

THE OLD DOCTOR

THE old doctor, on his way home from Iron Springs, suddenly remembered the Pilgrims. He must run in and check them over, now that he happened to be in their neighborhood. There was sure to be something he could do for them, for the Pilgrim family lived in an atmosphere of sin, sickness and death. For ten years now, ever since the Pilgrim family had come to the vicinity of Mandonville, Dr. Laidlaw had ministered to them. He had ushered seven tiny Pilgrims into the world, and carried all but one of these through many infantile diseases; he had poulticed and lanced and dressed various portions of their anatomy, and set wrists and legs without number, for they were a brittle lot and fell downstairs, out of hay-mows, and into wells, and were stepped on and run over with alarming frequency.

When Mrs. Laidlaw accepted an invitation for herself and the doctor she often made their acceptance conditional on the good health of the Pilgrims. Even at church it was not an unusual sight to see an usher tiptoe up the aisle, guided by the doctor's bald head, and the congregation were pretty sure it betokened an upheaval of some kind at the home of John Pilgrim, though most of the alarms now came at night since they got their telephone.

And in all these ten years Dr. Laidlaw had not received a cent for his services, the elder Pilgrim believing that a doctor's services were included in his title of citizenship.