

tangled up so a chair wouldn't do. But you run along now an' play.'

'I know she wants it,' thought Norma, covering her hesitation by an onslaught upon a dandelion that had pushed its yellow disk through the matted grass. 'She wants that yarn just as much as I wanted to go for violets. If I'd really rather go in and hold it for her than go with the girls, that wouldn't be the same as doing it when I didn't want to.'

'I'm coming, Aunt Jane,' she announced, jumping up. 'I'd just as lieve. I just want to get you a bunch of cherry blossoms first.' And she darted across the grass at full speed, feeling as if she were borne on the wings of her new impulse.

It wasn't even very tiresome holding the yarn, though it was so badly tangled that it took a long time. Norma sat waving her extended arms now this way, now that, wondering dreamily how it would have been if she had gone off to the woods instead, the way she meant to. Father, mother, Will, Aunt Jane, even—she could see them all looking at her with stern or sorry eyes as she stared into the green haze that filtered through the lilac leaves pressed close against the south window.

'Are you tired, dearie?' asked Aunt Jane, looking up and smiling.

And suddenly all the other faces smiled, too; and the little room seemed pleasanter and sunnier than it was even out there on the grass under the cherry trees, and filled with the perfume of the white blossoms.

'It's sweet, isn't it?' said Norma.

'Yes, child,' said the old woman, smiling into the fresh up-turned face; 'it's spring.'—Helen Palmer in 'Congregationalist.'

'Beaton's Folly.'

(By Rev. John T. Faris, in the 'Christian Endeavor World'.)

'Good-by, David! Be sure you bring me good news to-night!'

David Beaton smilingly waved in recognition of his mother's injunction. But he did not feel much like smiling. He was starting for the city, where he had expected to call at the offices of the Alabama Railway, and make an application for appointment as and operator at some station.

For three years he had been a helper about the home station. Eager for work, and quick to learn, he had soon become familiar with all the duties, and had frequently taken Mr. Dunlap's place. In fact, Mr. Dunlap had told him a year before that he was entirely capable of running a station, and had offered to recommend him for appointment.

But David had been content to wait. He was only seventeen when Mr. Dunlap made his suggestion; and it had not then become necessary for him to go to work. There were only his invalid mother and himself in the family, and Mrs. Beaton had always enjoyed a sufficient income from a small property.

When, however, that property was swept away, David realized that he must become the breadwinner. Remembering Mr. Dunlap's offer, David asked him to write in his behalf to the general offices of the road. When two weeks passed without a reply, the young man determined to make his application in person.

At first he felt quite bold as he thought of the visit to the general manager. But now that he was actually about to begin his journey, he was not so sure of the outcome. What if the manager should tell him he was too young? What if he should be asked some questions too hard to be answered at once? What if—

But he squared his shoulders, and told himself to stop thinking of the lions which might prove to be in the road.

'Perhaps there'll be no trouble, after all. I'll do my best to look old and wise, and I'm sure I can answer any fair question. Anyway, I must have the position; what will mother do if I fail? She expects me to tell her some good news to-night, and I must not disappoint her.'

He was more than an hour too early at the railroad offices. But after tedious wait-

ing he found himself in the presence of Mr. Albright, the manager.

'You say there was a letter about you several weeks ago, Mr. Beaton?' was the response to his few sentences of explanation. 'Let me send for it. It must be on file in the other room.'

When the letter was brought, he glanced at it, and read a paper pinned to it.

'Yes, the letter came, and has been favorably considered. We had no station for you at the time, but instructions were given to let you have the refusal of the first suitable opening. But, to tell the truth,—and the general manager looked at his caller judicially,—aren't you a little young for such a responsible position?'

David was ready to urge the three years' experience, when Mr. Albright spoke again.

'Never mind that, though. I see here is another suggestion pinned to your applica-

great city. If the plans of the founders had been carried out, neither you nor I would ever have been appointed to this station. Twenty years ago an English syndicate was investing in the Alabama iron-mines. A railroad was surveyed from the mineral field to Zeno, here on the river. The town was laid out on a grand scale. Water-works and electric lights were put in. Three or four dozen houses were built. Then there was a big failure in England. The railroad did not get within a hundred miles of us; we have only a little spur of the Alabama, and one mixed train a day. The houses are many of them empty; the water-works have never been in use; the lighting plant has been dismantled. Some days I never sell a ticket. Nothing comes over the wires but railroad business, and very little of that. There is a small amount of freight to handle, and some mail to care for. The monthly reports are



THE 'PADUCAH' WAS AFIRE!

tion. 'Offer him Zeno City,' it reads. You are young, but I don't know but you'll do for our work there. It's a very small station. Yet it's the best we can offer you. The salary is thirty dollars a month. If you prove yourself faithful and willing, we'll have something better for you. What do you say, Mr. Beaton?'

Of course David agreed. The pay was small, but the fifteen dollars he could send his mother each month would be sufficient for her needs. Then he would not plan to stay at Zeno City many months. He would be so faithful and willing that promotion would speedily come. So he told his mother when he informed her of his appointment. So, also, he told the retiring agent at Zeno City when, next day, he had been duly 'checked in' for service.

The retiring agent laughed unpleasantly. 'There's no chance here for faithful and willing service. The G. M. said the same thing to me when he sent me down here. I've done the best I could; but there's nothing to do.'

Then he went on to explain.

'You see, Beaton, this was to have been a

farce. In fact, I don't see any use of keeping up the office, unless it is that the company has its eye on this field for future development. Anyhow, I am glad to be out of the place.'

They were walking through the freight-room as the retiring agent finished his narrative. A peculiar engine attracted David's attention.

'What's that for?' he asked.

'That's another relic,' was the explanation. 'When the station was built, it was expected that the Tennessee River would be a great feeder to the railroad. Many boats were run from here to Ohio and Mississippi river cities. The station is, as you see, on a high bluff. Freight was to be carried from the boats to the shipping-platform by means of a cable tramway. This engine operated it. You can see the tramway from outside. I'd open the door, but the lock is too badly rusted.'

'Do they never use the tramway, then?' David asked.

'Not in the year I've been here,' was the answer. 'When I came, they told me it would be a part of my work to keep the engine in