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A REMARKABLE IMPOSTER,

on

The Deacon's Mistake.

THE village in one of the shade of in which my boyhood and early youth were passed was and is a quiet agricultural centre of about one thousand population. It had the usual complement of country stores and inns, and a large and imposing academy. In the traveling season it was enlivened for an hour daily by the transit through its "Main Street" (and what city or village in the country has not that stereotyped name?) of passengers from the railroad depot to the steamboat; but for the most part it dozed amid the great events of the world, apart from its excitements and its bustling activity. Let it not be understood, however, that this place had nothing in particular to distinguish it from the Jonesvilles, Pottstowns and Smithburghs, in which those States are prolific. It was an old and historic place, celebrated in the annals of at least one of our wars; its situation on the bank of a great river, nestling under a mountainous elevation of tableland, was exceptionally romantic; it was embowered by trees of patriarchal growth; and among its people there was a goodly sprinkling of education, refinement and wealth, with some old and rather exclusive families to give a tone to its society. It was a place, in short, of such natural beauty and rural quiet as to make it the domicile of a number of that most envied class-they who live on the interest of their

In this community there were several churches; at least two more than could decently support a pastor. The largest of these societies, as well as the wealthiest, and one second to none in worldly respectability and religious character, had parted with its last shepherd some months before. A painful want of harmony had arisen in this flock; schisms had crept in, several members had been expelled, social breaches had consequently occurred, and the society had become divided, distracted, and powerless to accomplish Christian work. The church edifice had been permanently closed, and there seemed no immediate prospect of better things.

At this juncture a person arrived in the village bearing a letter of introduction to one of the deacons, which was duly presented, and out of which grew momentous consequences.

The bearer of this letter was a man of thirty-five or forty years of age, habited in listeners. The evening's sermon was in no black, but without the conventional white neckcloth of the ministry. He wore an amount of jewelry upon his person that seemed quite unclerical; but his general demeanor was grave and decorous, while his manners and address were those of the most courteous refinement. Personally he was rather undersized, quite spare, and church. They found no difficulty in acwith a face that at once denoted mental activity. It was certainly an attractive face, set off as it was with curly black hair and whiskers, illuminated by a pair of such brilliant eyes as is not often bestowed upon his sex, and embellished by a half-smile that was at once winning and habitual. The outside of this man, in short, was decidedly interesting, and provocative of inquiry as to who and what he was. Such at least, was the impression made upon the deacon, who politely invited his visitor to be seated | istry. while he mounted his spectacles and read the letter.

"The worthy man was instantly filled with a sense of awe and importance to find six months. Both church and people were timeelf addressed in writing as the dear taken by storm, if I may so phrase it, and respected brother of a doctor of divinity surrendered at discretion. The new minis-

resident of an Eastern city, whose name | ter was the lion of the town, the foremost may be here omitted, but who occupied the very highest place in learning, picty and influence in this denomination; one of those bright and shining lights known to all good Christians, but whose beamings our good deacon had never thought would rest particularly on him. Glancing with pleasure and pride upon a religious work by this very doctor that he had just been reading, the deacon proceeded to acquaint himself with the contents of the epistle. It was substantially as follows, barring date, address and superscription:

"I desire to present to you, in the bearer of this, the Rev. Albert Wynne, a clergyman of our denomination. For some years past in charge of one of the largest of our Eastern churches, he has been compelled by ill-health and an unfavorable climate to relinquish his charge and seek a more congenial atmosphere. His relations with his people were sundered with the utmost reluctance upon his part, and with the lasting regret of the whole society. He is a young man of extraordinary gifts, and, if Providence shalt spare his life, will become in a few years a priceless treasure to us all. Therefore I am personally solicitous as to the preservation of his health; and to this end I have recommended him to seek a charge in some quiet locality like yours. You may secure him for a time-and Hearn that you are without a pastor-and though his connection with you cannot, as you will understand from my premises, be lengthy, yet your people have cause to regard themselves as fortunate beyond other men in securing him at all. One caution, however; I charge you and your co-workers, as brethren in Christ, to guard his health assiduously. You must see to it that he takes sufficient physical exercise, and does not injure himself by overwork or study.

"As I am about to depart for an extended tour of duty at the South, and as the reputation of your people and yourself is well known to me, no answer to this will be necessary. I trust Brother Wynne to you with the assurance that all will be well."

This letter, of course, secured the reverend gentleman a hearty welcome at the hands of the deacon and his family, and he was most hospitably entertained. The deacon at once obtained the necessary concent that Mr. Wynne might preach the following Sabbath; but he was troubled and vexed to find that he could create very little interest in the matter among the people. The general feeling in the society was one of apathy and indifference, which even the letter of this distinguished doctor, widely as it was circulated, was not powerful enough to remove. The good deacon was restless, nervous, almost wretched. Notwithstanding his utmost exertions to create a furore in favor of the new-comer, he was conscious of having failed; and on Sunday morning, on the way to the place of meeting, he bunglingly stammered his fears and excuses to his guest.

"Pray don't be troubled, my dear brother," responded Mr. Wynne, with smiling suavity. "Let us see if I cannot advertise myself to this people to-day."

And advertise himself he did, most thoroughly. To the two dozen assembled in the morning he preached such a discourse as the old stones of that church had never before heard. It was fervid, earnest, eloquent, convincing in argument, powerful in diction, and so impressively delivered as to kindle enthusiasm in the dullest of his few hearers. The fame of this effort flew over the whole village during the day, and at night the church was crowded with curious way inferior to that of the morning; both the prayer and the preaching of this man, so different from all that these people had been accustomed to, wrought powerfully upon the minds of all present. On the follewing morning a committee waited on Mr. Wynne to secure him as a pastor of the complishing this object. In answer to the tender of a larger salary than the society had ever paid, made with apologies for its smallness, the minister reiterated the reasons which had led him to desire a change of location, as expressed in the introductory letter, and cordially accepted the charge offered him, expressing the hope that he might, by the blessing of God, be permitted to forward his work in this place. And he immediately entered upon his min-

I shall not attempt to detail minutely the history of Mr. Wynne's connection with this church and people for the next six months. Both church and people were

theme of public and private conversation, the observed of all observers. Everybody was enthusiastic in his praise; all were delighted with him, save the elders of other denominations, upon whose membership his pastorate threatened a heavy draft. His zeal was unbounded, out of the pulpit as well as in it. Not only did the fervor and charm of his preaching fill the church twice each Sabbath, thereby greatly augmenting its revenue, but his inquiry-meetings, earnest and stirring, were largely attended, and made important additions to the membership. He healed all the social differences in his flock; he investigated the cases of some who suffered expulsion, proved their errors venial or their penitence sincere, and accomplished their restoration; he lent his potent encouragement to aid societies, ever dear to the kind hearts of the matrons; he built up the languishing Sabbath school-in fact, he made himself effectually useful about everything that concerned the harmony and prosperity of this church and society. That he became immensely popular follows as a natural consequence from the above statements. Aside from the high favor that he enjoyed among the membership as a talented and devoted minister, his fascinating address and brilliant conversational powers made him the acknowledged leader, the facile princeps of the best society of the place. Beyond this, young men liked him because he was always companionable; the young women (could it be otherwise?) thought him as handsome as Hamlet on the stage, and not unlike the melancholy philosopher, while many of them sighed secretly at thought of him.

For six months or more all went swimmingly with Mr. Wynne and his people; and as he expressed a warm desire to extend his term of service here indefinitely, there seemed a good prospect that the connection might be a long and spiritually profitable one. Suddenly one weak audacious voice was lifted up against him. A journeyman tailor, a man of extensive reading, if humble occupation, heard one of Mr. Wynne's astonishing discourses one evening, and discovered that its language sounded strangely familiar to him. Returning home with the idea fresh in his mind, he took up a volume of Channing's published sermons, and there found the one he had just heard, word for word as Mr. Wynne had repeated it from the pulpit. The tailor made known his discovery, and created a little buzz of excitement and inquiry. The candid few who took the trouble to examine the proof of this clerical piracy were convinced, and denounced Mr. Wynne as an impostor; but the popula tide had been setting too long and too strong to be suddenly checked. As the minister indignantly denied the charge, most of his admirers were perfectly willing to dismiss it at once; others believed, or affected to believe, that it was merely a remarkable coincidence of language and ideas: and the insinuation was speedily hooted down, leaving a very small minority who believed in it.

A more dangerous rock than this, however soon after threatened the good fame of the minister. The deacon to whom his introductory letter happened to be addressed was very little of a letter-writer, and under ordinary circumstances the intimation with which this letter closed, concerning the doctor's proposed absence, would have been sufficient to prevent a response. But about this time the deacon had become so deeply impressed with the merits and talents of Mr. Wynne, and so grateful to the learned doctor for securing him to this place, that he wrote and posted to the latter a letter of awkward acknowledgment, briefly setting forth the great success of his protege in his new charge. A reply came promptly, and conveyed some rather startling intelligence. The doctor acknowledged the receipt of the deacon's letter, and emphatically repudiated the Rev. Albert Wynne. He had never before written to the deacon, he said, nor did he know any person, minister or otherwise, of the name given in his correspondent's letter. He had written no letter of introduction for a year; and he had not been, nor had he intended to be, absent from the city of his residence for more than a day at a time during that period.

The deacon felt as if struck by a thunderbolt. He seized his hat, and rushing to Mr. Wynne's study, threw the letter down before him, and anxiously, breathlessly, asked him to read it. The minister did read it, calmly and without change of countenance, and then musingly replied:

"Why, this is strange enough! What

can it mean ?"

"I don't know," the deacon said. "Don't von know?"

"There is some awkward blunder somewhere," replied the minister, taking a turn across the floor. "Doctor-not know me, indeed! He is my father in the ministry. I am inclined to think that this letter you have shown me is the mistake of his

"Perhaps so," said the deacon, catching at this awkward explanation with a sigh of

"I'm certain of it," cried the pastor, with animation. "Now don't say a word about this, my dear brother, and I will write at once to the doctor. I am confithat his answer will set everything right."

The too credulous deacon promised and return home, secretly rejoicing that his confidence in Mr. Wynne was unshaken. Had he at once made public the contents of this letter, the final catastrophe would have been averted; but with his blind faith in the wonderful pastor he held his peace, and only revealed his damning information when it was too late to prevent the mischief that this wolf in sheep's clothing was even then meditating. It is unnecessary to say that Mr. Wynne did not write to the

It has been said that Mr. Wynne was peculiarly a favorite with the young ladies of his flock. Several of them, indeed, had been up to this time successively the objects of his particular attention; and it was more than whispered that he had trifled with the affections of three or four of the village belies in a very cruel way, flitting from one to another, and engaging the hearts of all at the same time, like a professional lady-killer. Such reports, bowever, made but little headway against the strong current of popular favor; nor was this favor materially diminished when it became known that he was engaged to marry the young and beautiful daughter of a wealthy member of another denomination. The announcement created a great flutter, of course; some of the younger ladies indulged in bitter comments, which evidenced anything else than a lack of interest, and some of the matrons expressed the opinion that it was decidedly wrong in Mr. Wynne to look beyond his own flock for a wife; but the intelligence, on the whole, was well received, and the approaching union bade fair to establish Mr. Wynne more firmly than ever in the affection of the whole village.

The wedding-day drew near; and in the mean time certain impalpable rumors touching the fair fame of his proposed son- tiary before the expiration of his term; in-law reached the lady's father. Solicitous for his daughter's happiness, the parent | blighted irreparably by his villany. She gave them such investigation as they were capable of, and ascertained that they had no more substance than this, namely: that a few persons, confessedly hostile to Mr. in this dark episode only as a troubled Wynne, had said of him, first, that he did dream. not dress like a minister; second, that he wore too much jewelry for a minister; third, that he wrote three or four different hands; fourth, that he stole his sermons; fifth, that he had flirted with all the girls in the congregation; and therefore, taking all these things together, they believed he was a humbug, or something worse.

Attaching some little importance to this incongruous indictment, as he would probably not have done had he stood in ordinary relations with the subject of it, the father sought a private interview with the pastor, and laying these complaints before him, looked him fairly in the eye, and demanded to know if their was any good reason or any impediment to prevent the proposed union. And Mr. Wynne laughingly blew away the charges against him, as too puerile to call for a serious answer; and then looking his catechist squarely in the eye, and laying his hand on his heart, replied that there was no such reason or impediment, so help him Heaven.

The wedding took place at the appointed time, with all the imposing show, and all the hilarity that attends such occasions among the wealthy and aristocratic. The mansion was filled with guests, and was prodigal in its hospitality; the cariosity and interest excited by the occasion was gratified to see both bride and groom appear self-pessessed and happy, looking never so well; the ceremony was over, the dancing done, the feast had been duly honored, and the newly-made husband and wife had received farewell and godspeed thirty hours past-when the impending thunderbolt fell. The deacon, thoroughly awake to the wretched truth, rushed into the house of the late rejoicing with another leeter from the doctor that moment received. It denounced the man calling himself the Reverend Albert Wynne as a swindler

and an impostor; that he was not a minister of the gospel, although he had assumed in several places to be such, and that he had abandoned his wife and children in New Jersey two years before.

The scene that followed is indescribable. Passing over the emotions natural to such a distressing revelation, we turn to the pseudo pastor. Being apprised in some unaccountable manner, at the hotel in the city where the first pause in their journey was made, of the discovery of his villany and the pursuit of the father, he precipitately abandoned the poor confiding victim of his deception and fled. He was discovered some hours after on a railroad train, partially diiguised; and when asked by the officer wither he was going, he coolly replied that charges had been made against him which required him to defend himself, and that he was going East to investigate them. He was arrested, detained for a time, and then reluctantly discharged for lack of evidence.

But justice was not to be thus balked. The father, outraged by the villain's crime in his most precious relations, and now set himself systematically to work to fasten the clutches of the law firmly upon this man. While one set of detectives "shadowed" him from place to place, others went to New Jersey and procured the legal evidence of his former marriage, and the attendance of the deserted wife. In a few weeks the culprit was re-arrested and brought back to the scene of his illicit triumphs, now the scene of his disgrace; and under the unromatic name of James Hardy, the only one to which he could lay rightful claim, he was indicted, tried and convicted of bigamy, and sentenced to five year' imprisonment. The trial incidentally developed the fact that the accused was an expert forger as well as a veteran bigamist. It appeared that he had at least two wives living at the time of this last marriage, both of whom he had heartlessly descried; and that upon abandoning the second, in New Jersey, he had caused the notice of his death to be published in a distant paper, followed by the touching sentiment:

"Peaceful be his silent slumber."
In the cold and lonely grave."

Copies of this paper had been sent to his late residence. He had been traced through several places, in all of which he performed the role of a minister, as skillfully and as successfully, for the most part, as in the last scene of his labors.

It is somewhat of a relief to know that this adroit scoundrel died in the penitenand that the life of his last victim was not has since happily married, and in the relations of a loved and honored wife and mother, she may well remember her share

I have styled the career of this man a remarkable imposture. It may be said that neither bigamy nor the simulation of the clerical office is extremely rare among us, and that both are occasionaly detected in the same individual. After this is granted I must still claim that the real-life villain here presented was the peer in subtlety, andacity and unadulterated wickedness, of anything in human shape that even the genius of Wilkie Collins has put in print; and I am quite certain that Miss Braddon has introduced us to no more fascinating a gentleman among those of her characters who deserve gibbeting. I do not remember to have read of any of the black sheep of fiction who were possessed of that strong personal magnetism that made people of average common sense the unyielding adherents of this reprobate, and caused them to reject conclusive evidence of his imposition. I hope and believe that such dangerous gifts are charily bestowed on man-

Married Without Delay.

A young man in Columbia county, Ohio, courted a girl for a week. Knowing that prograstination is the thief of time, he got a can of oysters and a license, invited the justice to the fair one's house at eight o'clock, and then popped the question, was accepted, pulled out the document, and informed the maiden that the squire would be there at eight. She pleaded delay; he couldn't see it. Her silk dress wasn't made; calico would do. There was no stove in the west parlor; off coat, and in ten minutes there was a fire roaring. The squire came, the job was fixed, and the new-made wife cooked the oysters.

Without a regular occupation, no person, male or female, can preserve a sound mind in a sound body.