## THE SUBSTITUTE.

A Soldier Personates a Comrade to His Mother.

By MURIEL E. GRAY. 1910, by American Press Asso ciation.]

Among the young men who marched away to the Spanish-American war was Elmer Wilkinson, a boy of eight-een. His mother was an invalid and gradually losing her eyesight. When she bade goodby to her young soldier son she said.

Dear boy, this is the last time I shall ever see you, even if you re-

"Don't talk that way, mother," he Perhaps you'll see me with pair of straps on my shoulders."

But the soldier never returned. He died in a hospital of a fever, leaving a message for his mother and sister with his captain, Wendell Clifford, to deliver when he should return to the United States. Wilkinson's death occurred at the close of the war, and Clifford sailed north with his regiment only a week later. Therefore no news of Wilkinson's death reached his home until it was brought by his

captain.
When one morning Dora Wilkinson received Captain Clifford's card her first thought was to keep from her mother any bad news he might bring from her brother. Mrs. Wilkinson at the time was on the verge of nervous prostration, and Dora dared not impose upon her any further strain. Entering the room where Clifford was waiting, she closed the door behind her, then in a low voice asked for news of her brother. The word she received was not altogether unexpected, for she had been informed of his



"I'M GOING TO TELL MAMMA ON YOU."

illness, but it was nevertheless a great shock. Clifford comforted her as well as he could. As soon as she had made some recovery she told him that on no account should her mother at present learn of her son's death.

While they were conferring the door opened, and Dora's brother Harold, aged seven, came into the room. Dora was distressed at the was distressed at his appearance, fearing that he would tell his mother that an officer had called and she would expect news from her son. She exacted a promise from the boy that he would

say nothing about Captain Clifford, offering a large bribe if he kept it.

But Harold could no more know what was not to be told without telling it than he could keep candy in his pocket without eating it. Leaving the room, he went straight to his mother and told her there was a man down-stairs with brass buttons on his coat and a gold eagle on his cap. The first intimation of this to Dora was the

mother's voice from above, crying:
"My boy, my boy! Why don't you come up to your mother?"
Dora's heart sank within her. "Go to her," she said to Clifford. "She can't distinguish you from my brother. You'll have to let her think you are

"Coming, mother, dear," cried the captain cheerily. And he hastened upstairs, while Dora, seizing Harold, locked him in his playroom, then joined Clifford and her mother. She for him to rise to the occasion. found the old lady with her arms about Clifford, patting and caressing friend. I am more than that. him. Hearing a footstep, the mother

"Is that you, Dora?" "Yes, mother."

"Why should you have kept Elmer's arrival from me? Why didn't you bring him right up?"

"He had but just arrived," stammered Dora.
"We didn't like to give you too much

joy all at once," said the captain.

For the time being the matter worked well enough. Mrs. Wilkinson no-ticed only that her son's voice was deeper than it had been, but he told

her he had caught cold coming up on the transport. In order to get away from her he said he must report in camp at a certain hour. Going down stairs in company with Dora, they both stood for a few moments looking at

"This must end in disaster," said Dora ruefully "It can be kept up for some time,"

replied the captain reassuringly. "Not with Harold in the house." "You know I'm still in the service. I don't need to come very often to see

your mother."
"That's fortunate in one respect—in another unfortunate. She'll be worry-

ing all the while when you don't "I see. Well, call on me when you

"Thank you. I must think of some

way to break the matter to mother.
I'll talk with the doctor about it." The same day Harold was packed off to an aunt with a letter from Dora explaining the circumstances. Mrs. Wilkinson bore her supposed son's absence until her daughter thought that he had better come again. The doctor had said that the invalid must not at

present on any account be told of the deception and an occasional visit from

Clifford would be well. So Clifford was sent for. He came and went and came and went a number of times. Mrs. Wilkinson improved rapidly, hav Mrs. Wilkinson improved rapidly, having, as she supposed, her son with her
again, but the matter of broking to
her Elmer's death and the deception
that was being played upon her was
put off from time to time. Meanwhile she was consulting an oculist,
who told her that as soon as she had
recovered sufficient nerve vicor to recovered sufficient nerve vigor to submit to an operation he could re-store her eyesight. She told him that she wished the operation performed at

The position for Dora and Captain Clifford was becoming critical. Dora dreaded the consequences of her act of mistaken kindness on her own and her mother's account, and Clifford dreaded it through sympathy. The doctor would not permit them to make a confession before the operation since it would render Mrs. Wilkinson the less able to bear up under the

Meanwhile Harold escaped from his aunt and suddenly appeared at home. Captain Clifford would rather have encountered a regiment of Spaniards, and Dora would infinitely have preferred a mad bull. To make matters worse, Harold surprised the supposititious brother and sister by bursting unannounced into the room where they happened to be when he arrived. A common object, a secret sympathy, had done their work. Clifford was sitting beside Dora with his arm

around her waist.
"Oh, sis!" cried the boy. "I'm going to tell mamma on you."

Clifford caught him half way up the

staircase and brought him back. "How would you like to go to camp with me. Harold, and see the sol-diers?" asked the officer.

"Bully! Shall we go now?"

"Right away."
Seizing the boy's hand, the captain drew him to the front door.

"Keep him as long as you can," whispered Dora.
"May I drown him?" asked the cap-

tain in return. The case was too serious for even a smile from Dora, but she wished that the boy might be temporarily rendered Inanimate.

Clifford had Harold with him half a day when it occurred to him to take him back to his aunt. A telephone to Dora secured the address and her ac-

quiescence.

Dora made one grave mistake. She Dora made one grave mistake. She failed to inform the oculist of the all important secret. Mrs. Wikinson told him that she would like to surprise her son and daughter by having the operation performed without their knowledge and appear to them endowed with her natural eyesight. He fell in with her plan and assisted her to arrange matters, to that end. Mrs. to arrange matters to that end. Mrs. Wilkinson suggested that her supposed son and her daughter should visit Dora's grandmother, who had heard of the young soldier's return and was anxious to see him. Dora, realizing that she could explain matters to her grandmother, accepted the invitation for herself and Clifford. The visit was made and the grandmother let into the

As soon as the pair had gone on the visit Mrs. Wilkinson telephoned her oc-ulist, who sent a nurse and a carriage for her. She was driven to his office and an operation successfully perform-The patient's eyes were bound up and she was told not to take the band age off till the next afternoon. There she was sent back home in care of the nurse, who was to remain with her till the bandage was removed.

The next afternoon the surprise that had been planned by Mrs. Wilkinson was to take place. The couple that had gone on the visit were to return at 4 o'clock, and Mrs. Wilkinson was to take off the bandage upon their arrival. A few minutes before 4 it was removed, and when a carriage rolled up to the sidewalk Mrs. Wilkinson was near the front door ready to spring into her son's arms when he entered.

Suddenly the door was thrown open and the young officer and Dora enter ed Mrs. Wilkinson was about to spring into Clifford's arms when she eaw that he was not her son. She drew back.

"Why, mother!" exclaimed Dora, turning white.

"Who is this gentleman? I expected to see Elmer. I have submitted to an operation and can see quite well. I wished to surprise my boy."

Clifford saw that the time had come

"Madam," he said, "I am your son's friend. I am more than that. I am, I trust, to take your son's place, to love you and cherish you as your own boy would do were he here with us But he is not here. He died for his country and asked me on his deathbed to tell you that his last thoughts were one he loved best in all the

of the one let love best in all the world—his mother."

It was a sad ending to the poor woman's surprise. The blow, if not sof tened at the time, was rendered in the tened at the time, was rendered in the end more endurable by a devotion on the part of the young soldier to his friend's and his wife's mother that last ed until that mother was called to join her own son.

The Crush.

It was at an afternoon tea, with the usual musical accompaniment. The man's man had been literally dragged there, an unwilling victim, by a zealous friend who liked afternoon teas with a musical accompaniment. Needless to say, the zealous friend was a

The man's man was very unhappy. He had sulked and had positively re-fused to be introduced to the bevy of charming girls presiding at the tea tables, much to the chagrin of the ladles' man, who naturally couldn't un-derstand the attitude of the man's man. It was inexorable, from his point

of view. But a ray of hope glim-mered in his breast when the man's man rushed up to him, exclaiming: "I say, old fellow, introduce me to the fat lady sitting over in the corner, will you?"

eyes of the ladies' man glis-

With the greatest of pleasure," he cried. "Have you got a crush on her?"
"No," replied the man's man savagely. "I should say it was quite the other way. She's sitting on my hat!"—Philadelphia Ledger.

## A LOST ART.

It Restored a Child to the Home of Which He Had Been Robbed.

By ALBERT J. FORBES [Copyright, 1910, by American Press Association.]

While I was secretary of legation at Vienna, finding it necessary to see Count Czshardi, who was connected with the Austrian foreign office, on official business, I went to his country home, a couple of hours' ride from the capital. I found a mediaeval castle in excellent repair and standing in the center of a large tract of land. After driving more than a mile from the gateway I stood at last on the steps leading up to the main entrance of the castle. The outlook was charming. American though I am to the core, I thought that I would not object to have been born to the inheritance of such a place.

d the count a cold, formal man, though he treated me with distinguish ed consideration. He was unmarried and lived alone—that is, if one can be said to live alone who is surrounded by secretaries, attendants and servants. I conferred with him upon the matter of business that brought me to see him and dined with him, after which, pleading occupation, he turned me over to one of his secretaries, a young man about my own age. I was pleased at this, for I had dreaded passing an evening with a man who was repulsive to me from the moment I first saw him.

"Tell me something about this place I am sure there are many interesting incidents in its history," I said to the

secretary while we were smoking.

"There is nothing in its history more interesting to me than the recent change of ownership," he replied. "The count has only been in possession

lease tell me all about it." The last owner of the place and the title, of course, was Count Herbert Czshardi, a cousin of the present own-



THE WINDOW WAS OCCUPIED

er. He had only daughters to succeed him and, according to the Salic law, at his death all would pass to the male nearest of kin. When Count Herbert was sixty years old and his countess was nearly fifty they claimed that a son had been born to them. August Czshardi, the present count, being nearest male of kin, disputed the fact, claiming that a male newborn babe had been surreptitiously introduced in order to prevent the title from passing out of Count Herbert's family at his death. "That was twelve years ago. Ten

years ago Count Herbert died, and his cousin, August, instituted a suit in the courts for the possession of the title. He claimed that the babe, Franz, was not the son of Count Herbert and his wife Elizabeth, but of a peasant woman named Margaret Beck. The case passed through different courts, the countess always being the winner until fourteen months ago, when Mar garet Beck confessed that the child was hers and she had given it for a consideration to the count and countess. This put the present count in

possession."
"And what became of the boy?" 1

"The courts gave him to his real mother, Margaret Beck, with whom he is living as a peasant."

"After living until he was twelve years old as the heir to this estate?"
"Yes."

I questioned my informer as to many points of evidence in the case and, among others, the question of family likeness. He told me that the boy did not resemble either his father or mother or any of the pictures in the gallery of family portraits.

When I went up to my room to go to bed the secretary went with me to see that I had everything needful.

"This is not a guest chamber," he said. "The rooms used for guests are in the other wing. The rooms on this side were occupied by the last count. Count August does not use them. His own suits are now being decorated, so you are placed in here."

I am as impressible as a woman in making up my mind about such mat-ters as that which had been related to me, using instinct rather than evidence. The evidence may be false, but my instincts are natural. At any rate my instincts are natural. At any rate, I sympathized with this poor boy. Whether he was or was not the rightful heir, he had been brought up a

There is another womanly trait in me. I am timid in the dark. I don't look under the bed for burglars, but carry an electric hand lamp with me wherever I go.

That night I did not sleep well. I was thinking of the poor little fellow who had often doubtless played, perhaps slept, in this very room. He fate that awaited him and now was sleeping in a squalld room in a pea ant's hut. After lying awake till I ----

heard the clock in the tower strike 2 I got up, took my electric lamp and walked about the room. There were pictures on the wall, and I examined them by the light of my lamp. One, a picture of an open window, a darrested my attention before I went to bed from the fact that the artist had not put anything in the casemen Why he should have painted a win dow without some flowers or a birdcage or some one looking out of it ex-cited my curiosity. Fizshing my light upon this picture, I started with as-

tonishment. The window was occupied I was at first too much abserbed in the phenomenon to notice who was the occupant. I am not superstitious Indeed, I refer everything to a natural caree. It was no ghost looking at me. It was one who had been put there with some sort of paint that would only appear when illuminated by a certain kind of artificial light. Doubtless it required electric or simi lar rays.

the figure in the windowbeautiful boy of twelve, with thick locks tumbled over his head, a child's honest eyes, a mouth pursed up as children often do when interested— looked me straight in the face. My first thought was that he was the dispossessed lad. But, no. Little Franz was now twelve years old, and this boy could not be more than ten. In a corner my light revealed not the artist's name, but "Herbert David Paul Czshardi—1832."

It occurred to me at once that thus

was Count Herbert, the father of the

dispossessed boy.

It was near dawn before I fel. wieep, and 1 did not awaken till 9 the next morning. The picture of the window was directly opposite me. Though the sunlight was shining upon it, it was truly a window. Had I been dreaming? I thought not. Neverthe-less during the morning I shut out what light I was able from the room and examined the picture again with my lamp. The boy was there, but not

Before I left the castle I had figured out a possible solution to the case that had been, I believed, wrougly de-cided by the courts. In returning to Vienna I learned the whereabouts of both the countess and little Franz. The boy was living with his peasant mother, and the countess was living in a humble cottage near by. I went

first to see the boy.
Scarcely a feature was different from those belonging to the portrait.
Though 1 had nothing to gain or

lose by this discovery, I uttered an exclamation of delight. I had positive proof that little Franz was the son of Count Herbert Czshardi.

Count Herbert Czshardi.

From the boy I went to call upon
the countess. I explained to her that
I had passed a night at the castle in
which she had lived and asked her if which she had lived and asked her if she remembered the picture of the vacant window. She repfled that she did. It was there when she went there a bride. I asked if there was a picture extant of her husband when ten or eleven years old. Tears came into her eyes as she said:

"No, and there being none lost us our ease and turned we need boy out."

case and turned my poor boy out."

She listened with eagerness to my adventure in my bedchamber at the castle and fairly gasped for joy whea I had finished. She told me that her husband had had a faint remembrance of a Japanese artist coming to the castle when he was a little boy and painting his portrait, but the count was then too young to recall anything

The countess sent immediately for her attorney and told him my story. He disbelieved so remarkable a tale, but admitted that children are liable to show a likeness to either of their parents when the parent was at the same age as the child. The lawyer was obliged to resort to chicanery lest August Czshardi might destroy the picture. He obtained an order of the court for it and succeeded in getting it before Czshardi was aware that it was

of any importance.

I was present in the courtroom when, the case having been reopened. the picture was shown to the jury by daylight, then by electric rays, little Franz being present that they might see the likeness.

The case was won. I was invited to escort the countess and her son to the castle the day they returned to it and to be their guest as long as I would remain. Never shall I forget the delight, especially of the boy, at getting back to that with which he had been familiar since babyhood. The most touching scene of all was when he and his dog met in an embrace. The dog whined, and both tertainments at which the Declaration

cried for joy I was much interested to know how ic addresses delivered. Then there the picture could have been painted. was an automobile floral parade, the Different chemists tried to find out cars being descrated with flowers and the constituent that made it visible under certain light rays, but failed. In Japan there is a famous painting a portion of which is only seen in the dark, but it is known that phosphorus in the paint will produce this result. Why the picture that won the suit will appear only under electric rays is a question that has not yet been solv-ed. When it is we shall have a new discovery perhaps equal to the X ray.

Big Hats in Colonial Days.

The question of high hats at public places was of some moment, even in colonial days. In 1769 the church at Andover, Mass., put it to vote wheth er "the parish disapprove of the female sex sitting with their hats on in the meeting house in time of divine service as being indecent." In the town of Abington in 1775 it was voted that it was "an indecent way with the feminine sex to sit with their hats and bonnets on in worshiping God." Still another town voted that it was the "town's mind" that the women should take their bonnets off in meeting and hang them on the pegs.

An Egg Worth Cackling Over. Charles Ellis of North Plainfield, N., has a hen that laid a freak egg the other day, the like of which has never been seen in North Plainfield before. The egg was of the shape of a dumb-bell. The two bulbs were connected by a solid part. Each bulb was soft shelled. In one was the yolk, and in the other was the white.

Hewitt-You should make hay while the sun shines. Jewett-I can't if I stick to my business of making umbrellas .- New York Press.

The Crusade

## :=: For a :=: "Sane Fourth." \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Mayor Gaynor of New York forbid-ding the sale of fireworks, firecrackers, etc., from June 10 to July 10 and edicts atong the same lines by the authorities have started a nation wide movemen to make the Fourth

noiseless one. of the plans to bring this about is the forming of a national organization, the work of which will be to call to the attention of every community the long list of Independence day casualties caused by the use of explosives and in other ways induce them to confine the celebrations to parades, field sports, pyrotechnic displays safely and skillfully conducted, etc.

This matter of having what is called a "sane Fourth of July" has been agi-tated for several years, but not since it started have so many executives taken it up and expressed their ap-proval of the move as at present. President Taft has indorsed it and expressed his interest in it in a letter as follows:

"I am heartily in sympathy with the movement to rid the celebration of our country's natal day of those distress-ing accidents that might be avoided and are merely due to a recklessness against which the public protest can-

Last year, owing to the work of who are agitating the "sane



AFTER THE CELEBRATION.

Fourth" idea, there were fewer accidents than on any Independence day n some years, the statistics showing thirty deaths. This was an unusually small number, but in 1909 a number of cities had adopted the plan. Figures gathered show the number of people killed and maimed in the last seven successive observances of the national holiday was much greater than the combined losses of the Amerof the Revolution.

During the last five years the death list totals 1,153 and the list of injured 21,520. Of the injured, 88 were totally blinded, 389 partially blinded, 388 los legs, arms or hands and 1,067 lost fin gers. During the last seven years blank cartridges alone have gathered in a death harvest of 794, mostly boys between the ages of six and eighteen years.

"But, gee, ma, how kin us fellers show how we licked the British? mournfully asks the small boy of his mother when the matter is laid before

A way is being found all over the land. Here is how Washington cele-brated the Fourth last year: During of Independence was read and patriot flags, and many other affairs that delighted both young and old in the capital. At night there were many displays of fireworks, the abolition of which is no part of the program of those desiring a "sane Fourth." They want fireworks, but want them handled by experienced men so as to avoid accidents. Not one gunpowder accident was reported in Washington during the day, while on the Fourth of 1908 there were 104.

In the cities that adopted the "sane Fourth" plans last year and in those preparing to do so in 1910 the pageant idea predominates, with floats senting local historical scenes as as those of national interest. In Pitts burg over \$100,000 will be expended on the coming Fourth along these lines The historical and artistic displays now eing arranged promise to excel any thing of the kind ever before shown there. Besides the historical scenes other floats will show the city's indus trial greatness. Many excellent field sports have also been arranged to interest the boys.

The Tail of a Fish.

A fish's tail is its wings. Owing to the machinery of muscle set along its spine and to its cleaving form a trout or salmon can dart through the water at a tremendous pace, though its rap-id flights, unlike the bird's, are not long ones. It is soon tired. The water is not so friendly to flight as the air. The stroke of the fish's tail is one of great power, and by means of it and the writhing, snakelike flexion of the body a high speed is reached. The strength behind this speed is shown in the way a fish or sea mammal out of the ground or boat.

## THE CASE OF HOMER BYRD.

How a Man Was Made to See Himself as Others Saw Him.

By CLARISSA MACKIE. [Copyright, 1910, by American Press Association.]

The Village Improvement society had concluded a very interesting meeting and was regaling itself upon the dain-ties which the ladies had provided. Mrs. Wixom nodded her head vigor-

ously over her plate of ice cream. "Serves Homer Byrd right," she whis-pered hoarsely in her neighbor's ear. 'He don't deserve no light in front of his old place; most tumbledown old rat trap in Upper Village! The miserly old codger!"

"They say he spends a good deal of

money helping those who need it," said Esther Fray as she set down her cof-fee cup and turned a reddening face to the excited little group. "I heard that he helped old Jake King last winter when Jake broke his leg and""Just hear her talk!"

That same evening shortly after the Village Improvement society went into



HE SAT THERE ON A LITTLE IRON SEAT.
Ind STUDYING THE STATE SOCIAL SESSION ME. Homer Hyrd Wendle at his way through the moonlit night toward the graveyard that surrounded the church. In his arms he bore great sheafs of white lilacs, which he intended to place on his wife's grave. Scarcely a day passed that he did not visit the spot, and invariably he carried some floral offering.

And so it happened that as he knelt eside the green mound the harsh clack of voices in discussion issued from the lighted window of the church parlor, and as argument waxed heat-edly and the voices rose louder Homer Byrd was soon made acquainted with the various opinions which his townswomen held toward him.

He sat there on a little iron seat with his head bowed in the upturned palms of his hands. The moon mount ed toward the zenith. The members of the Improvement society noisily dispersed, and still he sat there in the sflent plot back of the church think

When he arose and shook back the his forehead there was a light of resolution in his thin face, a light that replaced the expression of dull derection to head characterized his long to the expression of dull derection to head the continued to be autify the second crounds with unabated ng lock of gray hair that fell over

eriod of grief for Mary Byrd.
"God forgive me! I have been a
oward! A coward I will be no longer!" The Homer Byrd place was a large, quare brown house set in a wilder-less of trees and shrubs. The weather ceaten roof showed through the bare branches in the winter, but when sum-mer came the house was invisible. The fence that surrounded the ample grounds was sagging from the rotten osts, and an air of neglect and decay haracterized the whole place. Within doors, where Homer Byrd oc-

cupied the south wing, it was bright and cheerful, but the remainder of the great house was closely shuttered and given over to mold and darkness. the funeral of Mary horses and other stock had been sold, the great barns closed, the poultry yards deserted, and the large, prosperous farm lay idle and useless, while the master shut himself and his grie

That was all until Homer Byrd

heard the opinions expressed by the Village Improvement society. The next morning Miss Harriet Paine declared the news that Homer Byrd had gone to the city, and Upper Village knew no more of its unworthy townsman until a fortnight had elapsed and he returned with two sharp look ing men who spent several days abou the Byrd place, measuring and figur-ing and talking earnestly together. Then they disappeared, and with one accord the curious element of the village fell upon old Rachel Mills, who "did" for Homer Byrd, and eagerly sought for knowledge of the strang

sought for knowledge of the strange proceedings.

"Fo' de lan', Mis' Paine, I dunno," protested old Rachel earnestly. "I arsked Mr. Homer, and all he sayed was: 'I's gwine ter have more light, Rachel. 'I 'spects I needs more light, and I'm gwine ter have ft!' Sich queer dured on mo haver!" doin's I never heard on-no, never!

The investigating committee ed that they never had heard of such folings either. And as time went on the wonder grew, for an army of work-men appeared as by magic to assist the few village artisans, and before long the Homer Byrd place began to assume its former handsome

"And they say," proceeded Harriet Paine volubly, addressing the assen ciety, "that the whole house has been done over. He's had the shutters open-ed and the carpets all took up, and most of them was mildewed and worththe way a nsu or sea manual out of the water will raise its tail and strike less. He's had the furniture all polished and the walls papered and new

floors are hard wood, and he's bought new rugs and lots of new things."

"Mr. Wixom says he's buying stock for the farm," remarked Mrs. Wixom

eagerly.
"Yes, and they say he's going to farm it again on the same scale as he did before. There's a lan'scape man a-fix-ing up the ground, and I guess it'll be the handsomest place in Upper Village now," continued Harriet enthusias. tically.

"Like as not he's going to be mar-ried," remarked Adeline Dare, voicing the unspoken thought of the other women.

"Who do you suppose is the one?" asked Mrs. Wixom curiously. The other women were silent.
"I don't know," remarked Adeline

spitefully, "but I guess I know several who ain't the one!" Miss Paine laughed scornfully. "It's

well for them who realize they ain't got no chance to up and say so."

The widow Dare flushed angrily and turned her little gray eyes upon her tormentor, "And there's them who ain't never had a chance and never will who don't never say die."

Esther Fray looked with distressed eyes upon the quarreling women. To

eyes upon the quarreling women. To her delicate sensibilities the coarse-ness of their arguments was like so many stinging blows, and she longed to escape to the quiet little cottage where she had lived alone for many years. The meeting had not adjourn-ed, however, and timid Esther dared not make the first move, which might attract attention to herself.

The irrepressible Miss Palne glared angrily at Adeline Dare and opened her thin lips to deliver a stinging retort, when Mrs. Wixom broke in has-

"Queer how he set to work all of a sudden, wasn't it? You remember that night we was all a-talking about it in the church parlor here, and the very next day Homer Byrd went to New York, and when he came back he had the men with him." "Sure enough and-I declare, I never

thought about it till this minute," said old Mrs. Smithers eagerly, "but John said when he come out of the meeting that night he went around to see if the back blinds was closed and there sat Homer Byrd on his little iron seat a-looking at the grave which he'd covered with white laylocks. John didn't nothing, but jest tiptoed back

"That seat is most under the church windows," volunteered Mrs. Wixon in a strained whisper.

There was no reply. The members of the little group which had occupied the corner by the window on that memorable night looked at one anothen furtivers 9 Esther Fray was won-dering with palpitating heart what she had said that might have betrayed the diffident interest she had always taken in the silent, grief stricken wan who had been the subject of discussion. She hoped none of the others would remember that she had arisen to defend him.

Miss Harriet Paine laughed harshly. "I'm willing to stand by what I've said about Homer Byrd," she said, with a reckless shrug of her shoulders. "I guess Esther here'll stand in his good

graces as well as anybody. She spoke right up for him."
"Oh, Esther ain't bothering about no men," interpolated Mrs. Wixom, with good natured appreciation of Esther's confusion. "We don't want her to either. If we lose our schoolteacher I don't know what the children will

To Esther's relief the meeting was called to order for another brief business session, and when it had finally adjourned she slipped out and away to her little cottage with a perturbation that was unusual. She wished that she had not opened her lips to defend

his house and grounds with unabated zeal. He worked early and late with the laborers and was here, there and everywhere. His bent shoulders straightened, his contracted chest broadened with the deep breaths of wholesome air that he inhaled, his eyes brightened and his step took on the elasticity of youth, for, after all, Homer Bytd was a young man in his forties, and when October came there was considerable bustle about the place when the scanty crops from the

late season's planting were garnered.
"It needs a tristress now," said
Homer Byrd, with a troubled look in his eyes, and that night he dressed himself with unusual care and went And he went calling nights thereafter, to the unabated interest of Upper Village. "So it was Esther Fray after all,"

gabbled Harriet Paine after the wedling was over and the happy pair had departed through the new gates, above which hung a cluster of electric lights. "and I expect Esther 'll be fool enough to go up with him and put flowers on Mary Byrd's grave, just as he's al-

in Upper Village that understood save Esther and Homer and Mary Byrd.



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