

THE PROBATIONER

salary numbered less than the pains she inflicted upon them.

One Sunday she came to church clad in a décolleté gown which she had fished from her dead mother's belongings, and so horrified the preacher that he broke down in his sermon. Another time she surreptitiously conveyed cigars into meeting and helped the boys to smoke them. She had played dancing tunes on the church organ after a Sabbath service, and offered the minister the loan of a yellow-backed novel. All these things and many others, with additions, subtractions, surmises, and suggestions, were poured into the young minister's ears by shrewd mothers of marriageable daughters, who also maintained that the things the girl had done were only a trifle less scandalous than those she had left undone. In view of which revelations the calm countenance the minister held at his first meeting covered a fair degree of nervousness.

The attendance was large at that meeting. On the school benches were crowded the settlers from twenty miles around — long, lean men, angular women, and young girls from whose tender bones hard work and harder fare had worn the flesh. In the latter, youth constituted the sole claim to beauty; and as the minister mentally compared their washed-