

AT THE TIME APPOINTED

"Let our wedding be a fit consummation of our betrothal," she had said to him, "without publicity, unhampered by conventionalities, so it will always seem the sweeter and more sacred."

That evening found them all at The Pines, assembled on the veranda watching the sunset, the old home seeming wonderfully restful and peaceful to the returned travellers.

The years which had come and gone since Darrell first came to the Pines told heaviest on Mr. Underwood. His hair was nearly white and he had aged in many ways, appearing older than Mr. Britton, who was considerably his senior; but age had brought its compensations, for the stern, immobile face had softened and the deep-set eyes glowed with a kindly, beneficent light. Mr. Britton's hair was well silvered, but his face bore evidence of the great joy which had come into his life, and as his eyes rested upon his son he seemed to live anew in that glorious young life. To Mrs. Dean the years had brought only a few silver threads in the brown hair and an added serenity to the placid, unfurrowed brow. Calm and undemonstrative as ever, but with a smile of deep content, she sat in her accustomed place, her knitting-needles flashing and clicking with their old-time regularity. Duke, who had been left in Mr. Britton's care during Darrell's absence, occupied his old place on the top stair, but even his five years of added dignity could not restrain him from occasional demonstrations of joy at finding himself again at The Pines and with his beloved master and mistress.

As the twilight began to deepen Kate suggested that they go inside, and led the way, not to the family sitting-room, but to a spacious room on the eastern side, a room which had originally been intended as a library,