

"What, that acrobatic trick I spoke of? Really, Julia, I'm surprised—"

"No, you silly! I mean stopping short when you have spoken twenty minutes. I'll give you a signal. When you see me raise my handkerchief so, (*suiting the action to the word*), you've spoken long enough, so you can bring the sermon to a close as soon as possible without seeming too abrupt."

"That is an excellent idea, Julia," said Mr. Postlecreed, "and will save me a world of trouble."

"Very well then, that's understood," replied his better-half. "I'll give you the sign when to stop."

"Look here, Mrs. Postlecreed, a nice mess you've got me in with the church by your shameful conduct this morning. The people are wild with excitement. Didn't you notice the way they acted as we came out, staring at me and shaking their heads. I overheard old Mrs. Bulstrode say to her husband, as we came down the aisle, 'Why, its perfectly scandalous. Mr. Postlecreed didn't speak more than five minutes,' and the deacons and leading parishioners are holding a consultation in the vestibule, and the long and short of it is that they'll conclude that my usefulness is at an end. Five minutes—madam! Yes, five minutes—before I had fairly enlarged on Firstly. You and your handkerchief signal have ruined me—"

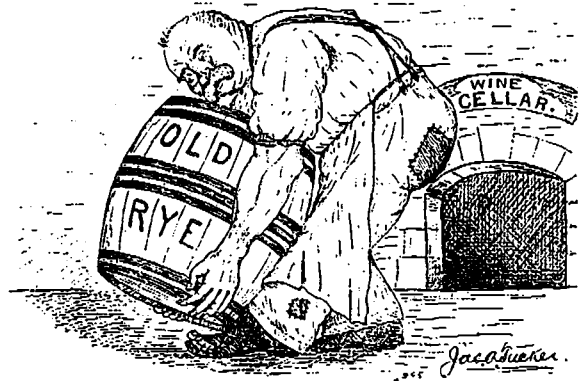


"But really, Pilgrim, I—"

"Oh don't explain, don't say you didn't mean to! Why, I made sure you must have made a mistake at first but you gave me the signal *twice*, so, of course, I supposed I must have been speaking long enough. What demon of malice prompted you, madam, to make a laughing-stock of your husband and create a scandal in the sanctuary by your ill-timed jest?"

"But, Pilgrim dear—"

"I am not angry with you, Julia, not carried away by passion, but simply sorry, very sorry, that you should so far have forgotten what is due to me as a preacher of the Gospel—what is due to yourself as my wife—as to deliberately plan to render me ridiculous in the eyes of the congregation—"



WRESTLING WITH THE SPIRIT.

"Pilgrim Postlecreed! Hear me half a minute. Was it my fault if I had a cold in the head? I couldn't help using my handkerchief, and never thought about the signal at the time."

"Well, all I can say is it is most unfortunate, and we may think ourselves lucky if I don't lose my position over it. To think that I sat down after preaching only five minutes," and the wretched minister groaned at the thought of the hideous anomaly which a five minute sermon presented to his mind.

Singular to relate, however, the congregation didn't view it in that way. A few of the elder members were scandalized, but the great majority regarded it as a desirable innovation. And public opinion crystallized so firmly in his favor during the week that his original intention of making a full confession and explanation was abandoned. The five minutes sermon was a nine days wonder, and all sorts of hypotheses were advanced to account for so extraordinary a departure from pulpit conventionalities. And to this day when the affair is recalled the gossips assert that the cause of Mr. Postlecreed's abbreviation of his discourse was the painful discovery that his wife was carrying on a handkerchief flirtation with a Toronto dry-goods drummer, which upset him so that he was unable to proceed.

ONE DEGREE ABOVE ZERO.

JEMIMA TO DAD—"I heerd Squire Jones say we was goin' to hev the Reverin' Joshua Markerley after next conference."

DAD TO JEMIMA—"Well, we jist ain't, Sissie; we can't afford to fall so fur behind our neighbors. At Poggsville and Sherk's Corners, and Spriggin's Creek, and Bloomington, and Doople's Bridge, and Mount Maria, they're promised D.D.'s., or L.L.D.'s., or Ph.D.'s., and we're bound to keep up. All them fellows that ain't doctor of something or 'nuther kin go out as missionaries to Quebec, or the Holy Land, or Manitoba."

IDENTITY.

(A LONG WAY AFTER T. B. ALDRICH.)

SOMEWHERE in desolate boom-swept space,
In suburb-land, in pasture-land,
Two Equities met face to face,
And bade each other stand.

"And art thou real," cried one agape,
"Or unsubstantial, vague like me?"
"I know not," said the Second Shape,
"For the mortgages are three."