

fore, and he had said, "I am going to walk home with you." Was it only the evening before? It seemed years, eternities ago.

Out in the wet a figure crouched in the darkness. The rain beat in its face and drenched the masses of silver hair. She saw the figure and walked straight toward it. "Father," she said, and laid her hand upon his arm.

But the figure broke away from her with a low, inarticulate cry. "Tell them—tell them all," it cried and rushed back through the stage door. Feeble tears ran down its withered face as it ran, still weakly wailing its piteous cry: "Tell them—tell them all."

And so running, stumbling on in the semi-darkness, blind and bewildered, it tripped and fell. Fell through black space—a trap carelessly left unclosed—into the blackness of the chaos beneath. But it was still muttering feebly when stalwart arms, bringing the poor bruised body up from below, laid it gently down. It stared, dazed and uncomprehending, into the horrified faces bending around, while in the gray background, grimly waiting, stood Death.

"Father," sobbed Cordelia. "Oh, father, father!" And, kneeling on the bare floor, she raised the poor white head to her breast. Then a light of recognition lit the dim eyes. He looked up with a painful, quivering smile. "Kiss me, Cordelia," he said, and pressed his lips to hers.

Then suddenly he pushed her face aside, pushed away her clinging arms and sat upright.

"You called my girl a thief," he cried. "Look at her! You might have known she was no thief. My Cordelia wouldn't steal to save her life. You might have known it was the good-for-nothing, worthless old sot you all called old King Lear, who has abused and well-nigh broken the heart of the sweetest, noblest daughter man ever had. You might have known. I stole the necklet and she'd take the shame to save her—father."

And with one last appealing look—a look that asked forgiveness for the wrongs of years—the old man fell back dead.

With a cry Cordelia flung herself across the body. "Oh, father, father!" she moaned; "don't leave me. You are all I have!"

"Cordelia!"

It was a very gentle, hushed voice—a very gentle hand, too—which fell upon her arm. There was no assurance in the old man's face now, and there were honest tears in the handsome eyes. And back of them, and shining for her and her alone, the light that makes the whole world beautiful.

"Cordelia," said the voice, low and tender, "may I take you home now?" And an instant later, tenderly drawing her from her prostrate position: "My darling, come!"

And slowly, still dazed and bewildered, with clinging, trembling hands and slow, uncertain steps, King Lear's daughter passed from the side of Death out into the night with Love.

The Peacemaker

By Bliss Perry

IF you turn to the right at the blacksmith's shop in Slab City, and keep straight on through the Hollow, you come out upon Church Hill. Ten years ago there were two white churches there, on opposite sides of the road. From the burying-ground of either one you could see four counties of Massachusetts and three of Vermont, while to the northeast Monadnock rested like a pale blue jewel upon the dark uplands of New Hampshire.

Church Hill, like Slab City, belonged politically to the township of South Broughton. Theoretically it was dedicated to the Lord. Practically, it was an oozy stamping-ground of the Devil.

The white churches were rivals. The squat tower of the First Congregational, on the north side of the road, was surmounted by a battlement; the tower of the Second Congregational, on the south side of the road, was a slender Moslem minaret; otherwise, there was no difference between the two structures. The horse-sheds in the rear of the Battlement were in somewhat better repairs but there were a few more Christian Endeavorers in the Minaret. The choirs were difficult of comparison, each being unique. The summer audiences were slightly larger under the Battlement, but the Minaret drew ahead in the winter—thanks to its Endeavorers. Down at Dakin's store, in Slab City, it was the general sentiment that the ministers were pretty evenly matched. "Not much git up 'n' git to either of 'em," declared Orrin Waterman, the stage driver, and indeed both pastors seemed permanently settled, for neither of them had ever had an opportunity to move away.

Dakin's store was a sort of chorus for the long drama of discord between Minaret and Battlement. Not one of the frequenters of the place could remember the beginning of the trouble, for it dated from the great Unitarian secession in the twenties. At that time the new-fangled heretics had managed to get control of the original church building, the Battlement, and the orthodox minority migrated across the road and built the Minaret. By and by the Unitarians were forced to sell out to the Baptists, and then the Baptists in turn grew fewer and fewer, until, just after the Civil War, the Hard Cider controversy split the orthodox congregation, and the seceding faction bought the old Battlement from the Baptists, journeyed back across the road, and called them-

selves First Congregationalists once more. Their tenets included the proposition that every man had a right to make and drink as much cider as he pleased. The Second Congregationalists thought otherwise. From this point on, every patron of Dakin's knew the story; how the south township could support just one church, and here were two; how the young people on both sides had made overtures which the stanch old people had rejected; how the young folks had then "got mad" until they were, if anything, more bitter than their elders; how old Deacon Holbrook had been tipped out of his wagon three times rather than give half the road to anybody in the First Church; in short, how the Devil's hoofs had stamped joyously up and down from Church Hill to Slab City and back again for many and many a year.

The man that felt worse over it was the man that said least, 'Gene Holbrook. For thirty years he had been sexton of the Minaret, and when his father, the old deacon, had been tipped out of the wagon once too often, Eugene was chosen deacon in his stead. The vote was a close one, for he was an insignificant old bachelor, with no gift of extemporaneous utterance, and he toed in most absurdly as he trudged back and forth between Slab City and Church Hill. "Not over bright," was the comment of the very school-children; "no great hand to farm it," the verdict of the community. Mr. Holbrook had a singularly square head, as if whittled from a child's block; restless gray eyes; and a broom-shaped, crimped, black beard, most scrupulously trimmed. His maiden sister Lois, who kept house for him, thought it a beautiful beard, though she never told him so.

Lois had voted for 'Gene as deacon, in open defiance of what people would say. She knew well enough that compared with their father's iron-willed loquacity, 'Gene's voice in church matters would have little weight. It proved to have none whatever. For two or three years after his election, indeed, he wearied both churches by his efforts to secure a union between them. He got himself dubbed "Union" Holbrook, but that was all, and, in fact, his conception of union was that the Battlement folks should give up their enter-

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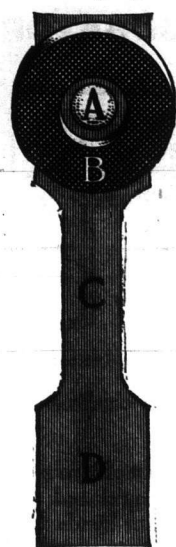
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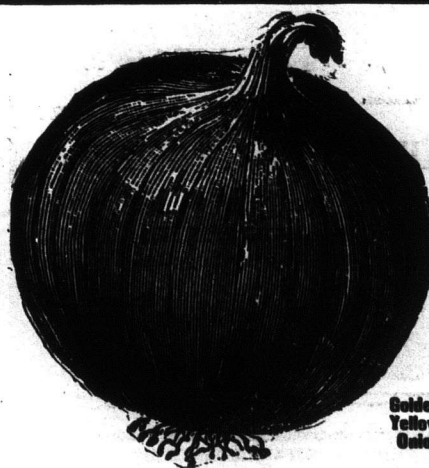
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