant it. "What's the subject?"

The other told him, "Life's Mysterious Withholdings;" and gave chapter and verse.

Peter recognized the passage, more clearly than Bartelmy guessed. "Well, Bart," he said, slowly and, as the bishop thought, a little sadly, "you're the last man I should have thought brave enough to tackle a theme and a text like that. Have you enjoyed yourself as you worked it up?"

Queerly enough, the bishop had, after a fashion; the historical allusions seemed to him good. And he said, "Why, yes;" but the question sounded a little peculiar, and he asked Middleton what made him put it just that way.

"I was thinking," Peter answered, "that a sermon like that might be useful tomorrow to at least one man." But when the bishop would have him explain, he changed the subject. He could do that.

The customs of Baccalaureate Sunday are much the same in all Middle-West colleges; probably they are a trace less formal than in the older schools further east. The faculty in academic dress and the trustees, a few likewise arrayed, the rest somewhat incongruous but less self-conscious in their business suits, sat in a half-circle back of the pulpit. The senior class, newly capped and gowned, faced the pulpit from the first rows of seats in the center of the great gymnasium. Around and above them, on the main floor and in the sweeping curves of the gallery, were twenty-five hundred people; students, townspeople, the families of the seniors and miscellaneous visitors. Nearly everybody present had some sort of personal relation to the college, and, in a way, to the preacher of the morning. All knew him, or knew about him;—a Calder man and a Kansas man who had come to be bishop. As he sat by the president he constantly caught recognizing and friendly glances.

Everything went as it usually does on such occasions. The service was expected to run over time, and nobody minded the long Scripture reading, or the long prayer of the venerable president of the Board of Trustees, or the long musical program. Most of all, the people were prepared to sit patiently through a long sermon. The sense of being a part of the spectacle would offset the restless weariness of an ordinary service thus prolonged.

On Sunday night, after the whole miserable business was over, the bishop could not recall, as he tossed in his berth, the first trifle which that morning had frayed the edge of his usual composure. He had been just nervous enough at the start to feel as he always felt before a Calder audience, but that of itself would not have shaken him. He well knew how to control such disquiet.

Whatever it was, it had come early in his sermon. He had not finished reviewing the story of the Samaria siege—and with sorry pride he remembered afterward how it held the audience, as well by the gift he had cultivated of turning any story into a word picture as by its sheer emotional interest—when a tremor of indefinable distress touched him. It came just as he reached the prophet's word which he had chosen as his text. It was akin to the distress he had sometimes known when in the midst of an address the swift suspicion had crossed his mind that he had used that theme before, and with the same audience. That wasn't it, this time. Yet it brought the same bewildering sense of self-exposure; a feeling capable of doing sudden damage to the nerves.

But this lasted only for an instant. Presently he was himself again, dignified and yet not cold; one moment properly serious and the next genial and almost debonair, as those who enjoyed his public appearances liked him to be.

After ten minutes or so he had occasion to repeat the text. And the quiver or tremor, or whatever it was, came again. So far, it is probable that no one had noticed anything wrong, except perhaps Peter Middleton. After it was all over, the bishop, remembering Peter's cryptic remark of Saturday, realized that his old friend had known from the outset that he was taking some kind of risk.

The recurrence of this unease put him off the track of his outline, and he discovered that he had omitted the next head of the sermon, as well as a rather striking illustration which he had worked up with some care. To gain time, once more he repeated the text. And again, as by some secret signal, the trembling and its nameless fear swept through him.

By now he was thoroughly alarmed. Words rose haltingly to his lips. The mind-resting phrases which at other times he could have rounded out with slight effort into acceptably rhythmical platitudes, became a jumbled and clumsy incoherence. He felt himself on the verge of panic. He tried to steady his nerves, as well as to gain time, by the impressive reiteration of the text, only to increase his distraction as the strange unease recurred.

What could he do? Though by this time the rest of his sermon was fogging into a hopeless mental blur, he dared not stop. He struggled for coherence, and even as he struggled a steadily-growing fear began to chill him through. "I'll break down if I'm not careful. Whatever can it be? Am I ill?" But he knew it was no illness of the body which had suddenly come upon him.

He began to be aware of other fears, crossing the path of the first. It seemed to him that here and there in the audience he could discern wondering and almost hostile glances. The gowned group around him stirred uneasily. The seniors put hands to mouths and whispered. A new and colder spasm of dread shook him. He felt himself facing a general and resentful disapproval.

And then, as once again he repeated the text of his sermon, light came; a cruel, penetrating light. It thrust at him like a weapon in unseen hands. The words he had spoken, the prophet's words, seemed to burn white-hot before his eyes; "*Thou* shalt see it. . . . but *thou* shalt not eat. . . . !"

On he stumbled, caring now only to find a stopping place. His sermon's form was in irrecoverable wreck; out of it he could grasp no salvage at all, save, possibly, some fragments of the customary charge to the graduating class.

In an agony of terror he paused, the stabbing inner light of the pitiless words every instant more searing and yet exquisitely torturing. He looked down, appealingly, on the young faces before him. If only he could see in them some trace of trust, some reassuring look of confidence. But no; there seemed neither grace nor understanding in them; and the great company all about was begininng to change into a many-voiced, menacing presence. He thought everybody knew what now he knew; everybody saw him for what he was. Was anything left, now, but to confess, and, if he could, escape? How *could* he escape from this horrible commingling of reality and nightmare? He had no power to separate fact from illusion.

"Members of the graduating class," he tried to say, "it is my pleasant duty—" and with a groan he saw again in the baleful inner light those stern words of Elisha's striking straight at himself; "*Thou* shalt see it," and in him now was left no remnant of pleasant words—"it is rather my solemn duty to warn you—" and a merciful darkness closed in around him.

He swerved as from a physical blow, and turned blindly from the pulpit. All he could recollect, when he tried to think what had happened, was the beginning of his fall, with Peter Middleton catching and steadying him. Peter had quietly made his way to the platform from a side seat, as soon as he realized that the bishop was in some sort of distress; and had just time for a whispered word to the musical director before his strong arms went about the almost unconscious preacher and saved him from falling headlong. The organ sounded the opening measures of an anthem, and the astonished but well-trained choir rose and struck into the selection appointed to follow the sermon.

The bishop knew enough to be able to say, thickly, imploringly, "Peter, old man, for God's sake get me out of here; they'll kill me!"

Peter, with two or three others, half led, half carried him through a door at the side of the platform, away from that menacing crowd, which to the distraught bishop's fancy was now seeking to tear him to pieces. Darkness came again, and when next he returned to consciousness he was in a bedroom of the president's house. A doctor had come, and evidently had made some examination before the patient came to.

"No," he was saying to those in the room, "it is not apoplexy, nor heart failure. He's just fainted. Some sort of a sudden shock while he was preaching, I imagine, though I was in the congregation, and can't for the life of me guess what it could have been. But I saw he was in trouble, just about the time Mr. Middleton did."

The bishop confirmed the doctor's opinion, by trying to get up. "Not yet, Bishop," the other said, "you're probably all right, but you'd better lie still a while."

"Why, there's nothing the matter;" but the bishop's voice belied his words. "I probably lost consciousness for a time; but people often do that when they're speaking, don't they, Doctor?"

"People lose consciousness under all sorts of circumstances, if the conditions are there. You've been working pretty hard lately, haven't you, Bishop?"

"No more than usual," Bishop Bonafede answered, "but I *was* somewhat below par this morning." And he tried to smile, with poor success.

The doctor sent everybody out of the room. "I want to stay a moment longer," he said.

"Now, Bishop," he told his patient, "I don't know what was wrong. But you were bothered, someway, from the very start. Did you get nervous and fussed because your memory went back on you, and you forgot?"

"No, not that." The bishop shivered a little. "It was the other way 'round; because I remembered. And it was too much for me. But it's quite out of your line, and all you can do is to give me something that will settle my nerves for a few hours. Didn't I hear you say that I was physically all right?"

"Yes, and I think you are. But there's something else wrong."

"There is, Doctor, and I wish I could talk it out with you. But I can't; not now. Just let me get a couple of hours sleep, and I'll be myself again."

To all appearances he was. By mid-afternoon he awoke, and told the president that he would not change his arrangements, which called for his leaving on the late evening train. The president protested, but Bishop Bonafede said, "Ask Dr. Morgan. He'll tell you it's perfectly safe." He thought he could trust that doctor.

The affair made a great sensation in the town, of course, though all possible pains were taken, when it was known that Bishop Bonafede had so quickly recovered, to minimize it. Various explanations were given. The official statement, handed to the editor of the town paper, in his capacity of Associated Press correspondent, was that Bishop Bonafede, who for some time had been working beyond his strength, had been taken ill with one of those sudden but not serious derangements of stomach and nerves to which men who work under great strain are liable.

But the bishop knew. When he awoke in the afternoon the thing had already become clear. The truth, which in his panic he had been on the point of blurting out, now separated itself from its distracting accompaniment of unrealities. He had been gripped by an illusion of persecution, perhaps, which had made each of his auditors seem a threatening foe. But back of the illusion there was a terrible truth. That day he had seen himself twice; once as these people thought him when he faced them at the opening of his sermon, and once as they might have seen him in the light which had shown him to himself. The garment of pretense had given way. His effort to give the prophet's warning a modern application had been all too successful. It had put such a strain on his own life's fabric that the uncertain fibres had pulled apart; he had stood before God, and, as he felt, before the people whose needs he was set to supply, naked and afraid.

The tragedy of Samaria had been re-enacted. Trusted by the college to declare to its children the hidden riches of Christian living, he knew himself after all these years to be a pauper of the faith, a shepherd of souls who had yielded his own soul to unclean beasts.

He saw himself near kinsman to the Captain of the Bible story. Time, and little else, separated these two. One in their love for the outward show of things, one in their readiness to become almoners of a bounty they had lost the power to share. "How like we are," thought Bartelmy Bonafede in his Pullman berth. "How like! But not all through. The captain died in the midst of plenty. The captain died....died...." And the train roared on through the night.

IV

For several years Peter had been in growing demand as a speaker, particularly since the Oxford Fellowship had begun to attract attention. His calls came from all parts of the Middle West. He learned his way from the station to the Methodist church or the principal hotel and back again, in a hundred towns within a night's ride of Great Meadows. In the summer, especially, he felt free to earn money for the Fellowship by this sort of work, hard though it was, and he gave two or three days a week to it.

A postponed date took him out of town in the first week of Tech, and he was hurrying back on Friday for a meeting with his student cabinet. The train was late, and when he reached the Center the group was already assembled. One of the boys stood in the portal, ready for whatever small service he might render.

"I'll be there in a jiffy, Harry," said Peter. "Is there any mail?"

"A few letters," said Harry, "and a telegram," picking them up from the hall table.

To Peter, glancing the letters over, they seemed either unimportant or from strangers. At any rate they could wait. He thrust them into the pocket of his overcoat, and opened the telegram.

"Hello; it's from Bishop Bonafede." And he read, "Shall pass through Great Meadows late Sunday night, stopping between trains. Must see you. Bart."

"Funny," said Peter, half to himself. "What's Bonafede doing here? He's got an Eastern Conference beginning Wednesday, and I saw by the *Advocate* he was to be in Pennsylvania last Tuesday. See, Harry, this wire is from Pittsburgh. Well; I'll be ready for him. The only train he can come in on is the 10:40. I'll be through for the day by that time."

He put the telegram in his pocket with the letters, and hurried into the room where his helpers waited. There was much to be done in this opening week, and he depended so largely on student assistance that he would not let anything interfere with that part of his Oxford Fellowship strategy.

But Sunday saw the work of the Center almost up to mid-term exactingness; the town had filled up in the last few days, and every activity was organizing for the season. Peter's morning sermon, heard by as many people as could crowd into the assembly room, might have been a sort of religious matriculation address. His chief concern was that Methodist students coming to Tech should grasp, from the opening day, the values of the Oxford Fellowship, and he did not so much preach as seek to produce the first stirrings of a sense of belonging.

In the evening he had arranged, as his custom was, a communion service, with a short sermon. He needed the sort of prepartion which solitude affords, and in the late afternoon he set out cross-country for a vigorous walk. Always he reveled in this combination of exercise and straight thinking, and, as today, sometimes he forgot how long a mile or two can be on the return half of the journey. When at last he turned in to the Center, somewhat warm and winded, the hour of evening worship was almost come.

Harry Meredith, on hand as usual to be of use if needed, followed him into the study. Taking off his light overcoat, preparatory to a quick wash, Peter's hand encountered a small sheaf of letters.

"What's this?" he said, surprised, as he pulled them out. "Oh, yes, I remember. I picked them up on Friday night, with Bishop Bonafede's telegram. Hadn't thought of them since. Say, Harry; look them over, won't you, and open them, while I freshen up a little."

Harry picked them up, and slit the envelopes. "Most of this isn't much, Mr. Middleton," he said; "circulars and things. But here's one that you ought to have. It's marked at the top 'Important.' "

"All right, Harry," said Peter, his hands still in the wash-bowl; "read it, please; unless it's from Rhoda."

"No; it's not even signed, except with initials."

He began to read, without much interest; but his voice dropped as he came nearer to the tragic appeal of it.

"Dear Mr. Middleton," it began, "you would remember me, I guess, but there is no use to bother you that much. Ten years ago, when you were at College Park, I brought my girl up from home, and you married us in the parsonage. We're still married; but I am in a whole lot of trouble. Just a few days ago I found out that my wife had gone wrong. She don't know yet that I even suspect anything. The fellow has skipped. He was a crook, as well as rotten other ways, and he ain't coming back. Well, Mr. Middleton, I got to have real help because this trouble has got me down, and somehow I thought of you. I ain't had the nerve to come to you straight out and open; the thing has broken me up, sort of. I don't know if you can help me, but if not, nobody can, and I'm through. We live in Edgerton, and so next Sunday night my wife and me will come to Great Meadows, and we aim to hear you preach. *For God's sake, Mr. Middleton, say something in your sermon that will tell me what to do!*"

"All the signature," said Harry as he ended the reading, "is 'D. S.' "

Middleton, with amazed eyes, turned to the other, the towel still in his hands.

"Harry, what in the world shall I do? That sounds like a real call for help. But it's time for the service this minute, and I was going to preach on the rich young ruler, 'The Call of Christ to Youth.' Of course that's impossible, now. I wonder whoever 'D. S.' can be."

They could hear the piano, though the voluntary had ended. The pianist was improvising until the preacher should appear through the door opening on the platform.

With quick decisiveness Peter spoke again. "Harry, I don't know yet what to do; but I shall. Just now you must help me. Go on in and start the service. You've done it before. Give out the hymn. Ask Brother Clement to offer the opening prayer; he's always ready. Read the Scripture lesson and make the announcements. They're on the pulpit. By the time you get to the second hymn I hope to be ready; but until then I'll stay here and see if I can get something to say. Go on, now; you must stand by me tonight, old man. I'll be out in time for the sermon, somehow."

In any other sort of emergency, Harry probably would have refused, flatly; but the letter had stirred him, too. Without a word he opened the door to the platform and stepped up to the pulpit. The hymn before the sermon was in its last stanza when Peter Middleton entered from the study and went to his place. Now he was turning the leaves of the pulpit Bible, and smoothing the pages when the book lay open at the chapter he sought. Below him stood the Table, covered with its fair linen cloth.

He began to speak with a quiet intensity that barely hinted at the pent-up forces within: "My text tonight is found in Luke's Gospel, eleventh chapter, '*And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*'"

The student congregation sensed something. The preacher's deliberately level voice was not less suggestive than the wonderful old impossible words. None could have said that he heard anything new; the old strangeness of the sermon was that dozens of its hearers declared, afterward, "He was talking to me."

Then came the Supper; never had Peter been more sure of its answer to men's deepest need. Brother Clement, a retired minister, and two other men in orders assisted. It was orderly and utterly reverent, but no moment was lost. Group after group received the elements and retired. At the last, ten or eleven knelt at uneven intervals along the cushioned ledge before the chancel-rail.

All the time Peter's eye had been busy. Intently he had scanned each group as it came forward, looking for some sign; though what, he knew not. Only when this last group came was the sign given him; but he saw it instantly. A man and a woman were coming forward together, the woman evidently under the greater stress of feeling. In the man's broad shoulders, in the vaguely familiar swing of his body as he moved down the aisle, in the shape of his bent head which shaded his face, Peter was sure he saw someone not wholly a stranger.

A whispered hint to his helpers, and they stood back. He took the bread, and when he had come to the couple kneeling at the far end of the chancel-rail, he knew. It was the man he had thought.

And quietly, as at Parkerville in the old days, he spoke, over the extended plate, "Steady, Doug; you're on the right track.

You got what I was driving at, didn't you?" The man nodded.

Again he came, bringing the wine. As he offered it he leaned over and whispered to the woman, "Shed for thee; it means Christ's forgiveness, and you've got Doug's, too."

And he turned himself back to the steps at the other end of the platform.

He had not reached them when from the woman's lips, wet with the wine of the sacrament, there burst a great sob of heart-broken contrition; as Peter looked back he saw the two still kneeling at the chancel-rail, but in each other's arms.

And at that moment from instrument and choir came the first strains of an ancient hymn of praise and penitence; *"Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will.... Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!"*

V

All through the summer Peter's thoughts had turned persistently to Bishop Bonafede. When his one-time friend had insisted on setting out alone, after his upset at the Calder commencement, it was with something of the old affection, in spite of what he knew and of more which he guessed, that Peter waved goodbye to him from the platform as the sleeper rolled out of the station.

The *Advocates* told him that Bartelmy was busy here and there. Marcus, he knew, had taken Judith with him to Mexico, on a special assignment for his London paper, and Viola would be dividing her time between Atlantic City and a Michigan summer resort where there was enough Methodist atmosphere to serve the needs of a bishop's wife, but no social or religious responsibilities. And now the bishop was coming far out of his way to say something; Peter could not imagine what.

There had been an unforgettable half hour in the study after the communion service. Peter intercepted Doug Swanley and his wife as they were trying to slip away from the service, and what was said and done, while these three, behind the study's closed door, talked of Parkerville and one another and the forgiving grace of God, they never told.

They came out as Peter was saying, "Isn't it a piece of good luck that I have to meet the train you'll take for Edgerton? I'll call a cab, and see you off in style. And remember, you've promised to keep in touch with me. I'll be up to see you, and you come here when you can. You're close enough. It's not fair that old friends should lose sight of one another as you and I have done, Doug."

"That's so, Mr. Middleton," said Doug. "You'll not lose us again in a hurry."

The taxi came in answer to Peter's telephoned order, and the three rode down to the station. "I've to meet Bishop Bonafede on this train, so you'll have to put yourselves on board without any help," he said. And the goodbyes they exchanged as the train rolled in to the station would have done credit to the parting of lifelong friends.

Peter hurried down the platform to the Pullmans, just in time to take the bishop's bags from the porter. "We'll check these," he said, "and then off we go. I've a taxi waiting."

"Where can we go that will be quiet; with no interruptions?" the bishop asked.

"At this time of night," Peter answered, "the loneliest place in this town is the lounge at Leyton Center. There's been something doing all day, but everybody has gone home by now. Tonight we could plot whatever you like and nobody would be the wiser." He was trying to make talk, for he felt that something was coming, and he did not want it to begin in a yellow cab.

As they were entering the big front door, the bishop said, "Tell the taxi to come back in time for my train, won't you, Peter? I've got less than an hour, and I need it all."

In a moment they were in the big lounge, hospitable and welcoming. Peter led the way to the couch in front of the empty fireplace, and the other settled himself among its cushions with a great sigh.

He plunged in without preface. "There's no need to beat about the bush," he said. "Peter, I've got to talk to you, although I know it's no use, and you'll think less of me when I'm done than you do now, much as you may doubt that. The psychologists have some name or other for the thing that drives me to come to you, but I don't know what it is. All I know is I've got it. You're the only man I can turn to. You know a good deal of what I have to say, and some you have guessed. Anyway, I must talk it out. I can't talk to Marcus. Tried it, just before he left on this last trip. Viola? No; you know she wouldn't understand. The only man in the Board of Bishops I might go to would be Eberle; but this isn't a thing to tell to another bishop. I've got to live with them, and they've got to live with me. I simply couldn't stand it, that one of them knew all about me."

"But, Bart, why come to me? What can I do with whatever it is you want to say?" Peter was honestly puzzled.

"Nothing. I'm not looking for anything to be done. All summer I have lived with this thing alone, but I can't go another day without talking; and you are the only man who'll let me say my say and understand the very heart of it, and let me go without preaching the obvious stuff that I know full as well as any preacher knows it. You'll think I'm weak, and I am. No matter. I've got to feel that somebody knows all this; somebody I can trust with my very soul."

Peter looked at him and wondered. As they sat there, if he were to put his arm across the back of the couch it would rest on the bishop's shoulders. He wanted to do it. They had not been in such physical nearness since the days when they had slept in the same bed in the old house on Paint Creek, and in the same room at Calder. What was it Bartelmy had to say? He had an inkling, and yet could hardly believe that the bishop would really let himself go. Certainly he was wholly unprepared for the cold frankness with which this man who had been his boyhood friend now bared the ugly truth.

"Peter, you win. That's what I've come to say. You've always won. I always tried to outdo you, from the time you took me into your father's house. I never succeeded. Right at the start I showed you how to make a milking stool, and you bettered my workmanship. I set out to keep you and Effie Bailey apart, and maybe I should have done it but that I went after what I thought was bigger game. I tricked you out of first place in an oratorical contest, and you took it in the very way that spoiled my victory. It was through me you were moved from Parkerville, and you scored a bigger success at College Park. Because I thought you were in my way at Columbus Avenue, I put Bishop Randolph up to sending you to a forlorn hope here at Great Meadows; and you have made yourself a name in the whole church with your Oxford Fellowship."

"But that's ridiculous, Bart. You make me out a pretty helpless sort of puppet. It isn't very complimentary."

"You got Effie, when I wasn't discerning enough to keep her," Bart went on; unheeding. "You got my boy, when I was too busy with my ambitions to be his father. You are what you are; and I—well, I am a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church. But even what that might be is spoiled for me when I remember that you know how it happened, and you know what price I have paid and shall keep on paying for the power and the glory.

"I'm talking to you now because I know that somehow you have never been fooled, and yet you have never tried to get even. You let Colonel Burlington have his way, and Bishop Randolph his, and me mine. I believe that you guessed, long ago, how it was all going to work out. And now you have your Fellowship, a thing that events will make more and more necessary to the church."

Peter tried to break in again, with poor success. "But you have something, too, Bart. You've gone far since those old days."

"What have I? Why, the right to go on being bishop—the only kind of bishop I know how to be. Peter, the man in the Bible story I tried to preach about on that Sunday at Calder had one big advantage over me; when he came to his great hour, the thing he hadn't believed in killed him. He was through with it all. When I came to my great hour, the thing I didn't believe in had already killed something in me, though not until that night at Calder did I know that it was dead. But, Peter, it didn't kill all of me. Some of me is still here. And I can't go back on what I am. There's no way out. I've thought it through, and I know. Why? Why, because the church *says* there's no way out."

"I should hate to believe that," said Peter. "It's dead against everything in the Gospel that our church preaches, about those who acknowledge their faults, and. . . ."

"Just the same, it's true," Bartelmy interrupted. "I know not only because I've thought it through, but because I've tried it."

"Tried what?"

"Tried to tell others what I'm telling you. It was at Long Beach, two weeks after that horrible day at Calder. I was down there for a committee meeting, and one morning I dropped in to that 'Sunshine Hour' or whatever it is they have every day just before noon. On a sudden impulse I determined to get up and make a clean breast of it."

Peter looked and felt incredulous.

"You needn't stare, Peter. I did. There was an 'altar call' for those who wanted what the leader called 'a closer walk with God'. After a minute or two I went up with the others, and the leader, as soon as he recognized me, greeted me as you would expect him to. Forty people were kneeling there, I suppose, and he asked me to say a few words to them.

"I stood up and said I wasn't the man they thought me to be. I told something of what I have said here tonight, though I couldn't get my own consent to put it quite so badly. But I laid it on as thick as I dared, in a place like that. And all I got out of it was the leader's sickeningly fulsome praise of my humility and self-forgetful devotion to a great task. He positively fawned on me. If I had been St. Francis, or, better, Francis Asbury, he couldn't have done a completer job."

"But surely you don't think what happened at one place is any sign of how the church in general would look at a man who wanted to get such a thing said," Peter protested.

"Not altogether, Peter; but, after all, you know yourself that, as far as the church at large is concerned, I'm speaking the words of truth and soberness. The church knows how to offer Christ to youth, that has everything to give. It knows how to offer Christ to a broken-willed down-and-out, when he has nothing to lose. But, Peter, what can it do for a bankrupt bishop? There's plenty in the Discipline that tells how to deal with a bishop who has broken the laws of the state, or maladministered the business of the church,—a wicked bishop; and how to dispose of a disabled bishop. But I don't think the men who made the Discipline ever so much as thought of a penitent bishop. There can't be such a man. He would be a flat denial of the system that made him. You and I have known many an unworthy candidate for the episcopacy; but what bishop of your acquaintance, after his election, was anything but faithful, well-meaning, impartial, and—more than all—away above reach of spiritual reproach? Search the *Advocates* as far back as you will; election to the episcopal office dooms a man who is not good to play a part. He must be what the church says he is. Ours is a proud church. We have almost lost the capacity—perhaps the need—for confession and penitence. That sort of thing appears here and there among our humbler people; but do you think the church would endure it to have a bishop who baldly confessed himself a sinner? Not a bit. It would insist to the world and to itself that excessive devotion to the church's interests had for the moment unhinged his mind. Rather than let him put himself in the pillory, it would unhesitatingly put him in the madhouse. Not for a minute could the church's self-love permit him to confess to such sins as mine. I have too much pride to let myself be counted mad, and the system has too much pride to let me be counted a sinner."

"But, Bart," said Peter, "you talk as though this 'system' were all there is to the church. And it isn't, by a long way."

"No; but the system, or the machine, or whatever name you like, has become so big that it is too strong to be resisted or turned aside from the direction in which it is moving. It *gets* men, when they give themselves to it. I am not saying that it gets every man. It hasn't got you. And I'm not saying that it gets every man who reaches high place. But there is something in most men that the system can fit to its purposes, altogether apart from any question of moral character; there was in me, and it's there yet. Whatever else I've lost, I've got that sort of ability and adaptability."

Peter had been, at the beginning, incredulous. Then he had listened, despite a protesting inner sense of shame, which momently lost itself in a growing pity for the man whom he had never quite ceased to love.

"I know how to be a bishop," the inexorable voice went on. "I can go through all the motions. I can deliver my usual speeches, and preach my usual sermons. As long as I have my health I can be a good enough bishop to get by. I can make appointments. I can meet committees. You will know, always, of course, what sort of a bishop I am. And I think you may be sorry for me. That hurts, but I can't help it. Viola never expected me to be anything else. If she knew what I am saying to you she would not understand, or care. Marcus doesn't know. He only fears. If I could keep him from finding out, I would. When I first knew of Judith I feared for him. He is the son of shoddy, and by his marriage he has come back to the children of shoddy. He's a Bonafede bound to a Jessop. Perhaps, by some trick of inheritance he will be an Oldroyd, and not a Bonafede at all, with more of my mother and her father in him than of my father and myself. It seems as if that might be so. I hope it is."

Peter's whole soul was stirred. For twenty years he had been accustomed to confessions. He had sent sappy freshmen out of his study, after tales told with an excess of abject weeping, their heads up and their eyes shining with something like new purpose. He was still a-quiver from the poignant half-hour which Doug Swanley and his wife had just spent with him.

But here was something new, and terrible beyond all these others. This was a man he knew better than he knew his own brothers; knew inside and out; a man he would still go far to help; and he couldn't help him.

For, after all, wasn't Bartelmy right? He owed something to his church, at least enough to save it from the defamers. In these days of pitiless publicity for every erring cleric, not a front page in America but would welcome with its biggest headlines such a story. How the scoffers would scoff, in their signed columns, in their personal magazines; how the baser religionists of every creed and cult would jeer at the Methodists.

The Board of Bishops would be humiliated to the dust. These good men had been unhappy about other affairs in their time, but never such a shame as this, touching one of their own number, had been blazoned to the world. And the farthest country church on the smallest district of the remotest conference would feel the disgrace of it all. No; the church could not endure it. Bartelmy was so far right.

And yet Peter could scarcely claim much ingenuity for the only suggestion which offered.

"I see, or I think I do, Bart, what you are facing," he said, his voice under poor control. "It would be useless to say I don't, or to minimize the things you have said. You believe the price of telling to the church and, necessarily, to the world, what you have told me, is too heavy for you—and the church—to pay. It may be. That's a question I never faced before; an awful question. Have you thought of retiring?"

"A thousand times; and as often given it up. What sort of a way out would that be? Retired, I'd still be Bishop Bonafede. To go into complete seclusion isn't possible. I've my wife to think of; and Marcus and his wife, as well as the church. And, short of disappearing, I'd be up against all sorts of impossible situations, all the time. Think a bit; and you can see what I mean; a bishop midway of his fifties, physically fit, mentally as good as ever,—and retired! No, Peter; there's nothing in that."

"But what *will* you do, then?"

"In heaven's name what *can* I do? Like the man in the parable, I cannot dig, and to beg I am ashamed. I must do what he did; be practical."

"But, Bart, it's a very hell of a life you're proposing for yourself."

"Don't you suppose I know that as well as you do, Peter? I've always been the more orthodox of us two, and if I no longer believe in the old hell, it's likely I believe in a worse one than you can. The old hell? Why, that wouldn't be so bad."

Peter cringed. "Bart, you mustn't. I can't let you talk like that. There must be some way out. You've got to save your soul—yourself, at any cost. Nothing is as important as that, not even the church."

"Oh, yes it is, old man; always has been. Don't you remember that once a great churchman said that it was expedient that one man should die for the people? He meant expedient for the church. He was willing to let an innocent man die, rather than compromise the church. But when the man's guilty, what could the church do, even if it knew? Nothing but let him die on his feet, without being found out!

"That's the solution, without telling anybody. Just for me to go ahead with the distribution of the bread of life. You know, none better, how hungry people are; and you've noticed, as I have, that people can be fed even under the preaching of a scoundrel. And, Peter, I'm not really a scoundrel, as men figure such things. I've only made the cheapest use of my opportunities. I do believe there are people in the church who wouldn't be so very hard on me, even if they knew all that you know. Not many, but some; and some who have been trusted almost as greatly as I have been."

Peter sat with his head in his hands. A great surge of sorrow swept over him. Scarce an hour ago he had dealt with a penitent woman and a forgiving man. Could it be possible that the friend of his youth, driven by forces beyond any control, was inexorably shut out from either penitence or pardon?

Bartelmy stood up. The sight of Peter's emotion almost shook his hard composure, but he would not yield.

"Don't take it to heart so, Peter," he said. "I'm not worth it, though I wish I could tell you what your interest means to me. I must go. My train is due in fifteen minutes. You've been good to listen. You've always been better to me than anybody else; and—" for an instant his voice shook the merest trifle—"if you'll let me say it, I've loved you as Jonathan loved David, ever since you took me out of the snow into your mother's room. I loved you when I was using you for my own advantage; there was envy in it, and ambition; but now that all such things are gone, the other is more alive than ever. If I dared to pray in your presence I'd say just one prayer; 'God bless Peter Middleton, my friend'."

They went out, somehow, to the taxi, and Bartelmy got in, not unsteadily. As it drove away, you would have said, if you had seen these men, that of the two the man who stood in the portal of Leyton Center, watching the cab until it turned a corner, was bearing the heavier burden,—a load of unutterable grief.

VI

The communion service at the opening of the Annual Conference was ending. Bishop Bonafede had supervised its administration, assisted by the district superintendents. Preachers and visitors had come in successive companies to kneel at the chancel-rail. Everything had been done decently and in order.

As he lowered his outstretched arms at the close of the ritual benediction, the bishop picked up a Hymnal.

"While the tables are being brought for the secretaries," he said, "let us sing hymn number 560, 'And Are We Yet Alive?' "

The conference joined, as conferences innumerable have joined, and will join through years to come, in Charles Wesley's hymn of reunion, without which a Methodist conference can scarcely be considered open.

"What troubles have we seen,
What conflicts have we passed,
Fightings without, and fears within,
Since we assembled last!"

Then Bishop Bonafede, standing by the episcopal chair, announced, "The Secretary of the last session will call the roll." Ten minutes later, the roll of the living having been completed,—"Let us rise and stand in silent tribute while the Secretary calls the name of those honored dead who since the last session have answered to the roll call in the better land."

After the moment of reverent standing the preachers took their seats, the district superintendents at their little tables in the chancel opened their brief cases and prepared for action, and the bishop turned the leaves of his morocco-bound copy of the General Minutes to the proper page.

In the steady, clear voice which was not the least of his episcopal assets, Bishop Bartelmy Bonafede arose and made the little speech which he knew by heart.

"Before our business begins," he said, "let me announce that I am ready to confer with any preacher or any committee about the appointments. Though I must take responsibility for final decisions, our Methodism, in form an autocracy, is in spirit wholly democratic. And so I shall be in my room from two to three this afternoon and tomorrow, and shall be glad to see anybody who cares to come. Naturally, with almost three hundred preachers to appoint, interviews must needs be brief. But all who come will be heard sympathetically and attentively."

Then picking up his Minutes he set the conference machine in motion: "We will take up the fifteenth question, 'Was the character of each preacher examined?' Frederick Stormington, of the Eastern District. Is there anything against him?"

"Nothing against him," said the preachers of the Eastern District, in the time-honored phrase. Brother Stormington arose and began to read his annual report; and once more a Methodist conference was moving to the rhythm of a routine which even war itself, not so long ago, proved powerless to interrupt.

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