POLLY PAT'S PARISH

WINIFRED KIRKLAND

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" 'I knew Captain would come,' breathed Polly Patt "

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By

Winifred Kirkland

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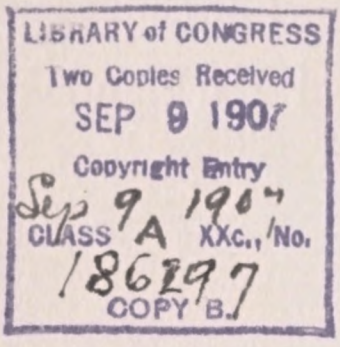

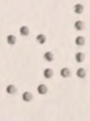

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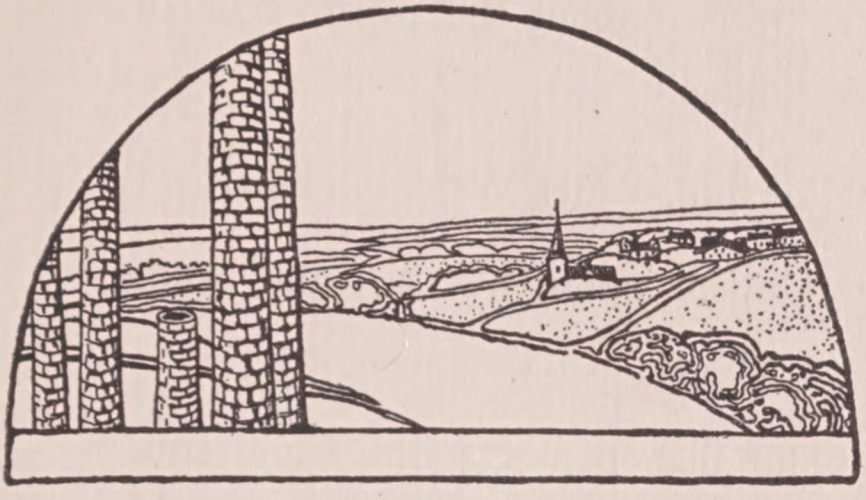

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Polly Pat's Parish

I

A FIRST CALL

AFTER three days of rain and raw September wind, the afternoon sun shone out below a black bar of cloud westward over the hills that encircle Forrestdale. For three days Miss Alison Farwell had delayed an important call, and now at last she set out, picking her way along the muddy footpath that led from her beautiful old Hedgerows down into the paved streets of Forrestdale. She did not use a carriage, although she had three. It was one of Miss Alison's whims never to use a carriage except in calling on other carriages, so to speak. If those she visited were pedestrians,

so was she. For this idiosyncrasy her cousins, the Job Farwells, laughed at her. There was nothing Alison Farwell minded so little as being laughed at. This was one reason why she was the most influential woman in Forrestdale.

Miss Alison was trimly tailored and dainty from head to foot. The light carriage of her slim figure, the girlish pink in her cheeks counteracted the years that declared themselves in the keenness of brown eyes, the faint powdering of grey in the soft chestnut waves swept back from her temples, in the quizzical amusement lurking about her lips. Miss Alison picked her steps gingerly, hating mud as one might who was born of generations of Forrestdale aristocrats. On the ridge of the sharp little hill that brings one down into Forrestdale she paused, looking out over the old town, no longer the Forrestdale of her girlhood. Spread-

ing out to her right, away from the streets of grave old houses and stately maple avenues, stretched the ugly red brick of the Farwell factories. Their smoke hung between her and the old white tower of the court house.

Radiating in irregular fashion from the factories ran lines of ugly squat cottages where lived the factory people. From these cottages vague rumours of discontent and agitation were carried even as far as peaceful Hedgerows. Like all old Forrestdale, Miss Alison resented the invasion of the factories with their smoke and noise and bustle, yet it was the Farwells themselves who had introduced them, who owned them, old Job Farwell and his son Charles. Since the Farwells owned the rest of the town as well, and allowed no competitors, they had things quite their own way in Factory End. Still there were those who muttered

that the real autocrat of Factory End was a certain brawny engineer, one John Noble, better known, from certain pugilistic tendencies, as Jack Smasher.

Miss Alison's gaze wandered on to where above the trees the shining spire of Calvary Church shot skyward. The ivy-grown grey walls were invisible, but Miss Alison had always loved this glimpse of the steeple. Here was the church where for generations all the Farwells and most of the rest of Forrestdale had worshipped. Here it was that old Dr. Truling had done service for so many years, and, at last, but two months ago, been carried very gently across to the rectory, fallen suddenly into the last long sleep.

Now a new and very different rector had entered into Dr. Truling's place. The vestry had been alive to the new needs of Forrestdale and of Calvary Church, and to this end

had searched and found an active city missionary. In confidential conclave the vestry had decided that the business of the new rector would be to unite the alien elements in his congregation, old Forrestdale and Factory End, the rich and the poor, but in this effort the vestry themselves had little intention of assisting. The new minister had preached his first sermon the Sunday before. He was not one who could stay fastened to a manuscript or to a pulpit while he preached. He strode up and down the chancel step as the quick words came pouring. He sent his congregation home with souls a-tingle, yet for a few of them the impression that remained was not that of the face afire with energy, but the pathos of that same face in repose, mark of a persistent bravery.

"Yes, we need to be waked up in Forrestdale," thought Miss Alison, setting forward now at a brisk pace

along South Street. "Forrestdale is dull. I am dull myself."

Miss Alison mounted the rectory steps and looked over the fair proportions of the grey stone building with that pride which all Calvary parish felt in possessing the finest rectory in the diocese. And how would the new minister furnish it? she wondered; it had been an interior exquisite as that of Hedgerows itself in the days of Dr. Truling and his sweet old sister.

The door opened upon Keziah Smithwick, of all women! The next instant Miss Alison smiled at her own start of surprise, for the doors of newcomers in Forrestdale always did open upon Keziah Smithwick. There were few servants to be had in all the town, and Keziah was one. Upon any new arrival Keziah descended from the fastnesses of a farm in the hills and was welcomed with open and unsuspecting arms. For two weeks

she did the work of a dozen, and anon departed silently as a thief in the night.

Now Keziah's little grey eyes gleamed maliciously under her tight-drawn black brows, her mouth set grimly, for Keziah hated Miss Alison Farwell because once Miss Alison, the suffering mistress being her own sister, had told Keziah what she thought of her, and besides Miss Alison's skirts rustled. Incidentally, be it remembered, the two women belonged to the same parish. There was a half minute's pause before Miss Alison's "Good-afternoon, Keziah. May I see Mrs. Everitt?"

Ironic laughter overspread Keziah's face. "Mrs. Everitt! Well, I swum! There ain't no Mrs. Everitt! Dead this long while, and worse luck for the raft of young ones she left for other folks to look after. Hear 'em now!"

"Raft of young ones," indeed, or

a herd of buffalo stampeding through the uncarpeted upper rooms. Then suddenly, as if some fine ear had detected voices below, utter quiet, followed by a buzz of whispers. The visitor surmised eyes peering through the balustrade above, as she hesitated on the threshold. Keziah, hand on knob, was uninviting.

"Well, dunno as there's anybody for you to call on here," she said.

"'Ziah!" rang out a sharp young voice from above, "I guess I'm here to call on!" and down the stairs in hot haste some one clattered and tumbled. Miss Alison saw an overgrown girl in an outgrown dress, tumbled red braids flying, clear pink colour that came and went under a mass of freckles, eager lips, eager grey eyes.

"Come into the parlour, please," she panted. "I—I—I'm the lady of the house. I'm Polly Pat."

Miss Alison did as she was directed.

"Will you sit down—on some-

"Come into the parlour, please, I-I-I'm the lady of the house"

thing?" pursued her hostess, for the parlour contained three wooden boxes, a tack hammer, and a very dirty white cotton rabbit.

Humour pulled at the corners of Miss Alison's mouth, but it was impossible to smile in the face of this towsled young person swinging her heels on a packing box, and regarding Miss Alison in such dead earnestness.

"Your name?" asked Miss Alison. "I'm not sure I caught it."

"Polly Pat, from Mary Martha. Cap always called me that."

"And Cap is———?" queried Miss Alison.

"Oh, I forget you don't know us," said Polly Pat, laughing delightfully. "You're the first person that's called except neighbours at the back door. Captain is father. You wouldn't know who the Four-in-hand are either, would you?"

"No."

"They're the others. There's Paul, he's twelve, and Dunder and Blitzen, the twins, ten years old—Kingsley and Maurice are their real names—then Annette, the last, she's seven. We call them the Four-in-hand because they're so hard to manage, and because they do everything together, except fighting. Paul does that for the whole lot of us. Paul's perfectly dreadful," she concluded, smiling with pride.

"And may I ask how old you are?"

"Sixteen. Sixteen *is* grown up, don't you truly think so? Captain and I had a big argument about it before we moved here. I said it was, and Cap said it wasn't, but I could try for myself and find out if I wanted to, because anything was better than any more housekeepers."

Her visitor was relieved that Polly Pat did not wait to hear her opinion, but went on. "It was rather sud-

den, my deciding to be grown up. It was all for Cap. We've had such a time with housekeepers. We've answered the advertisements in the church papers. You've read them, haven't you? They sound so nice. Cap and all of us would read them together, and then we'd pick out the one that sounded the most mother-y, but when they came they weren't mother-y a bit. After we got rid of the Crayfish—the twins finished *her* —I saw how distracted Cap was getting, and I just decided I'd do it myself, attend to things, I mean, the house and the children and the parish. Have you met our Captain?" she asked, abruptly.

"Not yet, but I hope to soon," her visitor answered.

There came over Polly Pat's face a look rapt and wonderful, transfiguring its childishness.

"I want to help Cap so!" she said, "more than I want anything

in the world. I want to help him in the parish. He cares so much about it. Don't you suppose I can, if I try dreadfully hard?"

The click of a latchkey saved Miss Alison's answer.

"There he is now," said Polly Pat, and there he was in the doorway—a tall man of light, athletic build, in his first forties, with brown, boyish face clean shaven, a suspicion of tenseness about the eyes and temples, contradicted by the flashing friendliness and sweetness of his smile of welcome. Polly Pat slipped a hand into his, and turned to her visitor with shining face. "This is Captain," she said simply.

He shook hands in a hearty, boyish way, and sat down on the third packing box.

"I am afraid you are not very comfortably seated, Miss Farwell; it is Miss Farwell, is it not?" he said.

"I had forgotten all about my

seat," answered Alison Farwell. "It is I who ought to apologise for intruding on you before you are settled, before your furniture has even arrived."

"Oh, it isn't going to arrive!" cried Polly Pat; "we haven't any. We gave it all away."

Miss Alison's face looked her bewilderment. No words came to her assistance.

"We didn't keep anything but the bedding and Cap's desk and chair, and, of course, the books. We're sitting on the books now. When we got here, and 'Ziah came, she would have some pots and pans, and a bed to sleep on. Cap let her buy them. She wouldn't hear of my buying them," this last in an injured tone.

"But you will surely need some furniture," exclaimed Miss Alison.

"So it seemed to me," said the minister, looking at his visitor with troubled eyes.

"No," said Polly Pat, with conviction, "I don't think so. Furniture has always been one of the chief troubles. Those housekeeper ladies were always fussing about the way we treated it. It's always getting broken or wearing out. I believe we can just as well get along without it until the children are grown up. It will make housekeeping so much easier for me."

"It would not make housekeeping easier for me," said Miss Alison, "and I have kept house a good many years, Miss Everitt."

Polly Pat's face went rosy red with conflicting feelings.

"No one ever called me that before," she said; "it sounds nice. I like it—no, I don't either. I think I'd rather *you* called me Polly Pat, Miss Farwell," suddenly leaning forward and laying an impulsive hand in Miss Alison's soft gloved one.

Miss Alison was not an impulsive

woman. Few people made sudden advances to her. Now she felt her two hands closing over the hard little fist, as she looked into the fathomless grey depths of Polly Pat's eyes. The minister's voice made Miss Alison turn sharply as he looked at her over Polly Pat's head, a smile, half quizzical, half pathetic, on his lips.

"It isn't always very easy work," he said, "this bringing ourselves up. We shall need help sometimes, perhaps, Miss Farwell."

Both fun and tenderness were in Miss Alison's eyes as they met his. In that look Miss Alison and the minister had acknowledged that they shared between them a problem to be solved. Little did the third one of the group guess that the problem's name was Polly Pat.

"Your Forrestdale is very beautiful," the minister went on; "I am sure we are going to be very happy here. It was hard to leave Randolph,

but I wanted the children to have a sight of hills and trees, and to have cleaner air to breathe than was to be had in the city. It's time they knew the feel of the grass. Have you seen the others?" he asked.

"No; may I?" Miss Alison responded.

He went to the door and uttered a ringing yodel, which met with an instant response. Miss Alison saw one, two, three, four little bodies shoot down the balustrade and bounce from the newel post to the floor light as rubber balls. The Four-in-hand filed in, none too tidy, and marched up to shake hands, all preternaturally silent; first Paul, red-haired, grey-eyed like Polly Pat, his square bull-dog face flashing into a surprisingly pleasant smile as he put out his hand; then the twins, round-faced, cherubic, Dunder, the brown one, ever equable, matter-of-fact, and Blitzen, blue-eyed and blond, also equable and

matter-of-fact, except when music shook him with an emotion he could not master; last little Annette, with her father's brown hair, her father's brown eyes, and her own sweet toothless smile. She looked appealing and kissable as a baby; in fact no little sister was ever a more daring and resolute follower of elder brothers in all their maddest escapades. Little Annette when she came to Miss Alison lifted an expectant, dirty little face framed in towsled curls, and Miss Alison in all her daintiness put her two hands about the little face and kissed it.

As one man, the Four-in-hand squatted down on the floor in a half circle about Miss Alison, and sat there looking up at her with bright, unwinking eyes, silent and wise as Hindoo idols.

The rector and Miss Alison now had the conversation to themselves. It was all about the parish, of various

people and circumstances needing to be explained to a new rector, of Old Forrestdale and of the difficulties to be encountered in Factory End. To all that Miss Alison had to say the rector listened with keen, quick understanding. To all this, Polly Pat listened, too, chin in hand, her face all alive and eager.

But the conversation was a little dull for the Four-in-hand. Fifteen minutes of silence and inaction for them was unprecedented. There came a pause in the talk, interrupted by Paul with the abrupt inquiry:

"Miss Farwell, can you do this?" At the words, down went his head, up went his heels. Thus inverted, he held himself rigid without the quiver of a muscle as he progressed, hand over hand, toward the door. He was instantly followed by Blitzen, with his "Miss Farwell, can you do this?" as he proceeded by a series of rapid back somersaults to the door and free-

dom. A third "Miss Farwell, can you do this?" and Dunder, transformed into a human cartwheel, swiftly vanished from view. "Miss Farwell, can you do this?" piped Annette. She drew her knees up to her chin, clasped her hands about them, and followed after her brothers by means of leapings into the air incredibly high, as if she'd been an India rubber hoptoad. The whole action was distinguished by the lightning-like rapidity that always characterised both the movements and purposes of all the Everitts.

The rector and Polly Pat turned upon their visitor faces of consternation, and then all three broke into laughter that rang through the house and reached 'Ziah, sourly concocting a stew in the kitchen, and was echoed with irresistible shrill merriment from the Four-in-hand, rejoicing in their escape. Their amusement was still heard in intermittent explosions as

Miss Alison took her leave. The minister's arm slipped about Polly Pat as the two stood in the doorway facing Miss Alison as they said good-bye. The picture of the two remained long in Miss Alison's memory, both so eager to help, both needing help so much.

"You will come soon again, won't you?" pleaded Polly Pat, squeezing Miss Alison's hand. "There are so many things we need to know, and we do so want to do our best for Forrestdale."

"I hope Forrestdale will be patient with us," said the minister.

II

THE RECTORY IS FURNISHED

IN the fortnight succeeding Miss Alison's call, Polly Pat returned it three times. On the first occasion she went with her father, and wore a black suit she had bought just before leaving the city. She hadn't had time to wait for alterations, so that the coat had little reference to her figure, but the skirt touched proudly all around. She carried a card-case without any cards; they had been ordered for the new parish, but they hadn't yet arrived. She wore a matronly little hat, and her bronze braids were tucked up so clumsily that she scattered hairpins wherever she went.

The second time she had come she had on her oldest (and shortest) skirt, and her hair flew out on the

wind as she came running up the hill. She had held on to her dignity in the town streets, but reaching the hill beyond, she had taken to a swifter pace, and arrived purple with the exercise and with the rage due to a hot encounter with 'Ziah.

The third time Polly Pat came slowly up the hill, bearing a great bundle in one hand and trailing little Annette by the other. Polly Pat herself was pale with worry and a whole morning of vain effort. "Annette needs new aprons," she said to Miss Alison without preliminary. "I don't believe I cut them right, and it takes so long to backstitch the seams, and she'll come out if I don't. Will you please teach me to sew on the machine?"

"But, my dear, you haven't any machine."

"I thought I could sew on yours," answered Polly Pat, opening her tired eyes very wide.

This being adopted so quickly, herself and her possessions, by a strange person of sixteen was a novel experience to Miss Alison. Yet if the natural impatience of a capable woman sometimes made her voice a little sharp as she directed Polly Pat's blundering fingers through the sewing lesson, Miss Alison forgot the sacrifice of a whole afternoon, when Polly Pat at parting clasped her arms about her neck and kissed her impetuously.

Yet in three visits Polly Pat had caught no hint of what was chiefly occupying Miss Alison's time and thought during that fortnight, and what was stirring dull Old Forrestdale to an activity such as it had not enjoyed for many a year. From house to house on stately old Elm Street Miss Alison's carriage went bustling, and there was no one who was not ready to help her. Of all this the rectory knew nothing, and

still less did it or Old Forrestdale know of the excited energy manifesting itself in Factory End as 'Ziah Smithwick, shawl over head, chatted by kitchen fires of an evening, and developed proud plans.

It was the bright mid-morning of an early October Saturday. There proceeded from the bathroom sounds of great racket. Whenever the twins did not know what else to do with themselves, they took a bath. Except for the sweep of muddy river on the outskirts of Randolph, and a single wonderful day by the ocean, their acquaintance with water was confined to the bath tub. However, the bath tub and imagination were enough for them; in thought they ventured the boundless deep, meanwhile lustily trilling aquatic hymns, as they splashed and rubbed and pummelled each other. Now two sweet soprano voices, Dunder's soulless, Blitzen's heart-piercing, floated out—

"Pull for the shore, sailor (splash),
Pull for the shore (splash),
Heed not the rolling wave (splash),
But bend to the oar (splash)."

Hark! What was that? They broke off singing, they clasped each other's necks in mock alarm, all a-quiver with curiosity. The front bell was ringing furiously, there was a thundering at the back door, the study knocker just below them was tap-tap-tapping impatiently. Whisk! They were out of the tub, into their bath robes, out of the door, and stretching their sleek wet heads far out over the upper balustrade. A trail of wet footprints across the polished floor marked their path. Polly Pat had flown to the front door; 'Ziah was at the back.

"Wait here," cried Blitzen to Dunder; "I'll 'tend to the study." He flew back to the bathroom, climbed up on the window sill, slammed down the upper sash, and,

flapping from it like a duster in the wind, shouted down, "Go right in. He's gone away. It isn't locked. There isn't anybody left to go to the door. What's that? A 'frigerator? Take it in then, take it right into the study. Who's coming in the front door, Dunder?" he shouted back over his shoulder.

"A bureau," shouted Dunder, "a big black bureau. Goodness! it's coming right upstairs, and I hear something else tumbling up the back stairs. Come here! Come here, *quick!*" the last word rising to an impossible shrillness, as Dunder danced up and down on his bare wet feet.

The black bureau was assisted in its ascent by two liveried black footmen, and followed by the round, flushed face, and the stout black-silk-clad form of Mrs. Job Farwell, who fanned herself with apoplectic energy as she panted after. In the upper hall just across from the staircase was

a door leading down, and something else was most certainly bumping its way up the back stairway. Just as the bureau touched the level, the door was thrown open and a table appeared to be cast forth from invisible space. The bureau was of old mahogany; the table had a red plush top festooned with ravelled rope, held in place by gilt tacks, and it stood shakily on legs composed of gilded spools. From the dusk of the stairway emerged the little worn, wizened face, the wiry, bent little body of Mrs. John Noble, Jack Smasher's wife, Keziah's sister. Mrs. Farwell came forth from behind her bureau —she had turned alarmingly red.

"But—but—but——" she said.

"Good-morning, ma'am," said Mrs. Noble, mild and polite; she had none of 'Ziah's aggressiveness, she had more than her determination.

"But *we* are furnishing the rectory," said Mrs. Farwell at last.

"So are we," said Mrs. Noble.

Behind Mrs. Farwell on the front stairs and Mrs. Noble on the back, there formed an excited line, neither procession understanding at first what was barring its progress. Ten o'clock of the day on which the rector was known to be absent at the Clericus had been the time appointed by the committee of Old Forrestdale, and by that of Factory End for stocking that empty rectory by way of surprise for the rector on his return. Both sides had arrived promptly. In front of the house the street clattered with vehicles. From private carriages and express waggons were descending chairs, tables, beds, rolls of carpet, and stacking themselves on the lawn and piazzas.

A very much homelier collection was pouring in at the back door, cots, dishes, pots and kettles, all that was portable by hand, all that could be spared from houses less gen-

erously stocked than those of Old Forrestdale. Now in their busy planning for this invasion, this unprecedented parochial activity, all Forrestdale had discovered that they loved their new rector, this man with the boyish eyes, the boyish handshake, and the man's sympathy. Dr. Truling had lived a quiet, scholarly life, remote from his people, opening the rectory sometimes to dispense a gentle, stately hospitality. Neither Old Forrestdale nor Factory End was used to a rector who needed them. The pewful of motherless little Everitts had strangely stirred people's hearts.

It was a genuine outpouring of affection that brought about the invasion of the rectory on this Saturday morning. Because both parties of the parish now stood there with their gifts in their hands, they resented all the more hotly this interference each with the other. Excite-

ment quivered all along the line as the state of affairs was communicated. Excitement buzzed in talk as little knots of people gathered in corners front and back, strident whispers guarded so that the parlour might not be heard by the kitchen, the kitchen by the parlour.

Old Peter Newman, Forrestdale's chief carpenter and jobber, mumbled away incoherently on the back steps into the ear of his stout daughter-in-law, who had left her Saturday baking, and come in crisp blue calico, her sleeves rolled up, to lend her hearty arm to the rectory furnishing. 'Ziah went from one to the other of her friends, cheeks and eyes aflame, viewing the opposing faction with glances meant to slay, and slamming every available door. In the study Mrs. Easton, a small, sharp little woman, whose tongue was a whiplash, poured forth a nervous flow of indignation into the ear

of Mrs. Charles Farwell, a stately young woman, whose very air of lofty indifference was an affront to Factory End. The rectory vibrated with excitement.

Meanwhile the five motherless little Everitts, for whose comfort and convenience so much of this preparation had been made, found themselves unceremoniously shoved into corners, whence they viewed the invaders with wondering and inquisitive eyes. None more alert than they to the fact that a crisis was enacting in their own hallway before their very faces. Polly Pat alone understood the full nature of the situation; it was not for nothing that she was her father's confidante. Mrs. Farwell with her bureau and her footmen. Mrs. Noble with her table, still held possession of the upper hall, both bent in the same direction, the sunny southern room which was the rector's bedroom. It was a time for action, but whose?

The rector was at the Clericus. Miss Alison Farwell was on her way, but at the other end of the town.

Up the front staircase, wriggling her way past Mrs. Farwell, past the black footmen and the black bureau, came Polly Pat, red braids very mussy, her Saturday morning shirt-waist out at elbows. Her eyes and cheeks were bright with resolution. Her voice rang out so that all heard.

"It's very kind of you, of course," she said; "all this furniture is very kind of you. I'm sure father would want me to thank you. But we really don't want it, you know." An appealing little smile flashed across the irritating determination of her face and voice. "You see, since I'm housekeeper and don't know very much about it, it makes it easier for me without furniture. I'm pretty busy anyway with just the house—and the parish."

The parish, as represented by the

score of church members there gathered, stared open-mouthed. Polly Pat smiled again, but into unsympathetic faces. "Won't you please take it away?" she asked.

"My child," cried Mrs. Easton, fiery temper in her tones, "you don't know what you're saying nor to whom you're speaking!"

"No more she does," cried 'Ziah, who had pushed her way in and who now unexpectedly joined forces with the enemy, both united against this audacious young person, their rector's daughter. "Who ever heard of anybody's living without furniture?" stormed 'Ziah at Polly Pat. "Much you know about living or housekeeping! Go along and be a heathen if you want to, but let us make your father and the children comfortable the best we can, Miss Know-it-all! I declare," 'Ziah looked around for sympathy, and found it, too, from rich and poor alike, "it seems though

sometimes I could wash my hands of the whole lot of them, she's that set and unreasonable!" And 'Ziah stooped and caught up Annette, who was clinging to her skirts, her lips quivering. "Go get dressed, for goodness' sake, boys," she admonished the twins sharply.

"My dear," said Mrs. Farwell, panting, but finding voice at last, and addressing Polly Pat, "I think it would be better if you allowed older people to do what they think best for your father and for all of you. It really is not the place of a young girl to refuse kindness that is offered."

A square little figure came out of the obscurity of a half-shut closet door. It advanced with knotted fists. Grey eyes scowled beneath a red mop of hair.

"You stop scolding Polly Pat!" growled Paul.

"Paul!" cried Polly Pat, the

anger that shook her ebbing from her in an instant at this new alarm. "You can't—*fight*—Mrs. Farwell!"

She held his arm in an iron grasp. Her gust of anger had left her pale and helpless under attack. She realised that everything was going wrong, but she didn't know what to do. And Captain—what would he say, or think of all this? There came over her face that visionary intensity which always—poor Polly Pat!—preceded the saying of the wrong thing. Her lips trembled a little: "I thought it would be better for us not to have any furniture than—for you all—not to be friends." She looked from Mrs. Farwell's constituency to Mrs. Noble's. Both factions bristled.

"Who's talking about not being friends?" snapped 'Ziah.

"I trust, Miss Everitt," said Mrs. Farwell, "that your father's parishioners are all friends."

"Then what is it all about?" questioned Polly Pat, with eyes of fathomless wonder. "I thought you were all awfully mad at each other."

Then at last, at last, came Miss Alison. The news of the confusion at the rectory had reached her as she stepped from her carriage to the curb, but the trouble in Polly Pat's face, the exasperation on the other faces, was not so clear. However, she knew Polly Pat's genius for blunders.

"Dearie," she said briskly, "won't you run down and see that Gilmore takes the basket out of the back of the carriage safely?"

Then she turned to the others. "I am sure," she said, "that Mr. Everitt will be very glad to know that *all* his parish have wanted to make his home comfortable; but wouldn't it be easier for us all if we should divide the house, some of us take some rooms, some others?"

The faces of Miss Alison's friends

looked relieved; the faces of the others acquiescent. 'Ziah was sullen.

"Which rooms do we have?" she asked.

A quarter of a minute Miss Alison hesitated. There was one room old Forrestdale had planned to make most comfortable for a man who seemed hardly to know what it meant to be thoroughly comfortable. For this room every article was selected, stood ready. But when Miss Alison spoke she said:

"You take the southern front room, Mr. Everitt's room."

A light of pleasure came into Mrs. Noble's tired eyes. 'Ziah was mollified, almost gracious, as she said, "You take the parlours then. You can make them look better than we can."

"But—why—Alison——?" expostulated Mrs. Farwell.

"Because he'd rather have them do it," whispered Miss Alison.

Now indeed the rectory buzzed with activity. It was a day that Polly Pat long remembered for the acuteness of her discomfort. Assuredly the rectory was her own home, and she had a right to unmolested existence therein, but to-day she seemed to be in everybody's way, yet there seemed no littlest nook to which she might retire. No remotest attic closet was safe from the intrusion of that insistent parish. Did Polly Pat, shyly and with reddening cheeks, offer the assistance of her awkward hands to any of Mrs. Farwell's groups of workers, she was courteously but coldly repulsed. As for her father's humbler parishioners, wherever they were, 'Ziah was, and between 'Ziah and Polly Pat there was fierce feud. The other Everitts might stand about, frank lookers-on, not unwelcome, and meeting frequently with hurried but kind attention. But for this Polly Pat was too

old. It is unfortunate to be too young to be reasoned with like a grown-up, and too old to be forgiven for your mistakes like a child. All the time in the depths of her wistful, worried little soul, Polly Pat was conscious that she was not doing what Cap would have wished.

It was in the early afternoon that Miss Alison found her beside the new flour barrel in the pantry. It went through Miss Alison with a sharpness to which she was unaccustomed to see Polly Pat's ruddy face so pinched with trouble. The others, those others who were not used to seeing Miss Alison demonstrative, were safely on the other side of closed doors. When Polly Pat looked like this, Alison Farwell was conscious of an overwhelming desire to keep her always a little girl, although she knew that it was her duty to help her to be a woman as soon as possible. Now she gathered the woe-

begone figure to her in a great hug. "It's all right now, dearie," she said between kisses, "you needn't worry a bit. Listen to what I want you to do this minute. Gilmore is at the door with the carriage. Run out and jump in, and tell him to drive you over Cardiff Hill. It's beautiful there. Run along with you, girlie."

While Polly Pat was away, Miss Alison did a little talking, only a word or two here and there, the right word in the right ear, but enough to make Old Forrestdale remember the next morning, when it saw Polly Pat enter the church, tall, broad-shouldered, her hair done high and the matronly hat atop, the black skirts sweeping the floor—that she was only a little girl.

When Polly Pat came back from her drive, her eyes dancing with the glory of autumn colours, Miss Alison was waiting, all ready to drive home. The children, as they fell

upon their big sister at the door, told her that pretty nearly everybody was gone, that pretty soon they could talk out loud again. "Mrs. Farwell's here still," said Blitzen, "and Judge Farwell's here, too, upstairs. He came to take her home."

"Jack Smasher's here, too, out in the kitchen. He let me feel his muscle," Paul went on with the news.

"And 'Ziah stood out in the dining-room," Dunder took up the account, "and they all said good-bye to her when they went away."

Verily it seemed as if the sun on that October Saturday would not go down on wrath, but deeper strife may shake a town than that of parish factions.

At last the click of the father's key. Polly Pat flew for her immemorial right of first kiss. The Four-in-hand swarmed down upon him. Rapidly and lucidly Polly Pat poured forth the day's events.

"Cap, Cap, we're furnished! They came and furnished us while you were away! See the parlour and the hall. And we had an awful time for a while, until Miss Alison came. But they all went away all right. Only some of them are here still, in corners and upstairs."

The rector looked about him and understood a little of what his eldest was saying.

"You like it, don't you?" said Polly Pat, intent on his face.

"It's a little more like home, don't you think, Polly Pat?" he assented apologetically.

Then he gently put aside his entangling offspring and proceeded upstairs to his room for the supper-time tidying up. On the threshold he paused. Dusk was deepening the shadows, but daylight was still clear. It seemed that the committee was exhibiting its day's work to the husbands who had dropped in at the end

of the afternoon. Yet there was no pride in the gesture with which Mrs. Farwell was pointing out object after object in the rector's room to her husband, old Job Farwell, with the shock of white hair, the square jaw, the sharp, deep-set eyes. Mrs. Farwell's gesture meant disgust.

"Why did you let them?" asked the Judge.

"Alison!" answered Mrs. Farwell.

In at the other door came little Mrs. Noble, her weary face aglow with pride. She tugged after her the doughty Jack Smasher, her husband, who tiptoed awkwardly in her wake.

"Ain't it lovely, Jack?" she said.

In half a second it had happened. It was not often that Job Farwell and John Noble met face to face, and when they did they were prepared and held themselves in leash. Now the flash of unexpected recognition found them off their guard.

Red hate leaped to their eyes as they faced each other, and then they remembered, for in the mirror they had both seen a third man standing in the doorway. John Noble slunk back, stealing away downstairs. What right had he in that home, anyway? Judge Farwell advanced with outstretched hand to the minister. Both men hoped he had not seen, for both knew that a man with eyes and lips like his would never understand hate.

But the rector had seen.

III

BLUNDERS AND BENEFIT

THE Sunday morning sunshine of late November fell through stained glass windows on the rector's earnest face turned toward his people. He stood at the edge of the chancel step giving out the notices.

"The Ladies' Guild of this parish," he read, "will meet on Wednesday next, at half-past three, at the rectory." He smoothed out the paper with a quick movement of strong, nervous hands. He always had to remember to curb his words against the yearning of his heart when he appealed directly to this people he had come to love, though not yet, as he knew, fully to understand.

"I have been somewhat troubled,"

he said, "as I have read the reports of recent years, to see how few the meetings of this guild have been and how scant the attendance. Can we not, at this first meeting of this new winter, try to swell the numbers, and, may I add, the enthusiasm of all members? I wish that all, all the women of this parish might be present at the rectory on next Wednesday afternoon."

In the rectory pew Polly Pat watched her father's face with eyes that kindled to his earnestness, for was she not one of the women of her father's parish?

On Wednesday afternoon they came, came fifty strong, yet all afternoon the rector at each ring at the door watched for his Factory End, but it did not come. It never had attended the meetings of the Ladies' Guild and it didn't know how to begin. Old Forrestdale bustled in and buzzed about and packed itself into

the parlour and library with an air of possession such as in former days it had never felt. Since they had furnished it, the rectory belonged to them, and so did the rector, and so did the rector's children.

Little Annette had claimed the privilege of opening the door. All afternoon she never budged from her station behind the high portal, and she met each arrival with a smile, speechless, toothless, sweet. She received petting in plenty and she was still small enough for guerdon of lollypops. After the guests were all stowed away within, the boys stole down from above and claimed a share of the little sister's booty.

At the library door the rector and Polly Pat welcomed each newcomer. The Ladies' Guild had taken for granted that the rector would stay with them during this first meeting, but the rector thought wiser not to do so. When all were assembled, he

withdrew, after a brief but pertinent address. But, departing, he left behind him Polly Pat. The rector was so used to treating Polly Pat as a woman that he sometimes forgot that other people might feel differently. The Ladies' Guild felt that Polly Pat, her duties as hostess done, might very properly retire. The Ladies' Guild was a very grown-up society; most of it had husbands and children, many of it were grandmothers. It didn't know what to do with Polly Pat.

Mrs. Farwell, the president, now came forward, as usual a little flushed and breathing quickly and heavily. Mrs. Easton, the secretary, took her seat close by, a pad on her knee for the keeping of the minutes. The Ladies' Guild had its spasms of parliamentary order. The president borrowed the secretary's pencil and, after long and perturbed tapping on the table with the same, at last re-

" When all were assembled, he withdrew "

duced the chatter in the two rooms to a mere rustling akin to silence.

"It is necessary at this first meeting of the year," Mrs. Farwell said, "that we should once again consider plans of work for the winter to come, and also decide the time and number of meetings. I should propose that we open our meeting with some discussion of these two subjects."

"Madam President," Mrs. Phillips drew her long languid length to a standing posture as she spoke, "I move that our meetings take place once in two months as heretofore."

"Oh, my goodness, that's not often enough!" exploded someone over by the library door. The rooms were silent now, silent and stiff. Polly Pat jumped to her feet. "Mrs.—Mr.—Madam President, it isn't often enough, really and truly. Why, what can we ever get done if we don't meet oftener than that? Besides, it gives people a chance to go

to sleep in between times. Why, we'd forget all about what happened at the last meeting, and that's just what was the trouble before, that's just what father said you—we needed—I mean enthusiasm."

She paused breathless, while through the back of her chair stole the gentle, gloved hand of dear old Mrs. Priestman, and plucked at Polly Pat's skirt, intimating that it were well for her to sit down. As she did so, the two parlours broke into tumultuous discussion, only nobody heard anybody's view but her own, nobody, that is, but Polly Pat, who through the excited talk around her caught enough to make her feel much as she had done on that eventful day of the furnishing. She sat with the same queer lonesomeness pressing down upon her spirits, while Miss Alison, quite helpless, sat the width of two great rooms away from her.

At length the society became aware

that its president, her face empurpled, was beating the table for order, and that if she didn't get it, the result might be apoplexy.

"Ladies," she panted at last, "the motion before the house is that we meet once in two months. Is the motion seconded?"

It was not for fully a moment, then Mrs. Priestman, who could never resist rescuing any motion thus pitifully hung in air unsupported, quavered, "I second the motion."

"Is there any discussion?"

Evidently not a whisper.

"Are you ready for the vote?"

They were.

"Those in favour please say aye."

"Aye," responded Mrs. Phillips, transfixed, and not she alone, by being the only affirmative.

"Noes?" said the president.

"No!" thundered the Ladies' Guild, gazing about at itself in amazement as it did so.

Mrs. Priestman now rustled gently to her feet. "Madam President, I move that the Ladies' Guild meet every two weeks."

"I second the motion," cried Polly Pat, her voice blithe with joy. The motion was carried triumphantly, against a faint murmur of negatives. Polly Pat turned about in her chair and beamed upon the whole society, and then her face grew troubled, for the society did not beam back at Polly Pat and she didn't know why. That curious chilliness in the atmosphere kept her quiet for a while; for a time she only half heard the discussion of plans for the winter's work.

The Ladies' Guild, for all its growing affection for Mr. Everitt, was conservative, and energy had never been its besetting virtue. What was this they were talking about, sewing for the Nortons and the Ellises, two families of notoriously shiftless Factory Enders, always conveniently

ready for the services of the Ladies' Guild? Was this all? Was this promising first meeting coming to a thus tame and impotent conclusion? Across Polly Pat's imagination flamed the thought of Captain's disappointment, destroying her brief shyness. Her eyes full of their visionary fire she sprang up. "Oh, this isn't all, is it? All that we're going to do? Just Factory End, just Forrestdale? No other work? And besides, I shouldn't think Factory End people ever would come to the meetings if we sew for them. They won't want to come and sew for themselves, will they? I shouldn't think they would. And father does so want them to come and be part of things.

"Then aren't there going to be any missions? Missions are so exciting and father just loves missions. Alaska, for instance. We had a man come and talk to us last year about Alaska, and it was perfectly splen-

did. Or Indians—Indians are so interesting. I don't think it's any fun just to work for Forrestdale, for ourselves. It seems to me it's sort of selfish. Don't you think it's sort of selfish, Mrs.—Madam—President?"

It is a rule of human nature that when people are hit home, they are very likely to hit back, at least at first. Mrs. Easton rose excitedly. She didn't so much as notice the chair. She turned on Polly Pat.

"Miss Everitt, may I be allowed to remark that in my early days young people did not instruct their elders? This society is not used to being taught its duty by girls of sixteen, by one—if you will allow me to add—who has not been asked to join the Ladies' Guild, and who is not a member!"

Polly Pat stood up, her face blank with a great surprise.

"Why, that's so," she said. "I don't belong. I suppose I shouldn't

have come. I never once thought of that."

Polly Pat's seat was at the end of a row. She turned so that she faced them all, standing against the dark library curtain, her two hands pressing its folds. "And you don't want me here at all, do you?" she asked.

Utter silence. Away across from Polly Pat Alison Farwell ground her handkerchief to a hard ball between cold palms. Something within her fought to keep her silent; to be champion too often was to fail, she knew.

"Aren't you going to let me help —in Cap's church?"

No whisper of reply. Tears do not come readily to motherless girls. Polly Pat had put crying aside in those six years in which she had stoutly mothered four younger than herself. Hers was such a young face there against the curtain, and it was

grown strange now with the passion of service upon it. None of those women who saw her ever forgot her standing there.

"Then I'll go right away now," said Polly Pat. She did not know, nor did they just then, that in the hour in which they turned her out of their society they took her into their hearts forever.

It was many months later that Polly Pat leaned over her father's shoulder to look at the diocesan report he held out to her.

"See!" he cried, his face bright with boyish pride.

Polly Pat read. "But, Cap," she spoke, puzzled, "they didn't seem to like it at all that time I spoke about missions."

"Can't help that. It's the finest mission report in the diocese," he responded gleefully.

But all this came long afterwards; there was no such comfort for Polly

Pat that November afternoon. After the last loiterer of the Ladies' Guild had trickled out of the front door and away, Alison Farwell still waited. She sent the Four-in-hand to search the house for Polly Pat, but there was no Polly Pat to be found. When she had reached her own home, and, wraps handed to a maid in the hall, had pressed on into the library, she saw the red fire flame leap on the polished andirons and also quiver on something bowed perilously near to the andirons, nothing else than the burnished bronze of Polly Pat's head. As Miss Alison entered, Polly Pat jumped out of the dusk and hugged her.

"I've gone and done it again, haven't I?" she said despondently.

"Sit down, girlie, and let's talk," replied Miss Alison, herself sinking into the great leather arm-chair by the fire. It had once been very lonely, that great comfortable chair

by the library fire before a little footstool had been drawn close beside it in the fire glow, before young hands had pressed hers in the dusk, while a girl whose bright hair Miss Alison stroked, talked of many things. The loneliness seemed remote now; in reality it was only a few weeks away.

It was a beautiful room, Miss Alison's library, rich with magic colours, restful. Here and there from dusky corners twinkled a bit of old brass. Cool Hellenic shapes gleamed white against the mellow walls. There were pictures you had never seen before that drew your soul along strange new paths. From Miss Alison's bookcases you could sail to Wonderland in how many different winged ships! If in all your life you had never known things like these, nor guessed how hungry you were for them, and if to the magical peace of the room there was added that most comfortable presence, Miss Alison

herself—ah, Polly Pat was not such a luckless young person after all!

Miss Alison's hand was soft on Polly Pat's hair.

"I just wanted to do something," explained Polly Pat. "It seems so queer not to have a chance to do something."

"I've thought of something you might do, dear."

"What?"

"It's the children," went on Miss Alison, "the children of the parish. We've never done very much for the babies. The Sunday-school is a pretty shabby little affair, I'm afraid. What would you think of a little missionary society for the children, boys and girls under ten, say."

"Could I?"

"I've seen four little people who are pretty happy when their big sister is around. It seems to me that you might manage other small boys and girls just as easily."

"Would they—would the parish—let me?" Polly Pat asked wistfully.

"Yes, I think they would," Miss Alison responded almost sharply.

Polly Pat's spirits recovered with the true Everitt elasticity. She bubbled over with plans, and Miss Alison let her run on and on, both forgetting that the November darkness was growing black and that back at the rectory people might be getting anxious, until both looked up startled, to see the rector standing in the doorway. He looked very tired that night. He had spent the afternoon in Factory End, and there he had heard things that shook him with worry and his own helplessness. Then home through the chilly twilight to find no Polly Pat at the door, and afterwards here to Hedgerows to search for her; he could not feel that Forrestdale, as he thought of certain dark-browed loungers he had often seen in Factory End, was any too

safe a place after nightfall. It was with relief that he paused on the library threshold, drinking in the peacefulness of the picture before him.

"Oh, Cap!" cried Polly Pat, jumping up. "Is it so late? Were you worried about me?"

"I'm not worried now," he answered, smiling, but speaking with a weariness both Miss Alison and Polly Pat were quick to feel; "but it is late. I heard rumours of supper overcooked and 'Ziah is in that state of mind she herself would describe as a 'pepper-jig.' You'd better hurry into your wraps."

Polly Pat flew away and the rector turned to Miss Alison to pour out his anxiety quickly before her return.

"Trouble's inevitable, I'm afraid. I can see how it must have been gathering for years. Forrestdale's remoteness and the lack of competition here have obscured the problem

somewhat, but in reality it's the old problem—native American demanding a man's wages against the foreigner willing for a time to undersell him in day's labour. I'm too new to the issues here to speak authoritatively, but it seems to me that the just fame and high market value of the Farwell work are due to the fact that the factories are run by men and women of good old New England stock.

"They won't put the official demand for the increased scale before the Judge until the first of March, but he and Jack Noble seem to have been having some preliminary skirmishing on the subject, and the Judge is as determined not to raise wages as Jack is to have them raised. The clash means a strike, the strike means that the Judge will bring in the foreigner. Then I don't know what will happen to Factory End."

Miss Alison gave a little shudder of repugnance. "We've always been so quiet in Forrestdale," she said. "I hate the factories!"

"It makes it worse," went on the rector reflectively, "that Judge Farwell and Jack Noble are both of the same old New England blood; and yet," he added boyishly, "that ought to make them the best sort of team really."

"Ready," interrupted Polly Pat. As they hurried home in the darkness she told her father all about her new plan. He listened absently at first and then with interest—perhaps to bring the children, the little rich ones and the little poor ones, together, might help a little to bridge that painful chasm in his parish; at least to think and plan with Polly Pat was relaxation from the thought of those deeper differences that no Infant Missionary Society was going to remedy.

Still the rector seemed to enter buoyantly into Polly Pat's schemes, gave out a stirring notice of the new society from his chancel next Sunday; with Polly Pat canvassed Factory End for little members, remembering that Factory End, little and big, needed special urging to bring it to the rectory.

Polly Pat came back from that afternoon of calls feeling strangely older. She had not dreamed that Factory End was quite so gloomy a place. Keenly sensitive as she was, she could not account for the feeling of oppression and ill omen that palled upon her spirits there. She was particularly haunted by the face of little Timothy Noble, a pale, freckled little lad, with his mother's wistfulness of eye and lip. Polly Pat's heart, with its early ripened motherliness, went out to little Timothy, and as for Timothy, on that same afternoon, he utterly lost his

heart to the minister's ruddy-haired "Miss Mary."

All five Everitts united in preparations for the first meeting. They were all to be members of course. The boys were somewhat over age, but they were deemed indispensable as hosts. Polly Pat had decided that the end of the new missionary endeavour should be Indians. To stimulate the infant imagination she would place before its eyes pictures of Indians, so she set the Four-in-hand to cutting and pasting, various mission journals affording abundant material. Thus in scrap-books you could see the Indian pictorially presented in all stages from beady-eyed, placid papoose to scarred and battered and blanketed old chief. You could see, too—and be fired to zeal thereby—the Indian as he appeared in photographs before and after accepting education.

The Four-in-hand snipped and

pasted most earnestly, and since in all its four little hearts it was loyal to its father and had been brought up on missions, it never acknowledged how much it preferred the Indian in a condition of blanket and wigwam to the Indian in the garb and the domicile of civilisation. As it pasted, the Four-in-hand got itself and the new library furniture most gloriously sticky.

A sweeter kind of stickiness affected the dining-room table when they came to making candy for their impending guests. In the candy-making Polly Pat insisted on a most rigorous self-denial; you could eat only such pieces as you accidentally dropped upon the floor. Blitzen developed a most enviable adeptness in dropping his portion, until poor Annette wailed, her little lips set with painstaking effort, "I *wish* I could drop some!"

Polly Pat, thus stern with the

others, was inwardly discomfited to find how much she wanted to eat some candy herself.

The young Everitts made their preparations under a constant fire of protest and reprimand from 'Ziah. 'Ziah had indeed put up with much in that rectory, and never before had she brooked any inconvenience at anybody's hands. Those who knew her best might have detected signs of restiveness on her part, even while she toiled hardest for the rector's family. A darkling purpose was taking clearer and clearer form in her mind. That night when she had at last peremptorily swept the children up to bed, and ten o'clock and half-past and eleven found her still scouring off sugar, ground hopelessly into the dining-room rug, that purpose flared into the certainty of resolve.

"This is too much," she flamed out, as she straightened her aching back, "I just will, so there!"

IV

A VICTORY

IT was the chill, wintry dawn of the next morning. In a blue black sky the December stars still burned brightly. Down the third-floor stairs of the rectory stole a stealthy figure. It was coated and bonnetted, and just above the sullen black eyes a heavy brown veil was tightly bound. In the big third story front room a strong, battered trunk stood packed and strapped. Just so many a time before had 'Ziah Smithwick deserted in the hour of need, while the household slept on, confident of breakfast.

But never before had 'Ziah's heart-strings pulled her back thus uncomfortably; Blitzen had sneezed last night; was he taking cold? Paul had a bruise on his knee no one but

'Ziah knew about; Dunder would miss his baked potato; the rector, whose meekness had ever abashed 'Ziah more than any severity, never seemed to know what he was eating, but he did like a good cup of coffee; Polly Pat, it would teach her one good lesson, but yet, yet—she was only sixteen—and there was one of the six 'Ziah dared not think of at all, and that was little Annette, her baby. 'Ziah gave herself an angry shake—she who had wearied of many an easier task, was she to be the slave of six?

The house appeared all dark and silent and asleep, but one little person there always woke up early, but by law was compelled to lie still, gazing at the ceiling and watching the square of window brighten into day. What impulse prompted 'Ziah to steal from door to door to listen that all was well within? Her shoes creaked frightfully, and a door

popped open. There stood a wee canton flannel mermaid, for they still tied Annette into a bag at night—with tumbled curls and eyes bright and dark in the light of the flickering gas jet.

'Ziah's bonnet and coat and mittens smacked of adventure. "'Ziah! Where are you going?" whispered Annette loudly.

"Get back to bed quick! It's still night."

"'Tisn't! I heard the clock; it's past five."

"Get right into bed," cried 'Ziah, picking her up.

"No, sir," cried Annette, kicking away with determination, not with anger. "I'm going along with you. You wait. I can get dressed the fastest of all." She could indeed. Annette was a small tornado at the toilet. 'Ziah's protests and pleadings she met with unconcern, for little Annette at seven was sometimes a resist-

"'Ziah! Where are you going?' whispered Annette loudly"

less will, besides 'Ziah loved her, besides—'Ziah sat helpless on the bed, until within five swift minutes Annette stood before her, garbed, washed, but uncombed.

"Let my hair go," she said; "my coat and hat are downstairs. Come on. Where is it we're going, anyway?"

Frosty, starry, wonderful was the out-of-doors into which they fared. Crisp snow was under foot and the street lights were still burning. Annette danced in ecstasy of adventure. 'Ziah was dazed and her feet aimless with irresolution. "Where?" cried Annette, both hands clasping 'Ziah's, her glowing little face raised, "Where?"

'Ziah did not answer, and at intervals Annette repeated the question, growing used to 'Ziah's silence, for this mysterious morning walk was fun enough without knowing whither it led. They were drifting down to

Factory End, to Jack Noble's house. Hither on other such walks 'Ziah had come. From her sister's house she would send for her trunk and engage horse and carriage to take her home to that snug little farm in the Forrestdale hills. Just five miles away lay 'Ziah's own home and freedom.

Annette shivered from head to foot at the noise, for suddenly, across the stillness, one after one, booming, shrieking, shrilling, the factory whistles rang out six o'clock. All Forrestdale was used to that early morning shrieking of whistles, but down here close by, in Factory End, the whistles were deafening, discordant, prolonging their noise on and on. Lights woke up in many windows. It would soon be breakfast time in Factory End. By and by it would be breakfast time at the rectory, too. They were at Jack Noble's gate—should 'Ziah go in? But what to do with this prancing, dancing witch of

a girl at her side? What to do with her at this present minute? What to do with the love of her in all the months to come? 'Ziah came to a dead stand. Once more Annette demanded, "Where, 'Ziah?" and this time at last her voice rang with command. 'Ziah looked down at her out of her abstraction, and as she looked something shook her through and through, and she lifted Annette up and smothered her with kisses, and then at last 'Ziah answered one word only.

"Home!" And with this she dropped Annette and turned sharply about, and her feet, no longer purposeless, bore her straight to the rectory.

The Everitts had never had a better breakfast than they had that morning, nor a fiercer cook. Surely it is only self-respecting to be ferocious toward those for whom for love's sake one has given up freedom.

V

AN INFANT MUTINY

THE afternoon was long in coming. Polly Pat was all day tense with excitement and the Four-in-hand caught her spirit. When the five young Everitts resolved themselves into a reception committee they could be very delightful indeed; so that when the Children's Missionary Society singly and in groups appeared at the rectory door at three o'clock, it was received by engaging hosts and hostesses. Annette opened the door, meeting her guests with chattering warmth. The twins were instantly friends with all the world. Paul, aloof and without cordiality, still enjoyed much popularity by reason of that prowess in personal combat which numerous small boys

near at hand, and small girls at a distance, had viewed and admired. As for Polly Pat, all children found a way to her heart straight as homing pigeons.

There were some forty small people assembled, and the crowded library was soon in a hubbub of chatter and confusion. True, there were signs of disaffection that Polly Pat was quick to perceive. On the porch, the small overshoes belonging to Old Forrestdale stood on one side of the door aloof from those of Factory End. In Polly Pat's room, where the children had taken off their wraps, small Flo Farwell, a nine-year-old of spirit, had indignantly caught up her coat from the spot where she had first tossed it beside Mattie Noble's, and had placed it with her little sister's on a chair apart. Down in the library the small folk of Old Forrestdale sat in a group by themselves and did most of the talking, while Factory End,

clean scrubbed and shy, viewed them wonderingly. Old Forrestdale wore square-cropped hair and trim white dresses, while Factory End exhibited frizzes and stuffy woollens.

Timothy Noble, pale and wide-eyed, followed Polly Pat as she flew about, like a little silent shadow. This 'Ziah observed as she peeped within now and then. Timothy's devotion had somewhat softened his Aunt 'Ziah toward Polly Pat. The sight of him even moved her so far as to comply with a request of Polly Pat's for chocolate for the company, a request indignantly refused earlier in the day.

But the Children's Missionary Society never got so far as the chocolate. Polly Pat rose to make an eager address of explanation—the meaning of missions, of their society, the meaning of Indians. Her red braids were tossed back, her face glowed. She wished Cap and Miss

"While she talked, the four-in-hand passed about the pictures of Indians"

Alison were there to see. She had done what the grown-ups could not: here were Factory End and Old Forrestdale seated together and everything seeming fair and friendly. While she talked, the Four-in-hand, in accordance with previous instructions, diligently passed about the pictures of Indians so carefully pasted; anon they would as diligently pass the candy standing ready on the dining-room table.

President Polly Pat talked on so eagerly of the needs of her Indians that her small hearers waxed round-eyed with excitement and zeal. It had been a matter of much concern to Polly Pat just how this zeal should be directed. They would capture some small redskin out there, by proxy, of course, through some missionary in the field, adopt him and educate him at a distance, and photographs and reports of his progress would constantly be sent back to the

Children's Missionary Society of Calvary Church.

But education takes money, and this the C. M. S. must earn. It would be fun and profit, too, she suggested, if they give an entertainment in which the small people should in tableaux represent various aspects of Indian life. Her suggestion as it penetrated was met with shouts of approval.

But when Polly Pat read the names of the committee she had chosen to assist in the entertainment, there was a strange silence; very few of Polly Pat's audience understood what a committee was, but at least the Old Forrestdale half understood and resented the proximity of their names to certain others on the list that Polly Pat read—Florence Farwell, Timothy Noble, Joseph Newman, Katharine Easton. Little Factory End was quite still, not understanding, but beaming upon Polly

Pat, because it liked her well; but on the other side was a buzz of whispers, a shrugging of small shoulders, and sidelong glances of the eyes. Grown-up Forrestdale was not always frank, but Flo Farwell at nine was a perfectly frank little snob. She was a leader, too, and now she rose to her feet with a flutter of curls and a rattle of starched piqué. Timothy Noble, gazing across at her, thought her very pretty, notwithstanding the fact that he was accustomed to hearing Judge Farwell and all his house constantly anathematised.

Flo diddled about on one toe an instant, then spoke out: "Miss Everitt, I know what a committee is. Mother has them, and Grandma. It's where people work all together. So I don't think we could have a committee like that you read. Katharine and I don't know those boys. They go to public school and we go to Miss Nemer's."

"Don't you think it would be a good way for you to get acquainted with those boys?" suggested Polly Pat.

"Oh, no, we can't; they're from Factory End. We don't play with Factory End children—ever."

In Timothy Noble's pale cheeks there mounted a deep red flush, but he sat silent, passive as always. Not so his younger sister, who had snapping eyes like her Aunt 'Ziah's, and who always fought Tim's battles for him. She sprang up. "Tim doesn't want to play on that committee either," she cried; "he wouldn't play with Flossie Farwell, not if you asked him!" She flounced down in her seat, her eyes darting fire at Flo, who still stood protesting, her head drooped a little. All her mother's haughtiness spoke in her next words—they were as challenging to the minister's daughter as in similar circumstances her mother's might have been to the minister himself.

"Miss Everitt, aren't you going to change the committee?"

"No, dear," answered Polly Pat, sorely troubled. "Wait a minute, dear——" for all the Farwell pride and temper were flaming in Flo's cheeks, and Flo Farwell was spoiled.

"Then I'm not going to stay here! I'm just going home! I didn't suppose there'd be Factory End children here anyway. Mother didn't want us to come, but Grandpa said we should. I'm going home—you'd better come, too," she turned to her followers, seated behind her. These hesitated, rose, were bewildered, but finally, carried on by Flo's mastery, swept out in confusion to the hall, and upstairs for their wraps. But as they began to move, Mattie Noble jumped up, clutching the chair back before her: "You won't play with us —I can tell you what—my father says—he says Factory End will show the Farwells some day—we'll show you!"

Timothy pulled her down and turned a pale, strange face on Polly Pat. "I'm goin', too; we're goin'!" he said.

"No, no, Tim, stay; you mustn't go off like this."

"Yes, I'm goin'; I ain't goin' to stay here;" his sensitive lips were tense. Polly Pat recognised a doggedness she could not master.

Factory End followed Old Forrestdale upstairs after its wraps, clattering on the polished stairs. Old Forrestdale ceased its excited talk as the other party entered. The Four-in-hand, sorely at sea, went about begging its guests to stay, urging chocolate, candy, imploring them not to be mad, to look at the pictures some more—anything. A curious numbness and inability to meet this crisis had come over Polly Pat. It was as if in a flash in this enmity between little children she had seen all the bitterness that lay behind it, seen the im-

possibility of the task she had so lightly set out upon. She felt helpless as her precious C. M. S. rushed into its wraps and rubbers, and swiftly, with embarrassed leave-taking, vanished from her grasp out of the front door. Then at last she came to herself with sudden resolution. The Four-in-hand stood in the hall gazing at her silently, looking to her to do something. Polly Pat made a dash for her coat and hat in the hall closet. "It mustn't end like this," she cried. "It mustn't! It isn't their fault really. I'm going to see their mothers."

The sharp December air nipped Polly Pat's cheeks to a bright rose as she sped toward Factory End. She arrived on the heels of the little Nobles before they had had time to undo muffler and hood, before Mattie could stutter out an explanation of their sudden return. Mrs. Noble, bewildered by the abruptness of Polly

Pat's entrance, ushered her into the stuffy, shabby, over-upholstered parlour, without stopping to shut the door into the room beyond. The children and their mother stood gazing at Polly Pat, waiting. Mattie's eyes still snapped fire, but Tim's face was full of a strange pain that made him look like a little old man.

"They must come back," Polly Pat plunged in. "They just must! Not to-day, it's too late now; but next week. We'll begin over again then. You'll send them, won't you, Mrs. Noble?"

"I don't understand, Miss——"

"Oh, ma," Mattie burst in, "that Flossie Farwell, she wouldn't be on the committee with Tim, and so she got mad and went home and took all the rest, and then Tim got mad, too —you know how mad he is when he *is* mad, and so we all came home."

"I won't never go back," said Tim dully.

"Oh, Tim," pleaded Polly Pat, "Flo Farwell was a silly little girl and didn't understand—I'm going to see her mother, too, and we want to try over again to see if we can't all be friends in our society."

"I won't never come again," said Tim.

"What's this?" questioned a big voice.

Tim shrank to Polly Pat's side. He always shrank at his father's voice. Jack Noble bent a dark glance at him. For the first time Polly Pat was face to face with Jack Noble. His great figure filled the little doorway. He had hands of an iron strength. Only the keenness of his eyes contradicted the brutishness of his jaw. "What's Tim been doing?"

"Nothing," Mattie answered; "it's not Tim, it's that Flossie Farwell. She wouldn't play with Tim on Miss Everitt's committee. She got mad

and we got mad, and we all came away quick and ain't goin' again."

"You got a right to go if Miss Everitt wants you."

"Ain't goin' just the same."

Jack Noble hunched himself against the lintel and surveyed the group. A half smile played upon his lips, giving to his heavy features a wholly unexpected look of intellectual subtlety. Polly Pat resented his gaze—it seemed to be studying her as if she were a strange specimen.

"You're like him, ain't you?" John Noble said slowly. "I been studying him all this fall, but not near enough for him to know it, I guess. I ain't none of your regular attendants, though I believe I was a member once when I was a boy," he chuckled, "but I watch him all the same. You tell him from me it can't be done."

"What?" asked Polly Pat.

"Nor you nor him can't mix fire

and water, rich and poor, them that works and them that spends. The world ain't made that way. 'Tain't made fair." His face grew dark. "No, sir, my kids don't go to no society with Charles Farwell's kids!"

"But if," said Polly Pat, "if I could get the Farwell children back, wouldn't you let yours come?"

"Goin' to see *their* ma about them?" he asked.

"Yes."

Jack threw back his head and laughed, a queer laugh, half pure humour, half bitterness.

"You're a new one to me," he said, "you and him." Then instantly all his amusement died away into a set black frown.

"Let the Farwells wait!" he said.

The early winter dark had already shut down as Polly Pat hurried up the hill to Judge Farwell's house, Red Chimneys, which lay just around the sweep of hills beyond Hedgerows.

The Farwells were all gathered about the roaring fire in the great hall, Judge Farwell and his wife, his son and young Mrs. Farwell and their two little girls. Flo and Sybil had had time to tell their story. Evidently the family circle had been discussing it, for Polly Pat heard, as the black footman opened the door, the low, smooth tones of Charles Farwell.

"The man needs suppressing. He'll spoil the town. He's on the wrong tack with Factory End. Can't he do his duty by them without making friends of them?"

"I'm not sure," it was sometimes difficult for the Judge to live down to his son's ideals, "that *he* can," growled the Judge's bass. "It's his way. Maybe it's the right way, but it's a mighty bad way for us just now. Church and business are pretty well mixed for the Farwells."

Then all perceived Polly Pat, as

the footman brought her forward, standing there both shy and eager, the firelight lighting her rosy face and blown bronze hair. There was a perceptible stiffening, a perceptible effort to receive her cordially. In spite of the antidote of Miss Alison's influence, Polly Pat had not by her behaviour on the occasion of the rectory furnishing or the first meeting of the Ladies' Guild endeared herself to the hearts of Mrs. Farwell and her daughter-in-law.

Polly Pat swept straight to the point, addressing Mrs. Charles Farwell.

"Won't you please make the children come back?" she said. "Father and I did so want to have the children of the church all work together. It's such a shame for the children to feel like that. It was too bad of Flo."

From beneath bushy brows, Judge Farwell's eyes surveyed Polly Pat with a twinkle of liking. He won-

dered what it was about her that was like her father.

"I am afraid, Miss Everitt, that I must own my sympathies are with Flossie," said Mrs. Charles Farwell. "She knows I wish her to be very careful of her acquaintance. No, I think we shall have to withdraw our little daughters from your missionary society, for I'm afraid it is, as you are trying to organise it—a little—mixed."

"Of course it's mixed; I want it mixed; so does father. He wants the whole church mixed."

Now Charles Farwell had for some time desired to communicate certain of his sentiments to Mr. Everitt. He was not a man who chose direct encounter, as did his father. He chose another way now.

"Has it ever occurred to your father," he asked slowly, leaning his tall length against the mantel as he spoke, "that he might possibly be mistaken in the matter?"

Polly Pat flamed at the veiled sneer in the tone.

"He isn't mistaken. Captain couldn't be mistaken about a thing like that! Why should your little girl not have anything to do with Tim Noble just because he's poor and she's rich?"

"There are other reasons," said Mrs. Charles haughtily.

"What other reasons?" cried Polly Pat.

"My dear," said the other Mrs. Farwell, gathering herself together impressively, "have you ever thought that you sometimes show a tendency to interfere in matters that do not concern you and about which, as a very young girl, you know nothing at all?"

Everybody expected an outburst from Polly Pat. No one in Forrestdale ever knew what the rector's daughter was going to do or say next. No outburst followed. Instead, Polly Pat's temper collapsed before their

eyes. Her eyes grew wide, her lips trembled. Polly Pat on her high horse would have provoked many a saint; Polly Pat in humility was so appealing that it hurt.

"I've thought so a great many times," she answered Mrs. Farwell, "afterwards. Perhaps I'd better go now without saying anything more. I suppose I've made the usual mess of it. But I wish the children would come back. Good-bye."

Polly Pat was such a desperately honest person that it was sometimes hard for ordinary persons to know what to say to her speeches. There was an embarrassed pause as she withdrew, though the eyes of the Farwells were not wholly unfriendly. The Judge at last cleared a husky throat, jumped from his chair, and followed Polly Pat to the door.

"Never mind," was all he could think of to say.

Polly Pat at the door turned wide

eyes to his. "Do you think Captain mistaken?" she asked.

The Judge hesitated just too long.

"But you like him, don't you?" asked Polly Pat.

"I do!" the Judge thundered, though still husky.

Outside the hill road was black under the December stars. Polly Pat remembered they would be anxious about her at home and hurried past Hedgerows, much as she longed to stop. Just below the gate there was a turn, and here, as they neared home, Miss Alison's horses always made a sudden dash. Polly Pat heard the sound of wheels, knew by the sudden clatter of hurried hoof beats that it was Miss Alison's carriage, drew to one side as the black shapes loomed up before her, and then her heart stopped beating, for just in front of the horses, dimly outlined in the starlight, was a little girl. The horses reared on two feet as Gilmore pulled

them up short, not daring to look before him. The child rolled like a ball from under the horses' hoofs, and fell on Polly Pat—and it was Annette. The door of the carriage opened. Miss Alison looked out.

"It's the minister's girls," said Gilmore; "we nearly drove over the little one."

"I ran away to look for you," explained Annette.

Never before had Miss Alison been stern to Polly Pat, but she had just come from the rectory, where the rector was just organising a search for Annette. The white worry of his face was before her eyes.

"Get into the carriage, both of you," said Miss Alison; "I will take you home. Polly Pat, while you are away busy with other children, perhaps there are children at home who are your first concern."

VI

TWO FIGHTS AND TWO FIGHTERS

POLLY PAT always remembered their first Christmas in Forrestdale, not because anything happened, rather because nothing did, and yet everybody seemed to be expecting something. Peaceful Forrestdale hardly knew how to meet the curious tension that pervaded the whole town. The silent combat of wills between Judge Farwell and Jack Noble subtly affected all the place, combat more dogged for the reason that both the Judge and Jack were of the same stock of old New England fighters.

True the Captain and Polly Pat managed to make an uproarious Christmas for the Four-in-hand, merry-making in which even 'Ziah joined with grim effort. But Polly

Pat herself had never felt so old, so out of the Christmas spirit. She was sensitive to every changing thought in her father's mind, and she knew by the growing tenseness of his eyes and lips that he was girding himself for battle. The strife that would tear Forrestdale in two was surely coming. Could one man stay it? Well, both Polly Pat and her father knew that he must try.

It had been agreed by the rector, Miss Alison and Polly Pat in solemn conclave that the C. M. S. should not be revived. Polly Pat was strengthened in this resolution chiefly by the memory of little Tim Noble's face when Flo Farwell had refused to know him—that little, patient, old-man face made Polly Pat tremble at issues too great for her. Besides, Polly Pat was discouraged and there is no discouragement like that of sixteen or like that of Polly Pat. The recollection of that dark evening, of

rearing hoofs, and her own Annette fleeing to her still turned her sick and faint. For the present Polly Pat felt quite content to let Cap's puzzling parish quite alone while she attended to her own children.

Her own four were puzzling enough. Paul, for instance, was daily more of a problem. He was not at all the pacific member of society that a minister's son might be expected to be. It had come to be that whenever a certain compact, silent ring of men and boys was observed in the village streets, people inquired, "Is it Pluto or the minister's boy?" Pluto was Charles Farwell's bull terrier. It was always either Pluto or Paul, for Jack Smasher's encounters were more serious and more secret.

Dunder and Blitzen found it easy to obey their father's command never to engage in personal combat. The twins were debonair and friendly

with all the world, but as for Paul, the mere manner in which he chewed a straw as he marched down the village street was an affront. Now, for all his comradeship, the minister was a disciplinarian. Many a time Paul was smuggled in at the back door by 'Ziah, sponged off and put to rights before proceeding farther. 'Ziah always had a bit of raw beefsteak in readiness.

Perhaps the minister was not always deceived, but doubtless he sometimes felt a sneaking gratitude toward 'Ziah. But there were times when there was no winking at the flagrancy of Paul's disobedience. There were dark half hours when Paul was closeted with his father in the study. On these occasions the twins took the noisiest of baths, but Polly Pat and Annette sat on the stairs with their arms tight around each other. When the study door was opened Polly Pat rushed down to comfort—not Paul—

but the one that needed it—Captain.

If any small urchin had spoken to Paul questioning the justice of his father's seeking to restrain him in the use of his fists, it is probable that Paul would have pummelled the speaker to the bitter finish, yet Paul's acquiescence in his father's decrees was rendered unsubstantial by the fact that his hero next in eminence to Cap himself was Jack Smasher.

It had seemed to the rector the more he knew of John Noble—he had little opportunity to judge at first hand, for in some way the factory foreman always eluded his efforts toward acquaintance—that the man had a mind above mere rowdyism. Even Charles Farwell acknowledged Noble's efficiency, trustworthiness, executive ability as workman and foreman. All Forrestdale but the Farwells attributed the success of the factories to John Noble.

How was it, then, that Jack Smasher's name came to be more and more connected with the growing lawlessness and rowdyism manifesting itself now in once orderly Forrestdale? It almost seemed during that January as if in the hush preceding the locking of the final fight, Jack Smasher was relieving himself by a boyish indulgence in the pleasure of fisticuffs. Still, his example was no good one for the roughs of the town, and Forrestdale boasted a corps of just three policemen.

The rector was discussing the matter one day with Polly Pat. It was a January Saturday afternoon, clear, cold, snowless. The rector was leaning far back in his revolving chair. Polly Pat was sitting on his desk, her favourite seat. There was one little drawer all dented by Polly Pat's heels.

"Why don't you stop it, then, Cap?" asked Polly Pat.

"I? I'm not a policeman."

"You make Jack Noble stop and he'll make the rest stop."

"How am I to make Jack Noble stop?" He viewed Polly Pat with eyes still troubled, but also quizzical.

"Just go and tell him to stop," repeated Polly Pat with emphasis.

"I've never been able to get hold of him, never spoken to him—it's rushing in——"

"Go!" cried Polly Pat, jumping down. "Go right now. It's Saturday afternoon and he has the time off. Here's your coat."

The rector found only Mrs. Noble at home; he had never found her husband in, though he had more than once surmised his presence behind closed doors. Mrs. Noble's manner had ever been apathetic, apologetic, reticent. The rector felt that he made little headway in getting acquainted with the Nobles. But today Mrs. Noble as she welcomed him

poured out her heart in anxious appeal.

"Oh, sir, I'm glad to see you. Seems though I couldn't stand it much longer sitting here alone. No, sir, he ain't at home. He's gone, and took Tim. I don't dare go after them. John don't mean bad, he ain't never hurt Tim bad, but I ain't never quite sure when he takes him off. He ain't right fond of Tim. Maybe if you'd speak to him—he thinks the world and all of you."

"Of me? But I don't know him. He doesn't know me."

"I guess he thinks he knows you. We all know you all right, sir. I guess you might find them back in Owen Baker's lot behind Joe Pratt's barn. That's where they mostly have them. Maybe you could stop it."

"Stop what?"

"I don't just know. Maybe I'm foolish. I guess I am. But Jack's so black about the trouble in the

mills, and he thinks Tim ain't got no spirit."

Joe Pratt's whitewashed barn gleamed staring white in broad sunshine. On all other sides Owen Baker's brown meadow lot was girt in by a high rail fence. Where the unbroken barn wall reared itself like a great white slab, on an upturned wooden bucket sat a stalwart form, hands on knees. On the brown sod before him stood two small boys, hatless, jacketless, both fists knotted, one upraised, waiting. They were evenly matched, one small, stocky, red-haired, with the jaw of a bulldog; the other taller, lightly built, nimble, but his eyes were frightened, and there was a whimper on his lips. The big man clapped his hands; out flew fists.

"For him, Paul! Under the jaw, the way I told you. Wake up, Tim, —use your fists or wait till I use mine."

Over the fence at Jack Smasher's right lightly vaulted a black-clad form. A gloved hand was laid on each boy's collar, and the two were deftly jerked apart. The minister faced Jack, a fine temper flaming in his eyes, on his lips the scorn of a man for a bully.

"Mr. Noble, I believe. I have not before had the pleasure of meeting you. Excuse my not removing my hat. My hands are otherwise occupied."

Then he let Tim free, but retained his hold of Paul, who had first struck out blindly at his captor, and then, recognising him, stood quiet as a soldier or a statue. Slowly the minister loosened his grip. Paul picked up his coat and shoved himself into it, then, with his cap crushed in his hands, he turned and at last looked his father straight in the eye.

"What's to pay, Cap?" he asked.

His father looked at him long and

" For him, Paul! Wake up, Tim!"

keenly. At last he answered, "Nothing."

"I meant," explained Paul, "when am I to come to the study? I'll be there."

"And I meant that you're not to come to the study at all."

"But you said I mustn't, Cap, and I did!"

"But I'm never again going to say that you mustn't, Paul."

This father, speaking thus with slow decision, was a new father. Paul's round freckled face was knotted into one great interrogation. Back of his wide grey eyes an active young brain struggled to explain a new relation between himself and Cap. His father's eyes never swerved from the puzzled face.

"Cap," Paul burst out at last, "how can I fight if you don't whip me for it?"

"I'm never going to whip you again, Paul." It was a curious

weary tone in which he spoke. Paul, the undemonstrative, fell upon him, shaking him by the lapels of his coat.

"Oh, Cap, please don't stop whipping me!"

"Why not, Paul?"

The boy's face was working painfully. "Because it means—you won't be the same, Cap."

Across the strain and sternness of the minister's face there quivered the sunshine of a smile. He ran his hand over Paul's towsled red head. "If you change, Paulus, then I'll always be the same. Home with you now!" he ended sharply.

Jack Noble's eyes were intense in their scrutiny of the rector. Jack was absorbed in his dearest pursuit—what he called "studying his man." He half muttered the result of his observations, "New kind of Dad a boy'd beg a whipping of. Not much like Tim and me," glancing askance

at the figure that crouched in the corner by the fence. But now the minister, too, was studying his man, and presently Jack, becoming aware of this, shuffled up, kicked aside the bucket and, with arms folded, stood leaning up against the barn, the evil spirit that possessed him that afternoon gleaming fitfully in his eyes, insolent to provoke if possible, and yet keen to see whether the man he had observed for months would fail in the test he would put him to now.

"Well," said Jack Noble at last, "you've caught me square. I might say like your boy, 'What's to pay?'"

"Something, by George!" exploded the minister. He allowed himself indulgence in this asseveration not oftener than once a year, but now something in this insolent stare was stirring his temper.

"My wife says you've been trying to get hold of me this long while,"

Jack went on. "Would you mind telling me why? What have I to do with a rich man's parson like you?"

In the sneer meant to test him, how could the rector know that Jack believed him a poor man's parson? But curiously the tone had the effect upon him of calming all temper instantly. Nothing so bitter and personal as temper could come in when the rector remembered that in Forrestdale he stood between the Farwells and Factory End.

The rector was sometimes like his daughter in directness. "I'm no rich man's parson, Noble, and I wanted to see you to find out if between us we couldn't do something to stop this trouble that's coming, they say—the strike."

John Noble's face turned black, but in that blackness all of the mere brutal bully passed away.

"'They say,' is right this time. The strike *is* coming. No, you and

me between us couldn't stop it. Nobody could stop it but *them,* the Farwells, Job and that hound, Charles."

The minister offered no protest, waited.

"I've done a man's work, twenty men's work, for 'em for ten years. Every man of us is American over yonder and we know our business. All we want's a man's pay and a man's day. Will they give it to us? Not them! We've made their factories for 'em. Instead of us they'll put in a lot of dirty dagoes taught their trade over in the Italian silk mills. Charles, he'll get 'em here."

"I believe he will," assented the minister. "Tell me, Noble, what good will that do you?"

"I can find plenty to do—other places," answered Jack.

"But the rest of them, the others over in Factory End?"

"It'll be best for them in the long run, too."

"To be turned out of home and work? I don't just see that myself."

"Oh," growled Jack, "you're on their side."

"Whose?"

"Farwells'!"

"Noble, do you believe that?"

Jack's eyes dropped, shifted—he could not face that direct gaze. He shuffled from one foot to the other, then spoke out with level eyes because he must trust this man. "It all comes to this in the end. Every man's for himself, Job Farwell, Charles—me—you."

"I?"

"Didn't old Job make it worth your while to come to me?" Jack's eyes narrowed to a slit. The minister sprang back, his fist involuntarily knotted. "Didn't he send you?" hissed Jack.

"No!"

"Who did?"

"My daughter."

"Didn't you come to beg me to give in to the Farwells?"

"No!"

"What did you come for?"

"To ask you to stop fighting and to keep Factory End from fighting. Talk of your being a freeborn American citizen while you're making Forrestdale a town of roughs and rowdyism!"

Still testing him, Noble sneered: "Parson's talk. Fighting's good for a fellow. You white-handed preachers are against fighting because you can't."

The minister smiled. He was genuinely amused, but the smile Jack thought meant contempt, the fine gentleman's superiority. He had his man in a corner now. He would try him to the uttermost. In months of bitterness he had watched him, hoping this man was true when all others were self-interested. He had proved to himself that the par-

son was not Job Farwell's tool. One other thing remained. Could he fight, this trim, clerical gentleman? In Jack's curiously compounded character one-third was pure bully, the other two-thirds were better things. All the fall he had struggled to down a slowly growing hero worship for the man he was now trying his best to insult. It seemed to Jack Noble that he could almost give up fighting for the sake of this man, provided, and only provided, the minister would show that he could fight. There would be some force in an argument against fists from a man who knew how to use his, yet would not.

With a new purpose in his eye, Jack Noble faced the minister. There was only one thing that would make him fight, he was sure of that. He spoke now with indifference, as if their conference were becoming irksome to him. "We ain't likely to

agree on the subject of fists, I guess, nor on anything else, perhaps. If you've nothing more to say, I'll be attending to a piece of my own business. Here, Tim!"

Hugging the side of the barn, Tim shuffled up, fear in every line of his cowering little body.

"What did I tell you I'd do to you if ever you cried in a fight again? Now I'm a-goin' to do it!" And one great hand caught Tim's collar. Tim's face went white but the minister's lips were whiter.

"Stop!" His voice rang out.

"Stop? For you?"

Now beneath the minister's black clerical dress there rippled the muscles of a Yale athlete.

"Stop!" he repeated, quite low this time.

"I ain't afraid of you!" goaded Jack, a great joy in his eyes, one heavy fist raised above Tim's back.

The minister whipped off his coat.

VII

THE PRICE OF A MAN

SILENT, apprehensive, Forrestdale waited for the first of March. All was quiet in Factory End now, no longer any rumor of fisticuffs and lawlessness, for John Noble had kept a certain promise. The promise had never been spoken, for he was one who made promises to no man but himself.

The slight hollows were deepening at the rector's temples while he, too, waited for that ominous first of March. Meanwhile he preached fearlessly, and bolder words each Sunday. The rector was not politic; none of the Everitts were. He faced Old Forrestdale in the front pews and the fringe of Factory Enders about the doors, both with intense, unswerving eyes as he spoke on this

mid-February Sunday morning. It was only the old impractical dream of all God's seers, the brotherhood of all men, the principle applied now and here—of all impossibilities—to capital and labour! It appeared that the rich man needed the poor man, the poor man needed the rich man, and only by the welding together in mutual helpfulness of all our sharply sundered classes could the world's progress be accomplished.

The light from beyond the veil was on the minister's face; the burning words came: "Oh, my people, man's divinest right is to love his fellow-man. When the rich man so scorns the poor man, when the poor man so envies the rich man that each kills in his own heart and in the heart of his fellow all brotherly love, then do both rich and poor alike but echo the cry of the first murderer, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' My brethren, let it not befal us here in Forrestdale that there be branded on our fore-

heads the curse of Cain!" Then, his eyes still burning bright, he half stretched out yearning hands to them, then turned instead and gave the ascription. There is strange magnetism in the words of a man from whom all self has dropped away—impractical, impossible, of course, and yet here, at least, was one who believed every man his brother; also, if one stopped to think of it, kinship with such a man would mean that one would have to square one's back and walk straight, shouldering no meanness.

Charles Farwell fingered the leaves of his Prayer Book uneasily during the sermon, never looking up, but the Judge faced the minister with level eyes, and far back in the church another pair of eyes, sullen, heavy-lidded, never wavered from the preacher's face. It was characteristic of Mr. Everitt's sermons that you always thought yourself harder hit than your neighbour. The Judge

rose to take up the collection, his purposes shaken for the moment with a *perhaps*. He was thinking, and passed the plate absent and unseeing until suddenly he felt an intent gaze upon him, and raised his eyes to look straight into those of John Noble, searching, questioning. Noble in church! It was unheard of! The Judge half drew back the plate, then extended it to receive Jack Noble's dime, but the gesture of repugnance had been perceptible. Both faces were hard as the Judge passed on down the aisle.

Service over, Charles Farwell and his father climbed into the runabout. The bob-tailed sorrel mare took the road with fleet hoofs in response to the little needle-like flicks of the whip with which Charles, being out of sorts, nipped her flank.

"Take the turn around by Farley Creek before dinner?" suggested Charles.

"All right," responded the Judge.

A sweep of clean macadam, swift-pounding hoofs, flooding noon sunshine—at length Charles broke silence.

"That man's dangerous."

"Which man?"

"Everitt." The curtness of the epithet was unpleasant to the Judge's ear.

"He's sincere."

"Therefore more dangerous. About the riskiest commodity in the market—sincerity, mistaken zeal."

"Mistaken?"

Charles Farwell turned and looked at his father with piercing gaze, restraining an explosive interjection of surprise.

"How otherwise?" he asked quietly, then waited several moments before he pressed on, carefully subduing all warmth:

"A sermon like that only strengthens Factory End to fight us. Capital and labour are brothers and equals, are they? That parson would

have us give Jack Noble the rein, would he? So that Noble might drive us as we're driving Susette!" For emphasis a particularly vicious flip of the lash made poor Susette rear on two feet while the Judge gave a grunt of remonstrance at being so jolted.

"No, that man must be suppressed!" snapped Charles.

"Noble?"

"Our rector, with his fine incendiary sermons!"

The Judge was still curiously silent. Charles eyed him with sidelong glances. "Infected!" he muttered.

"Eh? What's that?" asked the Judge.

"You don't mean me to believe that such charlatan eloquence has affected you, father?"

"Keep your whip off that horse, can't you? It's no question of eloquence, but I have been thinking that perhaps a possible amicable set-

tling with Noble would be best for us all in the long run."

"Amicable! Noble! How long have we known Noble? Is he the man to be satisfied with one concession, or with a dozen? Noble will be for nothing or for everything. This spring's fight means our success or our failure—it's your will or Noble's and you know it!" Then, after a pause he turned square about. "You do know it, don't you, father?" he repeated. "Remember you have hardly the right to risk the rest of us. The firm is Farwell and Farwell."

"I suppose it's impractical," conceded the Judge reluctantly, but——"

"Of course it's impractical. Besides, I'm your partner and I agree to nothing but fighting to the end." Then a smile of boyish good humour broke the cynicism of his face, for Charles Farwell was honestly fond of his father. "Remember, Dad,

Farwell and Farwell have got on pretty smoothly for thirty-five years."

An answering smile softened the Judge's face and Charles knew that he had won.

"Now," he said boyishly and cheerfully, "I've a scheme of my own to propose. Want to hear it?"

"Go ahead."

"You've heard of the extraordinary hold the rector has over Noble —something recent but really most remarkable. They say Jack's given up fighting and keeps Factory End as orderly as a cemetery, all on account of Parson Everitt. The minister is a hero without a peer in Factory End, can do what he pleases with all of them. That sort of man always takes with that sort of men. I propose we get hold of Noble by getting hold of his hero, and so let the minister manage Noble for us." minister?"

"How shall we get hold of the

"Buy him!"

The Judge threw back his head and laughed out a mighty roar that rang across the wintry fields.

"Charles, you're a fool," he said, genially, wiping his eyes.

Charles controlled his irritation and answered doggedly, "Every man has his price."

"Then the Reverend Brewster Everitt is an exception."

"Prove it!" challenged Charles.

"How?"

"Try him!"

"I! What would he think if——"

"Afraid, Dad?" asked Charles.

The Judge hesitated.

"Prove it!" snapped Charles. "Prove it to me. Prove it," his eyes narrowed; "prove it to yourself."

"I will!"

"Good! As to the price, I admit their prices differ, but men don't. You can buy Everitt; but the price is—his children."

"What do you mean?" The Judge's tone was not pleasant.

"He's poor, isn't he? How far does twelve hundred a year go among that household? How is he going to educate them? Is there anything a man like that would want more than the education of his children? Try him there. If he'll persuade Noble to give in, offer him a round sum to educate the whole brood, the best America and Europe can do for them all, from that impudent eldest girl to the smallest one, all five."

"Do you think he will?"

"Of course—every man has his price—never knew it to fail. If he hesitates, tell him it will be best for Noble to avoid a row with us, best for all his beloved Factory Enders. Don't be afraid to appeal to his philanthropy—that's part of the price, his price."

"I don't believe it," said the Judge slowly and firmly.

"Try it and see! It's worth trying, isn't it?"

"Yes," acquiesced the Judge, "I suppose it is."

Monday is the minister's day of rest, therefore Monday was a day beloved of the Everitts. It was always closed by a pillow fight, waging wildly from eight to half past. The Everitts divided themselves into two parties for the occasion, Captain and Polly Pat being one and the Four-in-hand the other. They kept score from week to week and the reward of the victors of the previous week was that they should hold the more difficult and therefore the more glorious position, namely, the lower front hall, while stairs and upper hall were possessed by the vanquished in the last encounter. It was one of 'Ziah's curious whims that the white pillow cases be removed before the fray; over the fight itself she assumed no control, since the rector himself was chief participant.

Amid the great bellowing and shrieking of onslaught, the ring at

the front door bell was with difficulty heard, and not until it had been twice repeated. When it was heard there arose a groan distinctly audible to the visitor outside—"Company!" A towsled and flushed Polly Pat opened the door and ushered in Judge Farwell. The battle arrested stood with pillows still poised in air. The rector, hastily smoothing his hair, stepped forward with extended hand. Suddenly the twins broke forth in protest, delivering themselves in rapid antiphonal sentences.

"It's Monday and there's still ten minutes."

"Judge Farwell, say, won't you play, too?"

"We'll get you a pillow."

"Just you wait."

"We can beat all three of you down there."

The invitation was unexpected and alluring. The Judge laughed and complied. Poor Judge, the Four-in-

hand utterly neglected their father and sister and with undesirable partiality devoted their entire energy to him. He was towsled and red and panting—and beaten!—when the clock rang half-past and the rector's voice cried, "Halt! Victory to the Four-in-hand. Close ranks. Right about face, bed!" But first the Four-in-hand stormed downstairs and fell upon their father, ferocious as bears about to devour, but this was merely their good-night to him. Under cover of their racket Polly Pat turned a sweet, anxious face upon the Judge. "I hope it isn't anything to worry Cap," she said. "Is it? Must you?"

The Judge had no chance to reply, for the Four-in-hand, flown to the top stair, were shouting: "What's the matter with Cap?"

Both Polly Pat's rich, ringing tones and the Judge's resonant bass joined in the shrill response, "He's all right!"

"And now," said the rector, smiling, "will you step into the study?"

The Judge found it extremely hard to begin. The rector sat silent, regarding the Judge with frank, expectant boyish face, making no pretence that he thought this any merely social call. The Judge, on his side, was not one to play with preliminaries. He left off regarding his boot toe and said: "Mr. Everitt, as you know, I'm in a good deal of difficulty at present. I've come to you because I believe you're the only man to help me out of it—if you will."

"If I will?" repeated the other. "I hope I should not hesitate to help you in any way in my power."

"This way is in your power," replied the Judge, yet hesitatingly and with doubtful eyes. He must go on, but he hated to be disappointed in a man, since he did not often go to the trouble of idealising one.

"In one word, Mr. Everitt," the

Judge rushed ahead, "the name of my difficulty is Noble. Other factory owners may have other difficulties, but mine is John Noble and only John Noble." Again the Judge paused, regarding the rector's face. "And now, my dear sir, do you understand where you come in?" he concluded precipitately.

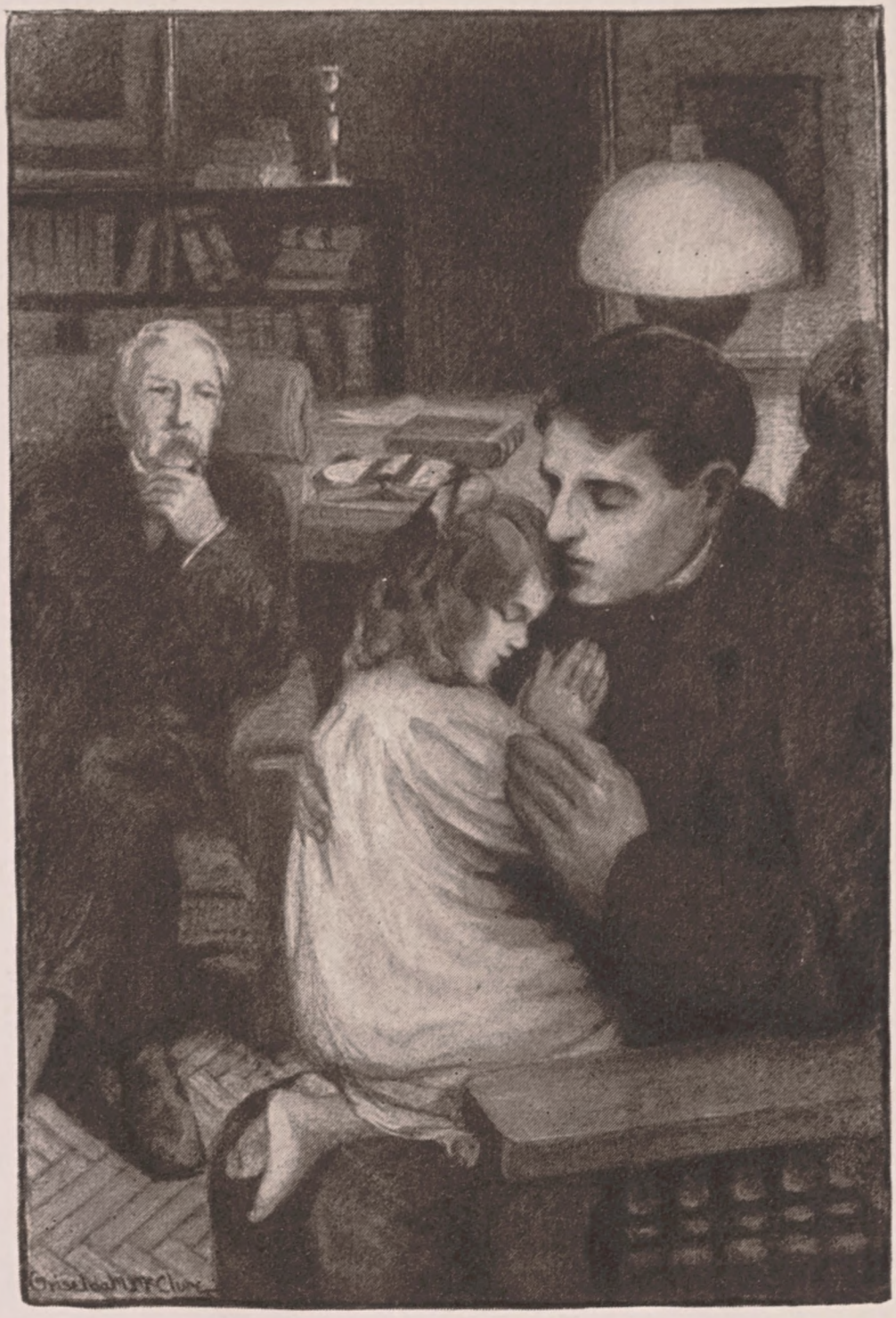
"No, I do not," replied Mr. Everitt, his sensitive, keen-cut lips a trifle parted, his eyes intent but blank of comprehension.

"They say you can do what you please with Noble," said the Judge.

The rector started back, one hand half clenched; across the clearness of his face there shot a black cloud; he understood. The Judge watched this sign of the futility of his efforts, joy pounding away at his heart.

Just here there came an insistent rat-tat-tatting at the closed door, a determined rattling of the knob.

"It's Annette," remarked one who opened, and Annette it was, wearing



" Jumped upon his lap and knelt there "

her nightly bag, tight girt below the knee. Her sturdy bare legs terminated in immense slippers, for Annette always appropriated the paternal foot gear.

"Did you forget, Cap?" she inquired, adding in a brisk, business-like tone, "my prayers."

"Come here," answered Cap gently. Annette emerged from the slippers and jumped upon his lap and knelt there, her little bare toes comically curled, eyes screwed tight shut. Captain gathered her two little fluttering hands into his strong brown fist and put the other arm about her, his head lowered and eyes closed. "I lay me" was briskly gone through with. Then "God bless Cap and Polly Pat, and Paul, and Dunder, and Blitzen, and 'Ziah, and ——" Here Annette opened her eyes for a flashing instant, turning with a quick, bird-like motion of the head, "and Judge, and make Annette Everitt and everybody a good

girl. That's all. Good-night. What did I do with the slippers? Good-night, Mr. Judge."

She was gone before her father raised his head and opened his eyes once more, eyes now full of a slow pain.

"Would you be willing, Mr. Everitt, to listen to a proposition?" resumed the Judge.

"Certainly," replied the minister, wearily, politely. He rested an elbow on the desk and lowered his brow upon his hand. His face was presented to the Judge in profile.

It was harder to go on now than it had been to begin. "Of course," the Judge continued, "I did not expect you to be willing to give us your help with Noble until you had seen the question in all its bearings. After you listen to me a bit you may see matters differently, may possibly think that your efforts would be worth while, worth your own while at least."

The faintest smile touched the rector's lips. The Judge noted it, liked it, and so pressed harder. "A strike, Mr. Everitt, will do Factory End no good."

"That is true," acquiesced the rector.

"Noble can control the strike and Factory End."

"Then you are determined to grant no concessions?" asked Mr. Everitt, turning sharply on the Judge.

"None. To grant one would be to pave the way for more. I understand business—and John Noble—pardon me, Mr. Everitt—as a clergyman cannot."

"That is perfectly true," again the rector acquiesced, drily.

"Your influence with Noble and Factory End would thus save the poorer members of your congregation much unnecessary suffering. I need not say what such service on your part would mean to us."

"That is quite unnecessary," said the other.

"And now as to what such service would mean to you, yourself."

"To me?" The tone was one of genuine bewilderment.

"I pay my way," said the Judge gruffly, "and ask no favors I do not return."

The rector swung about suddenly in his revolving chair and regarded the Judge. "He won't, he won't, he won't!"—thought the Judge, his conviction cheering him on to the test.

"Mr. Everitt, answer me one question: Will your salary suffice for the education of your children?"

"No."

"How do you propose to educate them?"

"I don't know."

"You will grant that every father owes his children an education, the best at his command."

"Yes."

"The best education for your

children is at your command, Mr. Everitt, the best money can buy in America and in Europe, for each of the five. I promise it."

Mr. Everitt's eyes as they pierced the Judge's were inscrutable. Was he hesitating?

"All you have to do in return is to persuade Noble to a course that is really the best thing for himself as well as the best for us, the best for you, and the best, as I've just sought to demonstrate, for your children."

The minister's eyes never wavered from their study of the Judge's face.

"Your daughter," said the Judge; "think what a college education would mean to her, and European travel."

"I am thinking," answered Polly Pat's father. He was silent several minutes, as was also the Judge.

"For her sake, then, you will," suggested the Judge.

White with rage the minister leaped to his feet. "For her sake I

will *not,*" he thundered; "for her sake I will live, God helping me, an honest man to the end."

In the Judge's heart was joy, the same joy John Noble had felt one still January afternoon. Both had tried a test, both had found their man true. But the Judge winced at the rector's white scorn.

"That any man should dare to bribe——" but Polly Pat had rushed in, braids flying, had laid an insistent hand on the Judge's arm, had swept him all bewildered out of the door, only flinging back to her father. "Never mind, Cap, there's somebody else to see you," adding to the Judge, "Please hurry." He was out of the front door before he had time to think. Then Polly Pat explained breathlessly:

"I hope you'll excuse my hustling you out this way. I beg your pardon, I truly do, but I had to, you know. John Noble was there, and I thought you'd better not meet."

Was it a sudden jealousy that darkened the Judge's face?

"Jack Noble," he queried of Polly Pat; "to see your father?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"I don't know," answered Polly Pat. "You have excused me, haven't you? Good-night."

Something exploded on the Judge's lips and his face was black as he whistled to his coachman.

John Noble shuffled into the rector's study. On the eve of the first of March he had come to see the one man in Forrestdale whom he believed disinterested.

"I came in by the back door," he explained, "seeing a carriage at the front."

"Yes," said Mr. Everitt, "Judge Farwell's carriage."

"Come to see you?" questioned Jack.

"Yes," said the rector with frank eyes.

VIII

FARWELL OR FACTORY END?

THE first of March had come and gone, and it was almost with a sense of relief that all Forrestdale settled down to the fact of the strike. It had seemed curiously silent at first without the factory whistles. Grown accustomed to that morning call to rise and work, Forrestdale found itself waking restlessly and straining ears for sounds that never came.

At first Factory End had felt quite in a holiday humour with its unaccustomed idleness, but such humour lasted but a few days. Always underpaid, Factory End found itself ill prepared for the emergency of a strike, however long foreseen. The very inadequacy of wages, by reason

of which they were striking, made even a brief suspension of work a grim and daring fight. Sullen-browed men were seen in little groups at street corners. Women's faces beneath their shawls grew pinched with worry, for there were a great many little mouths to fill in Factory End. And the issue of the Judge's obstinacy who could foretell? The memory of the way they had worked for him and of the way in which he had tossed their demands back in their teeth was galling. Four weeks went by, and the crowds at street corners grew thicker, brows blacker, and muttered words more threatening, but yet all was orderly still in Factory End, and law-abiding.

There was no effort made by the Farwells to bring in foreign workmen, although such effort on their part was excitedly surmised in Factory End. To Farwell & Farwell,

especially to Farwell Junior, it seemed probable that it would not be long before Factory End, remote from example of other strikes as Forrestdale was, would soon give in.

It was in these days of tension that Polly Pat's round face came to reflect some of the strain of her father's. It was in these days, too, that 'Ziah and Polly Pat relented somewhat toward each other; for it hardly seemed worth while to quarrel too fiercely over the housekeeping in the presence of a much greater crisis.

To tell the truth, 'Ziah always took a grim pleasure in any fight, and now, when dull Forrestdale was stirred by such dramatic excitement, she had to have someone to talk to. Blackening the range one morning with a sinewy arm, she talked to wide-eyed Polly Pat, seated, with elbows on the kitchen table. "This trouble's been brewing for years—

years. We all started even in this town fifty years back, Farwells and Nobles, Newmans and Eastons, but since, some has gone up and some has gone down, till there's one lot up there on the hill and another down yonder in Factory End—as was never meant there should be. Farwells had the money, so up they go. They hold on to the money, too, while other folks works for it. Where'd Farwells be if it hadn't been for Jack? He made their factories for 'em, and he can spoil 'em for 'em, too, if they're goin' to be so high and mighty. They say the Judge ain't nearly so bad, tho' bad enough, but that dirty little son of his, the Judge lets him lead him by the nose. You'd oughter hear folks talk about Charlie Farwell!

"Don't know what we're coming to. One thing I do know. Things would be lots worse in Factory End if it wasn't for your Pa. He's against rows, so there'll be none so

long as Jack can hold 'em in. Don't know how long that'll be. Jack, he thinks as much of your Pa as Tim does of you."

Such conversations with 'Ziah were none too reassuring to Polly Pat's overwrought little soul. It was more restful than ever before to sink on the little footstool at Miss Alison's knee in Miss Alison's library. Miss Alison, looking down into the upturned face where new shadows were deepening the wide child eyes, felt afresh her impatience against Factory End. It was strange how Miss Alison resented all that must inevitably make Polly Pat a grown-up. Miss Alison's impatience spoke in her words one afternoon:

"Try not to mind too much, dearie," she said, patting the heavy bronze braids. She wished Polly Pat might have grown up in the Forrestdale of her own youth, with only placid memories of a gentle old town to

remember out of her girlhood. "It will all straighten out again some day. We shall all settle down and find ourselves again, and it will all be as it used to be in Forrestdale." She spoke with a hope she did not altogether feel.

"Was everything all right in Forrestdale then?" asked Polly Pat.

"Yes, dear; before there were any factories, we were able to do more for our poor than their own pride has ever allowed us to do for them since."

But Polly Pat was thinking hard, her whole face knotted in genuine puzzlement.

"Would Captain have liked the parish that way, do you think?" she asked; she did not know that she was challenging the very spirit of Old Forrestdale. Polly Pat had a way of asking heart-searching questions most unconsciously. It was a very long time before Miss Alison answered.

"I am not quite sure with just his views that he would."

"Then it couldn't have been all right," said Polly Pat.

"We were a great deal happier and more comfortable, at any rate," said Miss Alison, more to herself than to her listener.

"It wasn't quite being friends, though, was it?"

"Being friends?" queried Miss Alison.

"I mean," explained Polly Pat, "being friends with the Nobles and the Newmans and all of them?"

"No, I don't think it was," confessed Miss Alison.

"But that's just what Captain wants the parish to be—friends. Don't you suppose he can do it?"

Such an earnest face upturned in question, such a young little face! What could one do but place one's two hands about it and kiss it? For response Polly Pat slipped from her

stool, and kneeling with her cheek to Miss Alison's shoulder, whispered: "Captain said to me once that the factories would be perfectly splendid if only Judge Farwell and Jack Noble were friends, willing to do things for each other, and that the church would be perfectly splendid, too, if only Old Forrestdale and Factory End would be friends." A pause in which Polly Pat's eyes studied the leaping fire-flame, and then turned full-shining to Miss Alison. "You see, this is about the biggest trouble Cap and I ever had, this parish," she went on; "you see, I haven't ever had enough troubles to be quite sure—but they do quite often come out all right, don't they?"

"Yes, girlie."

"And anyway, you just have to make yourself keep on hoping, don't you? But, of course, the hardest thing for me is that it's so awfully hard on Cap."

"That is why you must make yourself keep on hoping, for his sake," said Miss Alison gently.

"Oh, won't it be lovely when everything is all right again?" cried Polly Pat, her face breaking from worry into the radiant Everitt smile. To those who came to know them well, that smile, flashing across wide, sorrow-shadowed eyes, came to be very characteristic of Polly Pat and her father. It stayed in Miss Alison's mind long after Polly Pat had sped home, for some of the things Polly Pat had said kept her looking into the fire and thinking long that afternoon. Would everything be "all right again," she wondered, and right, not in the old way, but in this new impractical way of the minister's? Well, she thought to herself, with a quizzical bit of a smile, if these Everitts had done nothing else, they had certainly set Forrestdale to thinking.

If Alison Farwell could sit in her library and think calmly of the issues at hand, such impersonal detachment was not easy for some others in Forrestdale. Every day Judge Farwell drove to his locked and empty factories and himself went through them, all the five red brick buildings, every room of them, and then drove off again, not noting by so much as the lifting or lowering of an eyelid the ominous knots of idlers who sullenly observed his grim brigadier figure.

Charles Farwell had never forgiven the rector his incorruptibility, and still less had he forgiven a subtle influence he believed the rector to exert over his father. True, the Judge was bowing in all the factory business to his son's superior astuteness, but while he no longer lingered after service, he still attended church as regularly as did John Noble, and he, furthermore, insisted on the continued presence in the family pew of all

the ladies of the Farwell household. There had been some domestic bickering on the subject, but here the Judge's will had outweighed Charles's. Charles had to be content with absenting himself and with free discussion in the homes of his Forrestdale friends of the rector's attitude toward Factory End.

Now, be it remembered, for some years, just as the name of Farwell & Farwell had represented the factories, so had it represented the office of warden in Calvary Church. The rector was not surprised, however much saddened, by receiving one afternoon notice from the clerk of the vestry that Charles Farwell had resigned the position of junior warden. The Captain was fagged with Lenten services and long strain; he was temporarily inclined to be a little gloomy, wondering if the Judge's resignation as senior warden would follow, and then those of other ves-

trymen. Possibly, the rector reflected grimly, his own resignation would be requested to follow the withdrawal of the Farwells. He could hardly expect to be popular with any who had an interest in the Farwell factories. For himself, he had forgiven the Judge, but he could hardly expect the Judge to forgive him. At any rate, there was a gloomy enough Easter in prospect.

But, in reality, Mr. Everitt's discouragement carried him far afield. If Factory End turned to him as the one friend they could trust, with quite as warm affection did Old Forrestdale regret those sharp lines of worry at their rector's lips and temples. Despite Charles Farwell's disaffection, never had Lenten services been so largely attended, never had collections been so generous, never had the Sunday-school been so popular, or its pupils practised their Easter carols with such heartiness.

As for the Ladies' Guild, both in the rectory and out of it, it fairly buzzed with activity. It had plenty of money at its command, too, the Judge saw to that, stipulating only that the rector should not know whence the largest contributions came. As to where these contributions should go, if the never-to-be-spoken secrets of the Judge's soul had been known, it would have been found that he, as well as the rector, wished that they might go to relieve some of the women and children of Factory End.

Factory End kept its troubles to itself, but yet there were rumors that reached Old Forrestdale making its comfort uncomfortable. It was a bitter March, but Factory End was economising in fuel; there was sickness there, too, and hunger. When Factory End came to church it stared with dogged, sullen eyes at Old Forrestdale, forbidding sympathy. It

came to church with sullen motive indeed, meaning that Old Forrestdale should never think that Mr. Everitt was only the rich man's rector, fiercely intent to show those others that he belonged to Factory End. Curious anomaly of human nature that the fact that both parties worshipped under one roof, only sundered them more sharply when it came to giving or receiving help. Factory Enders would starve, but they would not be treated as beggars by those who refused to treat them as men. It was most true, what the Judge had once said, that church and business were pretty well mixed for the Farwells; they were pretty well mixed just now in his own conscience. However much Old Forrestdale might regret the passing of the old ways of helping its poor, was it really true now that it could help them only by being friends with them?

Busy with many meetings, the La-

dies' Guild surged through the rectory so that many secrets of the Everitts were made known, but to no unsympathising friends, for it became more and more evident to Forrestdale that the Everitt family needed immediate adoption. A gentler, more subdued Polly Pat had grown very appealing, and as for Annette, many a mother longed to get hold of the child and dress her as other children were dressed. She was really very pretty except when her parted lips revealed the startling isolation of two great front teeth. Mrs. Job Farwell, sitting behind the Everitt pew in church, found herself contrasting Annette's shabby, queer little duds with the daintiness of her own granddaughters. She was not altogether surprised by the revelation that came to her one early-April afternoon.

The President of the Ladies' Guild was bustling out after a protracted

meeting, when her ear—a grandmotherly ear, remember, and not much more unsympathetic really than her husband's—was caught by a smothered sound from the study. Whenever Polly Pat had anything particularly hard to do she took it to the study; if Captain was present, that presence helped; if he was away, as on this afternoon, there was something comforting about his room.

Mrs. Job Farwell cautiously pushed open the door. Spread over the study desk was a clutter of sewing, thread, shears, a great billowy mass of brown cashmere, and on top of all a red head was bowed; no sign of life but those same smothered sounds, and every now and then the spasmodic kick of Polly Pat's foot twisted about the leg of Captain's desk chair. You would not have thought pompous Mrs. Farwell could have been so readily transformed

into the cooing, anxious comforter. "Dearie, dear, what is it?" she asked, laying her hand on Polly Pat's shoulder.

Polly Pat raised a flushed face, rebellious at tears.

"Clothes are the only thing I ever cry about," she said. "I just can't sew. It's a dress for Annette," she explained, giving a savage shove to the brown waves before her.

It was a new rôle for Mrs. Job Farwell to play grandmother to Polly Pat. Together they folded away the troublesome sewing and Polly Pat's face was bright again when Mrs. Farwell drove away, and in the latter's mind were several new thoughts, and one of them was of direct appeal to the President of the Ladies' Guild.

Never before had that organisation accomplished more in ten brief days, perhaps because this work was so much more enjoyable than any it had

ever done. Old Forrestdale had inherited traditions of exquisite needlework, whereas the sewing it had always done in years previous for Factory End, and this year for the Indians, had always been so practical, so substantial and so ugly. The little garments they were making now were of an exquisite daintiness, and, moreover, into every stitch there went the love of every woman for a motherless little girl.

By Mrs. Farwell's advice, Polly Pat had never again taken out the brown wool for Annette's dress, but the reason of this advice she little guessed, until Thursday afternoon of the week before Palm Sunday. Captain had been called away for the afternoon, and would not return until late in the evening. Polly Pat, growing restless in his absence, had gone down to Factory End to look up some of her absent Sunday-school scholars. The reason for their ab-

sence was instantly forthcoming—no clothes.

"We didn't dare buy nothin' new this winter before March," explained Mrs. Noble, "and we certainly couldn't buy nothin' since, and Mattie's coat sleeves are clean through beyond my mending, and I don't want her to go to Sunday-school ragged."

It was the same story from the Newmans—no shoes, ragged coats, patched and outgrown dresses. Perhaps Factory End made the worst of its poverty, finding so sympathetic an ear. Perhaps all was not so bad as Polly Pat believed, but the complaining of the women, the haunting, weary faces of the men, the children listening to their mothers with such early uncanny comprehension of the distress, wrought Polly Pat's excitable soul to the highest pitch. Hurrying home, she quite forgot that Captain was away and that it was 'Ziah's afternoon out. The Four-in-hand

flew from the house, hatless, coatless, and fell upon her when she was still a block away.

"Oh, Polly Pat, boxes!" cried Blitzen.

"Boxes and boxes!" exclaimed Dunder.

"Five," said Paul.

"Addressed to you," added Annette.

The boxes bore signs of much curious handling, but had not been opened, five great pasteboard boxes, which revealed at first only a filmy mass of white tissue paper and pink ribbon. Each box presented this same result, for each of the five had appropriated one and was tearing away with fingers and teeth at the knots. "Letter for you in mine," announced Paul, handing it over to Polly Pat. It was a charming little note from Mrs. Easton, secretary of the Ladies' Guild, begging "Miss Mary" to accept for her little sister

the affectionate work of the women of her father's parish.

Garment after garment the Four-in-hand lifted aloft, dancing and shouting with approbation. There were frocks and coats and little slippers and shoes and gloves and stockings to match, all of softest and finest material, and no less than three beautiful hats beside. Annette soon wearied of her sister's and brothers' enthusiastic trying on. The boxes had been an excitement, but clothes did not in the least interest Annette.

Suddenly Polly Pat sat down, her face pale, her mouth and eyes wide, that mysterious, far-away look upon her face.

"What is it?" cried Blitzen.

"Hush, she's having a plan," said Paul; "keep quiet."

Motionless they watched her intently, until she sprang up and began thrusting their contents into the boxes and tying all up again.

"Polly Pat, what is it?" whispered Annette, but "After supper," was all that could be extracted from Polly Pat.

Supper was swiftly disposed of. It consisted of bread and milk served in bowls on the stationary washtubs.

"Now?" asked the waiting Four-in-hand, agog with curiosity.

"Put on your things and come," answered the mystifying elder sister.

They obeyed. "Now, each a box and follow me," she said. Evening walks were forbidden; "but I don't believe Captain will care if we all five go together," Polly Pat assured her conscience.

'Ziah returning at nine found an open and empty rectory. When the five came in a half hour later, obviously flushed and elated, neither threats nor entreaty could extract from them any account of their actions.

IX

TWO MEN AND THE MINISTER

IT was a bright Palm Sunday. The Ladies' Guild sought to keep its eyes forward, but yet there was a perceptible turning toward the middle of the church when Polly Pat, holding little Annette's hand, walked up the central aisle. But the prophetic thrill of pride turned to a chill of dismay—Annette on this fair spring Sunday wore a short-waisted, outgrown coat of some kinky white woollen material, the white much the worse for wear, making Annette resemble a shabby white polar bear. On her curly head was set a once white tam, her brown, ungloved hands stretched out far from sleeves shrunken back before the year's growth of little arms.

The Ladies' Guild looked at each

other, and then tried to look dutifully at the processional hymn as they stood up, but always their eyes went back to little Annette, clad in no glory, but wearing the winter weeds that had so long troubled her father's women parishioners. Well, the Ladies' Guild must wait for an explanation at least until after service. They got it then with a shock. The Everitts sat well in front and were late in getting out after service. The Ladies' Guild was in the vestibule and overflowing out upon the pavement. Sunday school came at once after church. Little folk of Old Forrestdale and of Factory End, in sharply separated groups of course, were wont to assemble at the church door, impeding the progress of an out-going congregation. It was just here, and just now, that the Ladies' Guild saw and understood.

Mattie Noble blossomed radiant in a little box coat of tan topped by a

white leghorn hat wreathed with apple blossoms. Four-year-old Ted Newman pranced about on new and shiny patent leather feet. His elder sister, proudly disregarding any wrap, pirouetted about in a little white wool dress embroidered in exquisite design. Another coat of soft baby blue ornamented the square shoulders of Rosa Ellis. Look where they would, the Ladies' Guild beheld Factory End flowering gaily in the dainty garments made with such loving devotion for Annette Everitt.

Now, Factory End mothers coming out of church were wont to linger to look over their offspring about to enter Sunday school, to shake out the frizzes of the small girls, and slick down the locks of small boys. Today mothers gazed proudly at their resplendent little folks, but yet with a return of misgiving and a dread of they didn't know what, now that the youngsters stood thus prominently

under the unfriendly eye of Old Forrestdale.

Mrs. Newman, 'Ziah Smithwick, and Mrs. Noble stood talking together, 'Ziah eyeing her young niece with sharply curious eyes. Mrs. Noble had not dared to tell 'Ziah of Polly Pat's sudden descent with mysterious and beautiful gifts. Mrs. Newman and Mrs. Noble shrank back suddenly against the cold stone wall at a voice that rang out, drowning all other voices—Mrs. Easton's—singling out Mattie Noble to stand forth: "Where did you get that coat and hat?"

"Miss Mary Everitt, she gave them to us," answered Mattie in none too mild a tone.

At Mrs. Easton's back pressed Mrs. Job Farwell and Miss Alison. Sharp-tempered Mrs. Easton certainly voiced the sentiments of all the Guild when she continued to Mattie:

"Well, you may just give them

straight back to her; they belong to her sister. We gave them to her."

In a flash 'Ziah understood. She flung herself forward:

"Annette's! Then she shall have them!"

Mrs. Noble was shy; it was hard for her to speak, yet she had her own Tim's bravery, for Tim was brave, though no one knew it. Her little face was working, scarlet spots were on her thin cheeks.

"We'll give 'em back; we're ready. We mistrusted there was something wrong all along, but when she came with her eyes all shiny and the coat in her hand, and tries it on Mattie and catches her up and kisses her—why, ma'am"—she spoke to Mrs. Farwell —"how could we ask her where she got 'em? We mistrusted, but yet what was we to do? 'Wear 'em next Sunday,' she says. Oh, ma'am, how was we to hurt her feelings? What is it you want we should do?"

Then, of a sudden, the hardness

went out of all faces, those of Factory End mothers and those of the Ladies' Guild. It seemed that they understood each other, and behold, they had something in common—a problem, for what *were* they to do? And to one coming upon the whole group suddenly, they really appeared at the moment to be talking together as if they were friends—therefore Polly Pat was to be forgiven the mistake. She stood on the church steps, quietly come out upon them, a vivid figure against the dark doorway. They saw that she saw them, and they knew that the wonderful kindling light in her face was because of them, because of what she thought she saw. She came down, she laid one hand lightly on Mrs. Farwell's arm—she was no longer afraid of Mrs. Farwell—and the other on Mrs. Noble's shawl; she spoke to those of the Ladies' Guild.

"You don't mind, do you? I had to; they needed them. And besides,

it seems, oh, it seems a little bit as if it was making you friends."

And pray, what was to be done about Annette's wardrobe then? Both then and after—nothing. Only, being under those radiant eyes, the Ladies' Guild and Factory End had nothing to do but to say good-bye to each other in friendly wise.

A little smile touched Miss Alison's lips as she drove home. It had occurred to her to wonder which was doing more for Forrestdale, Mr. Everitt's wisdom or Polly Pat's blunders?

It was the very next day that Miss Alison had an opportunity to strengthen the rector's purpose with some of her own new hopefulness. He had sought her in his puzzlement. As they sat in the quiet library, seeming so far away from all the strife and strain, the rector's whole self looked out of his wide, weary eyes as he asked:

"Miss Farwell, is there anything left for me to do?"

"Yes," said Alison Farwell.

"What?"

Miss Alison's quiet meditative repose steadied his excitement; she spoke half to herself, for she was thinking of Polly Pat's words as she said: "If they could only be friends, Old Forrestdale and Factory End; John Noble and my cousin——"

"An impractical dream," said the rector sadly.

"But your own," answered Alison Farwell, smiling. "Allow me, now," she added, "to make an impractical suggestion. Bring John Noble and my cousin together. Arrange a meeting between them—wait and see what will happen."

"Hate like that!" said the rector. "No one could bring those two together."

"No one but you, Mr. Everitt." Her steady, quiet eyes looked straight

into his, speaking the hope he himself had taught her. Slowly hope touched his tired face, too. He rose to go. "I will try," he said simply.

The rector was conscious of Charles Farwell's vanishing coat-tails as he was shown into the Judge's inner office. Since the evening of the Judge's visit to the rectory, Mr. Everitt had not crossed his threshold, either here or at Red Chimneys. It was not because the rector was unwilling to meet the Judge, it was because he knew the Judge would be unwilling to meet him. "He knows I know he's a scoundrel," thought the minister to himself. "I couldn't expect him to forgive me for knowing he's a scoundrel." Yet, in spite of the ugly word, Mr. Everitt no longer bore the Judge any ill feeling; cherishing of grudges was not an Everitt characteristic, and, besides, was not Judge Farwell a member of his parish? For the rector in the earlier days of their acquaintance there had

always been something likable about the Judge, that twinkle back of the sternness of his eye, that twitching of grim lips at a joke.

The Judge would be there in a minute, the office boy had said. Presently he stood in the doorway, hesitant on his own threshold. He looked all his seventy years that afternoon, and there was another thing that hurt the rector; the Judge's look was naturally direct and searching, but now his eyes were veiled and shifty with a shame he vainly sought to conceal by a conventional greeting.

"I am glad to see you, sir. Pray be seated."

The rector extended his hand with its hearty grip. The Judge seated himself ponderously in his office chair at the rector's left, his bushy brows drawn together by a frown, one hand making idle passes with a pencil on a bit of paper. He did not look at the rector; of all sensations that the Rev. Brewster Everitt did

not enjoy, the worst was the knowledge that he was making a man feel ashamed of himself.

"Judge Farwell," he said, "I know I'm officious, and I know you'll think so. But I don't see my way out of it, so I beg your pardon before I begin."

"Go ahead," muttered the Judge to the little pad in his hand.

"I want to ask a favour," continued Mr. Everitt, "although I've no right to ask it."

"You've the best right," growled the Judge quite low. "I insulted you." Did the rector know how hard it had been for the Judge to live without his own self-respect for those past weeks?

"I had hoped you'd forgotten," said the minister.

"Had *you?*"

"I'm going to—if you'll help," said the other, smiling.

At seventy there was much of the boy left in Judge Farwell. He

swung about, his eyes looked out now level and direct.

"What do you want?" he said; "I'll do it!"

"No," said the rector quickly. "I'll hold you to no rash promises. You must hear first. I want you and Noble to meet, by yourselves, and listen to each other—civilly and sensibly—for just half an hour."

The Judge's whole figure stiffened, his mouth was set, an ugly light burned in his eyes, then passed, leaving his face quiet, intent.

"I keep my promise," he said.

"But I don't keep you to that, as I said just now," answered the minister quickly.

"I will do it," said the Judge slowly, "because, as I said before, you've a right to ask a favour."

"Not for that reason, of all others," cried the minister, flushing.

"Well, then," said the Judge, a grim smile touching his lips, "I'll do it anyway, for no reason at all, if you

like. But," his face was swiftly darkened, "but I hope you don't expect any good to come of the interview?"

There was the mark of a sudden stab of pain in the rector's sensitive face, swiftly followed by a little smile as he pleaded. "But you won't take from me my right to hope, will you?"

It was much harder work than the rector had expected to get Jack Noble to consent to the interview. "No," he kept reiterating doggedly, "it won't do no good. It ain't no use. You don't know the Farwells the way I do. A man like you couldn't."

"Well, anyway, you'll try?"

"What's the use? He won't, if I will. If you do get me to give in to a meeting, how are you going to get the Judge?"

"I got him first, of course," answered the minister drily.

Wednesday afternoon was wear-

ing toward evening under a chill, heavy sky. Factory End, under the awakening of spring, only seemed to look more squalid in the cloudiness and threatened rain. The Judge was late in making his afternoon tour of his factories. The idle crowd about the factory doors was larger than usual. John Noble made a point of never being far from home at the hour of the Judge's inspection. This afternoon the crowd was quieter than usual; even they themselves did not know why; everyone felt a tenseness in the air, it seemed as if the slightest movement might snap it. So they waited, waited, as they did every afternoon, to see the Judge drive up.

The trap rattled up at last, the Judge's broad-shouldered figure in the back seat, towering above that of the little black coachman in front. Susette was jerked up sharply at the door of Factory A. Curious how the crowd without a word pressed

closer on the trap, closer, closer. The Judge's elbow brushed Dan Newman's breast as he jumped out. There was a bare passageway for the Judge between Susette's side and the front row of the strikers. The Judge marched on up the steps. He did not so much as turn his head, though he passed close enough to feel the breath of the men who hated him. He paused as he slowly unlocked the great door and entered, leaving it unlocked behind him. The crowd outside, still perfectly quiet, surged forward. But someone had faced them, his broad back against the door. Jack Noble folded his arms.

"No, you don't, boys," he said, very quietly. They fell back, but their stillness was not reassuring.

"What you doing for us yourself, Jack?" growled someone. In that low growl Jack recognised the last throes of the fight, his fight to keep Factory End from violence.

Not a lash, however, quivered as he staked his last hope.

"I'm going to do something now," he said as he turned and entered, closing the door upon them; "wait till I come out."

Through the great cavernous rooms, in the shadows of which lurked strange shapes of motionless machinery, the Judge's slow steps echoed as he went through his inspection. No, no one had tampered with the machines, the great engines could make the whole silent place start into life whenever he willed—whenever *he* willed? He had not quite liked the look of that crowd. He stooped to feel a piece of belting, when suddenly out of the shadow of one of the great looms there stepped a man.

The Judge started back. "Noble!" he exclaimed.

"He sent me," said Noble, standing stiff and straight.

"Yes, yes, I know," said the Judge. "I promised him; but the time—I didn't think to-day."

"To-day is about the right time," said Noble, his ear tense for sounds out in the silent street.

The Farwell pride rose here.

"I suppose you understand," said the Judge, "that this—our conference—is entirely Mr. Everitt's doing?"

"As far as I'm concerned, it's entirely Mr. Everitt's doing," answered John Noble, with equal haughtiness. They stood staring into each other's faces—which was to begin? A look of sudden scrutiny came into the Judge's gaze, it seemed to him there was a change in Noble. Not for six months had he seen him thus face to face.

"You like him, don't you?" the Judge questioned suddenly.

"Yes."

"Why?"

In the strange isolation of the

silent factory their words seemed to be coming from them without their own volition.

"He whipped me once," answered Jack Smasher.

"He whipped me, too," said the Judge.

"He's that kind," said Jack Noble obscurely, but the Judge seemed to understand.

"Yes, he's that kind," said Judge Farwell, "and since he is, I suppose we've got to talk this thing through now and here."

Jack thrust forward one of the high stools that lined the wall; the Judge sat down, while Jack himself stood, his back to the beam of a loom. They talked with a new illuminating frankness which seemed to them, as both thought on it afterwards, almost the work of wizardry, almost as if they had been under some secret hypnotic influence that forced them to speak, not as factory owner and factory foreman, not as Farwell and

Noble, but only as man and man. And they were coming to an agreement, an understanding, one that would, of course, have to be formally drawn up and ratified, but an agreement, nevertheless. It seemed as if each man felt the blessed ease of the relaxation of mental muscles, knotted to the strain of the past months. Both men drew the deep breath of relief when suddenly the Judge remembered.

"But Charles," he exclaimed. "I had forgotten. We must have his consent. I have not the authority——"

"Yes, Charles," said Noble, his face in an instant black; "Charles, we all forgot to reckon with him."

"I must see him before giving the final decision," said the Judge; "yet still I trust——"

"I don't," blurted Noble, rudely.

"I will go to him at once," said the Judge.

John Noble followed him slowly

down the stairs and out of the door. He had made his face expressionless, for he knew what the eyes searching his were asking. The crowd drew back now to let the Judge step freely to his carriage. The evil looks had not hurt the Judge before, but now that his purpose toward his workmen was changed, he was sensitive to their hate.

The men pressing toward Noble to question him let the Judge's trap roll quickly out of sight. There was a whisper of tense question voiced by one.

"Well, Jack, what did you do?"

"Nothing—yet—but——" he saw the mischief plotting in their faces—"if we wait a bit, I'm hoping——"

A laugh short and sharp as the bark of a dog was the answer.

"Boys," cried Noble, seeing them turn, "remember the minister!" That word held them, they hesitated, then someone cried: "Boys, remember the Farwells!"

X

TWO FATHERS

IT was characteristic of the Farwells that the offices of the firm were a good mile from the factories on Elm Avenue, the old business street of Forrestdale, remote from the smoke and steam and roar of machinery. To the offices the Judge now drove to find Charles.

Seated at his own desk, his back to the door, busily writing, Charles gave no recognition of his father's presence except the little backward wave of his left hand somehow indicative of closer comradeship than any more formal greeting.

"Guess I'll have to interrupt you a little while, Charlie," ventured the Judge, who at this minute would rather have interviewed the mob in Factory End than his son.

"One minute," answered Charles, then after a moment wheeled about, stretching his arms. "Nearly time for home," he said.

"Not quite yet," answered his father. "Truth is, Charlie, something has happened. I've had a little talk with Noble."

The good humour of Charles's face gave place to sharp suspicion. He drew back his feet, comfortably stretched out, and sat straight and tense, regarding his father with narrowing eyes.

"We've about come to an agreement," proceeded the Judge.

Charles's thin lips curled back from his teeth unpleasantly, he looked as if he were about to utter a malediction, but all his closed teeth let out was "Everitt!"

"Guess you're right," assented the Judge.

Charles sprang up and went and stood looking out of the window, his

back to his father, his hands clasped behind him, giving no sign of the fury within him except by occasional spasmodic twitching of his fingers. The Judge watched and waited. When Charles turned about his face was grey as the clouds beyond the window, but his eyes were bright with an evil fire.

"You've given in?" he asked.

"Not altogether. Noble explained some of his points—he's not so unreasonable after all—he made some suggestions, too, of improvements; he's pig-headed but honest—we came to a pretty good understanding—and then those poor devils down there——"

But here the Judge's broken sentences trailed off into silence. It is hard to face a look like that in the face of one's son. One is so likely to remember him as a little chap and to choke in one's excuses. Before Charles's white rage the Judge quailed.

"Father, I believe you're bewitched," said Charles. "How much have you promised Noble?"

"I told him I could promise nothing without your consent."

Relief cleared Charles Farwell's face perceptibly.

"I consent to no concessions," he answered.

But some of the Farwell spirit was stiffening the Judge's purpose. "It's true I promised nothing, but I've led Noble to expect——"

"That I'd agree?" sneered Charles.

Charles had possessed that sneer ever since he was a child. Then the Judge had never been able to resist thrashing him for it, to his lasting regret. Now the father sought to control his voice.

"You will at least consent to listen to some of Noble's propositions."

"No, I know them all. Allow me to suggest that I also know who it was that induced him to make them

and you to listen to them. Am I right in my guess?"

"And if you are, where's the harm done?" asked the Judge.

"Oh, none, certainly. Allow me to state merely that it's about time for you to choose between me and—Everitt!"

The Judge's face was flushed. He had never fought harder for calm speech.

"Charles, do you appreciate the position in which you place me by your —obstinacy? I've let Noble and——"

"Everitt," Charles supplied the name.

"Expect certain things of me," concluded the Judge.

"Very sorry," said Charles, politely.

"You insist on placing me in a false position?"

"You placed yourself in a false position, father," Charles's voice was quiet.

The Judge knew his son, knew of

old how futilely the storm of his temper would beat upon such obstinacy. He faced Charles for a moment, his eyes a flame of anger beneath his bushy brows, then his fists knotted and he stormed through the door that led to his own office, letting it slam behind him. Charles heard the sharp ring of his father's steps as he paced the floor. At length he flung in again. "One thing I ask," he demanded abruptly, "if you insist on tying my hands, there'll be trouble down yonder. I want you to take Amy and the children and get out of town and leave me to settle the mess you insist on making."

Charles looked up with a suspicion in his eye wholly unexpected to his father, who exploded: "Heavens, man, I don't mean *that!* Haven't I given my word I'll not yield an article without your consent? You can trust me, can't you? All I mean is, there's going to be a fight and I want you to clear out."

"I won't," said Charles.

But sharp anxiety made the Judge patient. "Come," he said, "don't say no to that, too. Promise at least that you'll take till to-morrow to think about going. Promise that much."

"For what reason?"

"It might be reason enough," answered the Judge with a curious quietness, for he felt suddenly very tired, "it might be reason enough that your father asks it, Charlie," and he turned quickly and went out and downstairs to his carriage.

"Take the turn around by Farley Creek," said the Judge to the coachman. He thought the air on the hills might do his head good before they should circle around into Forrestdale again, and so out through the town home to Red Chimneys.

Down in Factory End, meanwhile, it was very still, for a whisper had spread, "Wait a bit, keep quiet till

Jack's out of the way," and so John Noble had fancied the crowd dispersed without any mischief's having been done.

Polly Pat was not the only one who found Alison refreshing in distress. Charles Farwell thought he would drop in on his cousin before pressing on up the hill to Red Chimneys. He was not quite ready to face his father at dinner. Charles hated any unpleasantness at home.

He was both surprised and displeased to find another guest before him, a tall girl in white, with eyes disconcertingly clear and direct. Polly Pat had been bidden to dine with Miss Alison, and by the latter's request had let down her two braids for the occasion. She tossed them back with an impatient shake of her head as she rose, seeking to say a polite good evening to Charles Farwell. Charles Farwell was accustomed to concealing his emotions,

Polly Pat was accustomed to declaring hers, but it would have been plain to any third observer that both Miss Alison's guests were heartily sorry to see each other. Miss Alison, however, had the gift of making conversation on such occasions, and both Charles and Polly Pat felt a growing sense of ease and comfort while Miss Alison talked on. They had chattered thus perhaps half an hour when Polly Pat started, listening intently, "What was that?" she cried.

"What, dear? I didn't hear anything."

"Listen!" whispered Polly Pat.

It was always quiet on the hillside; what was that distant, muffled sound growing louder, nearer, a low roar, inarticulate, yet somehow human? Polly Pat jumped up, all colour suddenly wiped from her ruddy face. "I know what it is!" she said; "they're coming! I wonder where Cap is?"

All three rushed to the broad front window, and, sweeping aside the curtains, looked out. The cloudy April evening at seven still allowed them to see all things clearly and the elevation of the house prevented any obstruction of view from the hedge that separated Miss Alison's grounds and the roadway.

The inarticulate roar now resolved itself into the shouts and cries of a mob, and through all they heard the sound of wheels and the cracking of the whip as the Judge's two-seated trap came into sight at the turn of the road. The little black driver sat huddled down in front; grim and motionless, the Judge sat alone in the back seat. All about him, at each side and behind, surged sinister black forms, arms brandished in threat, fists shaken almost in the Judge's face, while he never stirred; and those cries, hoarse with hate—Polly Pat all her life long never forgot them!

She watched, her white face quivering, her whole frame tense, hardly seeming to breathe as the carriage and the mob drew nearer. Then as they looked, one man swerved aside, caught up a great stone, made a lunge toward the carriage. But all at once, mysteriously cleft through, the crowd swayed, parted. Right through them someone had pressed his way, someone with face white as Polly Pat's had leaped into the moving carriage, was seated in a flash at the Judge's side, so close that whatever harm came to the Judge must come to him, too—their minister, the friend of Factory End!

"I knew Cap would come," breathed Polly Pat as she swayed a little and her head sank on Miss Alison's shoulder; but she was too strong a girl to faint, and through clouded, dizzy eyes she still saw the crowd at the gateway, saw the mob hesitate, sway, and at last turn and slink

slowly back down the hillside, while the carriage drove on in safety. She had thought only of her own father until, slowly coming to full consciousness, she was aware of Charles Farwell's face. Why did it not reflect the utter relief of her own soul? Did he not realise it was all over now?

"They're safe," she said, reassuring him just as she might have done one of her little brothers, "it's all right now. Never mind, it's all over."

But Charles Farwell spoke neither to Polly Pat nor his cousin, but only to himself, as he answered thickly, "I did it!"

Polly Pat did not understand him; Miss Alison half guessed his meaning, but neither would have pressed any word upon him at that moment; they were both too sorry for him.

"Come," said Polly Pat to him at length, once more her active self, "we must go and see how they are—our fathers."

He followed her hurrying steps, the breeze whipping her muslin skirts about her ankles as she flew down the path and out of the Hedgrows entrance, up the hill and around, until they stood by the high stone portals of the gates of Red Chimneys. The house was yet some distance off, standing as it did on a wooded knoll.

Through the still leafless tree branches the piazza and lighted windows were visible. The great front door opened for a moment, showing a ruddy stream of light, and at the same instant the April breeze bore to them through the quiet evening the sound of the Judge's resonant voice, sharply cut off as the door closed again. The sound was reassuring, bringing both the anxious ones at the gate back to a sense of everyday realities. The effect on Charles Farwell was a sudden curious embarrassment; his father was all right, was the same father from

whom he had parted in anger some two hours earlier. He did not feel quite like grasping his hand and looking him in the eye, so that shame made his steps hesitant.

Polly Pat was flying on. She turned quickly. "Why, what's the matter?" she asked.

"Go on. I'll come by and by," answered Charles, in a voice that for some reason made Polly Pat turn back to him, standing there beneath the hanging lamp of the stone gate portal. Something was wrong, she felt it instantly.

"What is the matter?" she repeated, her wide-eyed child face all intensest sympathy. He did not answer. Polly Pat's eyes were intent upon his face, searching it to know how to help him. She ventured experimentally at last.

"He is all right now, you know. I understand about fathers."

"Oh, it isn't that," said Charles Farwell, almost irritably.

"Well, what in the world is it?" queried Polly Pat.

"I—I——" you couldn't help talking to Polly Pat as sincerely as you would talk to a child. "I wouldn't do what he wanted," concluded Charles.

Polly Pat uttered a long drawn "Oh" of comprehension. "I see," she said: "but then," she added, "you know you always have to do what the fathers want—that is, provided it isn't wrong; but then it never is wrong."

Still the other one was silent.

"Can't you do it still, what he wants?" suggested Polly Pat.

"Possibly," he admitted gruffly, adding: "You'd better go on up to the house."

"I've just got to see Cap," admitted Polly Pat; "but you'll come?"

"By and by," he answered and Polly Pat on the instant was running

up the circling gravel walks to the house. The Judge himself admitted her and showed her into the library. The women of the household he had peremptorily ordered out of the way when he and Mr. Everitt had entered.

Leaning against the mantel of the library fireplace stood the Captain, very pale. The black butler was just serving him with a cup of coffee, but the minister put down the cup on the mantelpiece when he saw that white clad figure in the doorway.

"Captain!" breathed Polly Pat.

"Daughter!" said the rector.

Then the Judge turned away, blinking hard. Letting go at last, Polly Pat pushed Captain down into an armchair, then brought the coffee to him.

"Now drink before you speak," she commanded. When he had finished she knelt with elbows on the arm of the Morris chair, looking with

intent, puzzled eyes into his face as he let his head fall back upon the cushions.

"Cap," she asked, "now that it's all over, why is it that you aren't gladder?"

The minister's lips were compressed into a thin line. There was a sharp little frown between his eyes, but he smiled as if in apology for his exhaustion, as he said, including both the Judge and Polly Pat:

"I didn't quite know how much I'd hoped until I saw their faces, heard them cry out—that way——" he shut his eyes an instant, the little frown of pain deepening, "and they are my people, and they hate like that——"

"Don't you hope any more, Cap?" whispered Polly Pat.

"No, not now," he answered.

But at this Polly Pat's entire manner changed. "Then it's just because you're tired," she responded

briskly. "We'll just put off hoping until to-morrow morning, when you'll feel better. Just lie back and rest now, and pretty soon we'll go home." She began to pat his hand with little rhythmic rat-tat-tats, rat-tat-tats. It would not have soothed everybody's nerves, that energetic patting, but it appeared to do the minister good.

It occurred to the Judge it was about time for him to steal away. He went out and began pacing the long piazza. The tap of his boot heels was audible far in the evening quiet, audible as far as where someone waited in the great gateway. The sight of Polly Pat and her father had set the Judge thinking. He, too, understood about fathers, being one himself, with just one child. Where was the boy now? Safe, of course, since the trouble was over for the time. But why didn't he come home? The worst of their rare quarrels was

that it always took Charles so long to make up. Down by the gate Charles's quick ear caught the sound of footsteps coming up the hillside—nearer, nearer, and presently a great burly form was beside him under the arch. Charles felt his every muscle stiffen for a spring—if anyone should dare to attempt more harm to that man up yonder on the porch! Jack Noble saw the tenseness of the attitude, the suspicion flaming in Charles's eyes, and smiled.

"No harm intended this time," he growled, "and this row just over wasn't none of my doing, either. Is he all right?"

"Don't you see him up there on the piazza?" responded Charles.

John Noble looked up toward the house and saw a tall form silhouetted against a bright window space.

"I meant the minister," said Noble.

"He's inside. I suppose he's all right," answered Charles.

"Don't you know?" demanded Noble fiercely.

"Would my father be walking the porch as calmly as that if there was anything wrong with the minister?" growled Charles.

"Not much, I guess," answered Noble, setting off up to the house.

"Noble!" Charles's voice rang out sharply.

Noble stopped.

"Here!" commanded Charles.

Noble turned around, not taking a step toward Charles. "I can hear you where I am," he said shortly.

"You tell my father," said Charles Farwell, "that you and he can fix it up as you please. You may count me out of it entirely."

Noble made no motion of proceeding on his way, at which Charles added: "That's all you need tell him. He'll understand, if you don't."

"Oh, I understand all right," answered Noble, continuing his way up the zigzagging hill path, lit now by

twinkling electric lights. He drew aside into the shadow of some shrubbery as he saw the door open and two figures come down the path toward him. He did not come out of his retreat as he recognised them, and beneath the nearest light saw Mr. Everitt's face, white and spent as Noble had never seen him. Polly Pat had her arm in her father's. As they passed, John Noble caught her words: "Don't mind it so much, old Cap. Perhaps everything will be all right."

"Hope it will be—for him," muttered Noble to himself. "He's tried hard enough—wonder why?"

The Judge's nerves were of iron, but they acknowledged their recent strain in the start with which the Judge perceived the great form loom up on the piazza steps.

"It's Noble," said the newcomer; then, standing stiff and straight, he added: "Judge Farwell, this afternoon was none of my doing."

"I know it," responded the Judge. "I've the minister's word for that as well as your own."

"You're all right?" questioned Noble.

"Yes, thanks to him," the Judge answered.

"'Bout time all Forrestdale was saying 'thanks to him' for one thing or another."

"You're right," acquiesced the Judge heartily. "But what's bothering me to-night—I wish there was something more to do than just saying my thanks."

"There ain't, though. You couldn't do nothing for a man like him. 'Tain't *things* he wants. I can understand how you'd feel, though," John Noble added.

"I've had a little idea about something we might do for him," the Judge broke off a twig of leafless vine as he spoke, "and it isn't things either. Besides it has something to do with yourself, Noble."

XI

EASTER IN FORRESTDALE

DOWN the street in the bright mid-afternoon sunshine there marched a short but curious procession, three umbrellas in a line, each draped about with shawls sweeping the pavement and concealing all means by which the three tents moved on. The procession was arrested by a sudden voice.

"Whose children are these?"

"The children of Israel, sir," piped a shrill voice in answer, adding: "This is the wilderness."

"Why, I thought it was Forrestdale," exclaimed the first voice in great surprise.

Through the fringe of the shawl at the tent opening, one bright eye appeared; there was a shriek of joy,

" The Bishop meets ' the Children of Israel ' "

then over went all the tents into the gutter, as Annette and the twins swarmed upon the bishop. He was on his way from the station to the rectory, having forgotten to take a cab, although always admonished to do so by his housekeeper. It was well she should remember the bishop was eighty, if he could not remember it himself, she was wont to say.

The bishop had plotted to surprise the Everitts with a week-end visit. At Easter time the loneliness of his great house was wont to become more than usually oppressive. The night before the bishop had found himself sitting into the small hours gazing at the fading fire, until in the stillness he seemed to hear light steps going up and down the stair and the lilt of a girlish song sung by a voice many years silent—until at length the bishop had risen. "I'm getting old, and that will never do," he had said to himself. "I must go

a-visiting. How about Everitt? There's trouble up his way."

Thus to-day here he was in Forrestdale, with three small Everitts giving him greeting. The Everitts had no grandfather of their own, but the bishop served very well in that capacity.

"And how is the father and Paul and Herself?" inquired the bishop. "Herself" had always been his name for the little fly-away, red-haired girl he had known from her babyhood.

"Paul's all right," said Blitzen, "but Cap's tired, Polly Pat says, and we were to keep quiet."

"Did you know about the strike?" asked Dunder, round-eyed and important.

"Yes," said the bishop.

"They had a fight last night—pretty nearly," continued Dunder, "only Polly Pat said we mustn't talk about it."

The three now picked up their tents and prepared to escort the bishop home. They carried the umbrellas over their shoulders with the dependent canopies floating out in the rear. They burst in abruptly upon Captain and Polly Pat in the study, the Captain seated in his desk-chair, Polly Pat on his desk.

"We've brought the bishop," announced Annette, tugging forward the dear old figure in the familiar old cape overcoat. The rector jumped up, his face aglow; Polly Pat rushed forward.

"How is it with thee, lad?" asked the bishop, grasping Mr. Everitt's hand; then turning to Polly Pat he took both her hands in his, his gentle old eyes scanning all her face. "And this is Herself?" he asked. "Little Herself grown to this? Oh, these little girls of ours," he shook his head and smiled, thinking of his own little girl, "they slip into women while

we're not looking—when they have fathers to take care of."

"I'm so glad you've come," said Polly Pat, "there isn't anybody I could have wanted to come so much. Captain's pretty tired—with everything that's happened. I guess I'll take the Four-in-hand up to the garret so that you two can be quiet down here."

The most comforting thing about the bishop was that he let people pour forth all their trouble to him without any check or protest, knowing the blessedness of utter unreserve, and knowing, too, that people wearied and worried are always better and braver than their words. Mr. Everitt's impetuous speech spent itself, while the bishop, who out of many years of lonely service had won the treasure of infinite hope, sat quietly there in the great armchair, thinking to himself once of another Good Friday afternoon with its cry of despair at men's hate.

The rector ended at last, summing all up as he said: "I've tried with all my heart and I've failed."

"How do you know?"

"I saw them," answered the other; "they hate each other—my own people."

"There is one thing," said the bishop musingly, "one thing years have taught me—no service is ever wasted—and so I wonder why it is that service, mere service, isn't enough for us; why we demand also to see our success." But the gentle peace of the old face spoke more to the rector than the bishop's words.

"I suppose I have let myself get a bit down," he admitted. "I couldn't have talked like this to anyone else."

"Then I'm glad I came," said the bishop.

"But," went on Mr. Everitt, his face clouding again, "I must admit that what I'm at present afraid of is

that they'll take from me my power to help them, that they'll ask me to resign. This vestry meeting to-morrow morning, at which I'm requested not to be present—I can't see what it means, except my resignation."

"I would wait, I think, if I were you," suggested the bishop, a quaint little smile touching his lips.

"And meanwhile cheer up?" said the rector, straightening up with sudden, unexpected briskness.

"That would do no harm, would it?" said the bishop, a little twinkle in his eyes.

The next day after the Lenten morning service, the bishop and the rector walked back across the church lawn surrounded by a troop of young Everitts. There was a drizzle of fine rain and a sharp chill in the air. It was not a cheering morning, and besides the rector had left his vestry in possession of the lecture room, not knowing the purpose of

the meeting or the reason for his own exclusion. Even the bishop had observed a curious air of secrecy in the bearing of the assembled vestrymen, a subdued excitement not altogether reassuring.

As they all trooped in by the study door the bishop announced: "I believe I have something upstairs in my valise."

"Shall we go up and get it?" suggested the twins.

"I believe you'd better," returned the bishop, and instantly they were off, returning with the valise, a shabby affair once bright and black and shiny. The bishop investigated and drew forth a small brown packet which he presented to Annette to open. She disclosed a number of little envelopes bearing a bright blotch of color at one end with printed matter below. All five Everitts examined eagerly.

"I wonder," said the bishop,

dropping his voice mysteriously, "if she—the lady in the kitchen—would let us have some eggs and a few old pans perhaps."

"Yes, she will," cried Annette, "'cause *I'll* ask her." She skipped kitchenward.

"You'll join, won't you?" asked the bishop of the rector. "And is Herself grown too old for Easter eggs?" then added to the rector: "Mine"—there was so much in that little word!—"mine never grew too old for Easter eggs."

It is no light matter to have one's kitchen invaded by seven in the middle of a Saturday morning, but it was the bishop who had suggested it, and Annette who had asked it. 'Ziah cleared her Saturday baking into a corner, her face at first grim enough as the seven took possession. She insisted only in enveloping the Four-in-hand in towels and her own aprons —odd enough they looked as they

capered about. Such marvels as they all produced, such crimsons and blues and bronzes! And these brilliant hues were not by any means entirely confined to the eggs.

The white-haired bishop at eighty was such an irresistible boy! His eagerness infected the rector, made Polly Pat a small girl again. It was good to hear the rector's laugh ring out like that—'Ziah could not stay aloof in her corner. She washed the dough from her hands, disappeared upstairs and returned with various bits of bright calico. She showed them all how to tie up the eggs in these bright scraps of cotton and showed what brilliant results could be obtained by boiling. All were crowded about her steaming kettle with eager, watching faces when there came a ring at the doorbell. The rector answered it. His face was a grown-up face once more when he returned to the kitchen say-

ing that the vestry requested the bishop to meet them for a short conference in the lecture room.

If the rector expected any enlightenment as to this mysterious summons on the bishop's return, he did not receive it. If the vestry requested their bishop to keep a secret he could do it.

Easter Day had a sullen, rainy dawn, but just before service time the sun came lustily bursting through and a brisk wind swept the radiant April sky all clear of cloud. The raindrops twinkled on bare brown twigs where the buds of spring were just swelling to life, and the chimes of Calvary church pealed forth their jocund Easter summons. It seemed as if all Forrestdale were pouring in at the church doors into the fragrant interior, all abloom with lilies.

Polly Pat, Annette and Paul were seated in the rectory pew, for the twins were in the choir. Polly Pat

heard her little brothers' voices float pure and high over all the rest, as they led the white procession of choir boys up the central aisle to the chancel. The final alleluia pealed forth in a great volume of sound, sinking to silence before Blitzen's clear soprano soared upward in the first anthem, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast. Not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

"Neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness," the words kept repeating themselves over and over in Polly Pat's brain. "Everything is so glad to-day," she thought, "that I just feel as if something glad must be going to happen to Cap," and then, at last, as the choir boys sank into their seats, she saw her father's face—pale still, but with all worry, all strain mysteriously wiped from

it, leaving only a marvellous joy. In his voice all through the service there was a thrill of this same solemn joy that caught at the heartstrings of his hearers.

"The something glad has happened," thought Polly Pat, not knowing yet the secret of the little note that had been put into the rector's hand on entering church, nor did she know until her father came forward to the chancel steps to read the announcements. It was clear that he could not quite trust himself to speak, in so few bare words did he state the two facts:

"To some my first announcement may seem out of place at a religious service, but to my mind, my brethren, nothing of vital importance to a community should be regarded as alien or apart from the life of their church. I therefore announce that the strike at the Farwell factories is declared over, and that the mills will

resume work to-morrow. I am further requested by the vestry of this parish to announce to you that at a special meeting, held yesterday, Mr. John Noble was elected to the vacant office of junior warden of this church."

As the amen of the hymn died away, the bishop mounted the pulpit steps to preach the Easter sermon. The bishop's words were always those of a prophet, and yet the strange thing was that you always forgot them because you remembered only the bishop himself—the crown of white hair, the stooping shoulders, the thin old hands that trembled a little, the shining peace of his face and the heart of hope within him. To many it seemed that his last words held the secret of the bishop's very self—the broken body and the sorrow-crowded life, and over all the living soul, forever victoriously youthful—as he said: "My breth-

ren, in this world we sometimes think so sick and sad and sorry a place, it is hate alone that killeth; it is love that forever giveth life."

As the offertory anthem rang through the church, two men side by side took up the offering. Bearing the laden plates they went up the long aisle toward their minister, waiting. Squarely built they were both, tall and strong and heavy, stepping firmly side by side, shoulder to shoulder, as if they had been friends —Judge Farwell and John Noble. The light in their rector's eyes as he looked down toward them was all that they had planned and hoped for.

It seemed as if that whole congregation was bent on shaking hands with their minister and the bishop before they left the church. They surged out upon them as the two stood in the vestibule. On one side of the rector stood John Noble, and on the other Judge Farwell, and they

did not withdraw, but merely stood back as all the others came crowding up.

Polly Pat, with face so bright that her eyes were wet and shining and her lips trembling, found that she could not get near her father at this moment. Timothy Noble had found his way to her side, and Charles Farwell, holding Flo by the hand, was pressing toward her. It was in Charles Farwell's mind to give in and shake the rector's hand like the rest of them, and let him know by a word or two perhaps how he felt about that night—that night the rector had saved his father's life. But it was easier, somehow, to stop and talk to Polly Pat. To Miss Alison, quietly watching, it seemed that Polly Pat did not make the slightest difference in manner as she turned from one to the other, between Tim Noble and Charles Farwell.

Miss Alison, as she glanced from

Mr. Everitt to Polly Pat, was thinking of the change in the two faces since the day when she had first seen them, when father and daughter had stood together in the rectory doorway at her leaving. She remembered Polly Pat's parting words: "We do so want to do our best for Forrestdale." She remembered also: "Sixteen is grown-up, don't you truly think so?" Sixteen had not been grown-up then; was sixteen grown-up now?

Then Polly Pat saw Miss Alison and came to her, laying one hand on Miss Alison's arm, and with the other making a little gesture toward the group about the rector and the bishop. "Friends!" said Polly Pat. "Cap has done it, hasn't he?"

Just for a moment Miss Alison's eyes were dimmed as she looked into Polly Pat's shining face, and answered: "Yes, he has done it—with Polly Pat's help."