

you suppose for one minute that I ever intended to marry you? Never! And your conceit is intolerable to even think it. Oh, no, but you were so gullible, that I persuaded myself that I could coax a few thousand out of you—and then—Good-bye! You would have plenty of time to mourn the loss of a your money and mother and I would so much have enjoyed a trip to Europe and had a nice house to move into when we returned—but you have spoiled it all. You viper! How I despise you! Your polluted presence is contamination to the foulest leper! Your hideous countenance mocks mankind! Go, hide that distorted thing you call your face in the deepest woods, and bury your loathsome body where man's footprint was never seen; and when your dry bones have returned to the foul dust from which created, hope for forgiveness for ever having lived!"

With a look of disgust and covering her face with her hands, as if to shut out a sickening sight, Sarah fled from the room.

John Swift was a strong man, but for a time his reason left him. Twice he essayed to speak, but his lips refused to make a sound. One groan escaped him, drawing his very life with it, and he arose with a mortal wound.

posing dwelling of which the town could boast.

At first there was much speculation among the Puritan maidens as to whether he had a wife to take charge of such a grand place, or whether perhaps, some day one of them might not be invited to act as mistress. But Old John's forbidding looks never courted inquiry, and at last all conjectures ceased.

Jennie Dean was a Puritan maiden only by adoption, having been employed for several years in teaching the village school, and as her work previous to that time had been one of charity in seeking out and comforting the friendless, her heart at once recognized in Old John a subject for her ministrations, and each morning as she passed she greeted him kindly. For weeks he paid no attention whatever, to her salutation, but her smile was just as sweet and her words as cheery the next time, till at last Old John began to feel just a little ashamed of his part, and the next morning he jerked his head in a sort of half apologetic way when she spoke. This was later followed by the abbreviated morning greeting of which I told you at the beginning.

To no one else in the village was



Feeding the hungry.

He placed his hand on the door to let himself out, and but for his grip would have fallen. With trembling hands he opened the door and stepped into the street. Strangers in the town pitied the poor old man whose limbs seemed too feeble to support him, and even those to whom he had for years been a familiar figure, scarcely knew him, so sudden was the transformation.

From that day forward, no one in his native town ever saw his face again. Through closed doors he disposed of his household goods; placed the house itself in an agent's hands, and left forever the place which had given him birth, and likewise caused his death.

For months he floated around different towns, avoiding people as much as possible. His meals were served at unheard of hours, and his walks were taken at night; but as he always had plenty of money, and never quibbled about price, no one objected to his idiosyncrasies.

By and by this Nomadic life grew tiresome, and John selected an old Puritan town where the quaint customs of its people never jarred on his sensibilities, and there bought the most im-

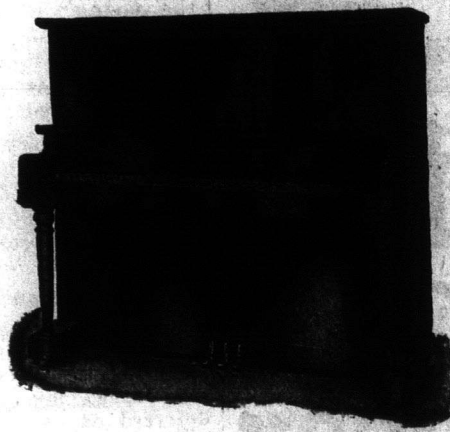
John ever known to have spoken a word. The few necessities which he required were ordered by post, and weekly checks by post also paid the bills. No one knew how he lived and few cared. Old John's solitary figure on his front porch was the only sign of life around the place.

One morning the chair was vacant. No one paid any attention to it or even noticed it except Jennie Dean, and the whole day her thoughts constantly wandered to the old recluse, and a heaviness seemed to oppress her. Her duties ended, she started at once for home, this time being careful to go by Old John's house, although she did not always return that way. But the chair was still vacant, and Jennie felt that all was not right. On the following morning when the old man was still absent from his accustomed haunt, Jennie could wait no longer, and she hurried straight to the pious parson and begged him to go at once to the house; but his piety was too saintly and of too high an order to risk besmirching it, or possibly being kicked out of a place that hitherto he had never sought to enter. Jennie with a feeling of contempt for so

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