

Sinclair stood up, looking sternly at Crawley, and said:

"Mr. Crawley, this Committee say unanimously that you are guilty. Have you anything to say before sentence is pronounced?"

The wretched creature fell on his knees with tears and cries entreating mercy.

"Take him away," said Sinclair sternly. "Now, gentlemen, what have you to say? What shall be done to this man whom you have decided to be guilty of murder?"

The discussion which followed was long and bitter. Sinclair and those who had come more recently to the country were for handing him over to the police.

"What's the good of that, Sinclair?" demanded Macnamara, one of the old-timers.

"Well, he'll get justice sure; he'll get sent up."

"Don't know about that," said Ike. "You see, you can't prove anything but stealin', and you can't prove that, for sure. They'll take him down to Regina, and they aint going to give him much down there for stealin' a little grub."

"Well, what do you propose?" said Sinclair.

"Well," said Ike, "hangin's too good for him. He ought to be hung, but 'taint the custom in this here country, I understand, and I surmise we'd better scare the daylight out of him and give him twelve hours to get out."

After some further discussion Ike's proposition was accepted. That night four masked men took Crawley out of the room where he had been kept a prisoner

and led him out of the village and up the trail to the woods, and there, unheeding his prayers and cries and groans, they made solemn preparations for his execution. In the midst of their preparations Sinclair, with a number of others, came galloping up and demanded the prisoner's release, and after a long and bitter discussion it was finally agreed that Crawley should be given twelve hours to leave the country, which decision was joyfully and tearfully accepted by the terror-stricken wretch.

"Hello, old man, there's a letter for you in my rooms. Thought you'd be in to-day, so took care of it for you." Father Mike drew near Shock's buckboard and greeted him cordially. "By Jove! what's the matter with you? What have you been doing to yourself?" he exclaimed, looking keenly into Shock's face.

"I am rather seedy," said Shock. "Played out, indeed." And he gave Father Mike an account of his last week's experience.

"Great Caesar!" exclaimed Father Mike, "that was a close thing. Come right along and stretch yourself out of my couch. A cup of tea will do you good." Shock, gladly accepting the invitation, went with him.

"There's your letter," said Father Mike, as he set Shock in his deep armchair. "You read it while I make tea."

The letter was, as Father Mike had said, a fat one. It was from his Convener and ran thus:



"MY DEAR MR. MACGREGOR:

"The enclosed letter from the Superintendent will explain itself. You are instructed to withdraw forthwith your services from the Fort. I know you will be disappointed. This is the sort of thing that makes our work in the West depressing: not big blizzards nor small grants, but failure on the part of Eastern men to understand our needs and to appreciate the tremendous importance of these years to the West. Never mind, our day will come. I regret greatly that the Committee should have been influenced by the petition enclosed. Do not let this worry you. The Superintendent's P. S. is due to some misunderstanding. I have written him on this matter. We know some of your difficulties and we have every confidence in you," etc., etc.

From the Superintendent's letter the Convener had enclosed the following extracts:

"It has been decided to withdraw our services from the Fort. I had a stiff fight in the Committee, but failed; they were all against me. Dr. Macfarren especially so—had private information (from his brother, I suppose); presented a petition, which find enclosed; protested against the waste of funds, etc., etc. This precious petition, by the way, seemed to influence the Committee greatly. I need not tell you it failed to influence me, unless indeed as an evidence of the need of our services in that place. You and I have seen this sort of thing before in the West.

Young Lloyd of the Park Church, too, was eloquent in opposing—the old story, funds overlapping, denominational rivalry. These young men, who decline to face the frontier, would show better taste in seeking to learn something of the West than in hampering those who are giving their lives to this work. The upholstered seat of the Park Church pulpit does not induce the liveliest sympathy with the Western conditions. Meantime the Convener sits on the chest, and the rest of the Committee seem to feel that their chief duty lies in cutting down expenses and that the highest possible achievement is their meeting the Assembly without a deficit.

"P. S.—Dr. Macfarren hinted a good deal at want of tact on the part of our Missionary, and young Lloyd, who knows Macgregor, seemed to consider this quite possible. Our Missionary must not antagonise men unnecessarily. Send him this letter if you think well; I always like to deal frankly with our men," etc., etc.

As Shock read the letters and glanced at the petition his look of weariness passed away and the old scrimmage smile came back to his face. "Read that," he said, handing the letters to Father Mike, who read them in silence.

"Withdraw!" he exclaimed in astonishment when he had finished reading. "And why, pray?"

"Oh! don't you see, 'funds overlapping, denominational rivalry'?"

"'Overlapping, rivalry,' rot! You cannot do my



work here and I cannot do yours. I say, this petition would be rich if it were not so damnable," added Father Mike, glancing at the document. "Whereas, the town is amply supplied with church services there is no desire for services by the Presbyterians'—or by any others for that matter," interjected Father Mike. "Let us see who signs this blessed paper? Macfarren. He's a beautiful churchman. Inspector Haynes. What's he got to do with it? Frank, Smith, Crozier! Why, the thing is a farce! Not a man of them ever goes to church. 'Whereas, the Presbyterians are quite unable to assume any financial obligation in support of a minister.' Why, the whole outfit doesn't contribute a dollar a month. Isn't it preposterous, a beastly humbug! Who is this young whipper-snapper, Lloyd, pray?" Father Mike's tone was full of contempt.

Shock winced. His friend had touched the only place left raw by the letter. "He is a college friend of mine," he answered quickly. "A fine fellow and a great preacher."

"Oh!" replied Father Mike drily. "I beg pardon. Well, what will you do?"

"Withdraw," said Shock simply. "I haven't made it go, anyway."

"Rot!" said Father Mike, with great emphasis. "Macfarren doesn't want you, and possibly the Inspector shares in that feeling,—I guess you know why,—but you are needed in this town, and needed badly."

But Shock only replied: "I shall withdraw. I

have been rather a failure, I guess. Let's talk no more about it."

"All right, old chap," said Father Mike. "Come along to tea. I wish to Heaven there were more failures like you in the country."

Shock's last service at the Fort marked his emancipation as a preacher of the Gospel. Hitherto the presence of those whom he knew to be indifferent or contemptuously critical had wrought in him a self-consciousness that confused his thought, clogged his emotion, and hampered his speech. This night all was changed. The hall was full; the Inspector and his wife, with the men from the barracks, Macfarren and his followers, General Brady and his gracious, sweet-faced wife, were all there. Ike and The Kid—whose ranch lay halfway between the Lake and the Fort—had ridden in, and far back in the dim darkness of a corner sat the doctor. As Shock stood up and looked into the faces of the men before him and thought of their lives, lonely, tempted, frankly wicked, some of them far down in degradation, he forgot himself, his success, or his failure. What mattered that! How petty seemed now all his considerations for himself! Men were before him who by reason of sin were in sore need of help. He believed he had what they needed. How to give it to them, that was the question. With this feeling of sympathy and compassion, deepened and intensified by a poignant sense of failure, Shock stood up to deliver to them his last message. He would speak the truth to-night, and speak it he did, without a tinge of embarrassment



or fear. As his words began to flow he became conscious of a new strength, of a new freedom, and the joy of his new strength and freedom swept him along on a full tide of burning speech. He abandoned his notes, from which he had hitherto feared to be far separated; he left the desk, which had been to him a barricade for defence, and stood up before the people. His theme was the story of the leprous man who dared to come to the Great Healer in all the hideousness of his disease and who was straightway cleansed. After reading the words he stood facing them a few moments in silence and then, without any manner of introduction, he began:

"That's what you want, men. You need to be made clean, you need to be made strong." The people stared at him as if he had gone mad, it was so unlike his usual formal, awkward self. Quietly, but with intense and serious earnestness, he spoke to them of their sins, their drunken orgies, their awful profanity, their disregard of everything religious, their open vices and secret sins.

"Say," said Ike to The Kid, who sat next to him, "they'll be gettin' out their guns sure!" But there was no anger in the faces lifted up to the speaker; the matter was too serious for anger and the tone was too kindly for offence. Without hesitation Shock went on with his terribly relentless indictment of the men who sat before him. Then, with a swift change of tone and thought, he cried in a voice vibrating with compassion:

"And you cannot help it, men! The pity of it is,

you cannot help it! You cannot change your hearts; you love these things, you cannot shake them off, they have grown upon you and have become your fixed habits. Some of you have tried: I know you have had your periods of remorse and you have sought to escape, but you have failed."

He paused a moment, and then continued in a voice humble and remorseful:

"I have failed, too. I thought in my pride and my folly that I could help you, but I have failed. We have failed together, men—what then is before us?"

His voice took a deeper tone, his manner was earnestly respectful and tenderly sympathetic, as he set before them the Divine Man, so quick to sympathise, so ready and so powerful to help.

"He is the same to-night, men! Appeal to Him and He will respond as He did to this poor leprous man."

Over and over again he urged this upon them, heaping argument upon argument, seeking to persuade them that it was worth while making the attempt.

"Say, boss, seems reasonable, don't it, and easy, too?" said Ike to The Kid, who was listening with face pale and intent. The Kid nodded without moving his eager eyes from the speaker's face.

"But I can't just git the throw, quite," continued Ike, with a puzzled air.

"Hush, listen!" said The Kid sharply. Shock had paused abruptly. For a few moments he stood looking into the eyes of the men gaping back at him with such intense eagerness; then leaning forward a little he said in a voice low, but thrilling with emotion:



"Does any man here think his father or mother has forgotten him or does not care what happens to him?"

Shock was thinking of his own dear old mother, separated from him by so many leagues of empty prairie, but so near to him in love and sympathy.

"Does any man think so?" he repeated, "and do you think your Father in Heaven does not care? Oh! do not think so!" His voice rose in a cry of entreaty. The effect was tremendous.

"God in Heaven, help me!" cried The Kid to himself with a sob in his voice.

"Me too, boss," said Ike gravely, putting his hand on the other's knee.

Shock's farewell was as abrupt as his beginning. In a single sentence he informed them that the services would be discontinued at this end of the field. He wished he could have served them better; he knew he had failed; he asked their forgiveness as he had already asked it of his God; but, though he had failed, he commended them to Him who had never failed any man appealing to Him for help.

There was no hymn, but in a simple, short prayer the service was closed, and before the congregation had recovered from their amazement Shock had passed out through the back door.

"Well, I'll be blanked!" said Ike, with a gasp.

"Quit that, Ike," said The Kid sharply. "Look here—I am going to quit swearing right now, so help me."

"All right, boss, I'm with you; put it there."

Then above the hum of conversation General Brady's voice was heard:

"Gentlemen, it is my opinion that we have lost a great man to-night, a fearless man and a Christian gentleman."

"That's my entire prognostication, General," said Ike, with great emphasis.

Meantime Shock had gone searching through the hotels for the doctor, whom he had seen slipping out before the closing prayer. But the doctor was nowhere to be seen, and in despair Shock went to Father Mike. He found that gentleman in a state of enthusiastic excitement. "My dear fellow, my dear fellow," he exclaimed, "that was great!"

"What?" said Shock simply.

"That sermon, man. I would give my hand to preach like that."

"Preach?" said Shock. "I didn't preach. Did you see the doctor?"

"Never mind the doctor," said Father Mike.

"Come in, I want to talk with you; come in."

"No, I must see the doctor."

"Well, then, wait; I will go with you."

Shock hesitated. "I think I would rather go alone, if you don't mind," he said.

"All right, old chap," said Father Mike, "I understand. The door's always open and the kettle on."

"Thank you," said Shock. "You know how I appreciate that," and he went out.

There was a light in Macfarren's office. Shock



knocked at the door and went in. He found the doctor and Macfarren seated by a table, upon which were glasses and a bottle. The doctor was pale, nervous, shaking.

"Sit down, Mr. Macgregor," said Macfarren, with more cordiality than he had ever shown to Shock before. "I was just saying to the doctor that that was a fine discourse, a very able discourse, Mr. Macgregor."

Shock made no reply, but stood looking at the doctor.

"I would like to say," continued Macfarren, "that I regret your leaving us. I believe, on the whole, it is a mistake; we require preaching like that." There was a touch of real earnestness in Macfarren's tone.

"Mr. Macfarren," said Shock, "I am sorry I have not been able to help you. You need help, you need help badly. Jesus Christ can help you. Good-night." He took the doctor's arm and, helping him up, walked off with him.

"What do you want?" said the doctor fiercely, when they were outside.

"Doctor, I want your help. I feel weak."

"Weak! Great Heavens above! *You* talk of weakness? Don't mock me!"

"It is true, doctor; come along."

"Where are you going?" said the doctor.

"I don't know," said Shock. "Let us go to your office."

The doctor's office was a cheerless room, dusty, disordered, and comfortless. The doctor sat down

in a chair, laid his head on the table, and groaned. "It is no good, it is no good. I tried, I tried honestly. I prayed, I even hoped for a time—this is all gone! I broke my word, I betrayed my trust even to the dead. All is lost!"

"Doctor," said Shock quietly, "I wish that you would look at me and tell me what's the matter with me. I cannot eat, I cannot sleep, and yet I am weary. I feel weak and useless—cannot you help me?"

The doctor looked at him keenly. "You're not playing with me, are you? No, by Jove! you are not. You do look bad—let me look at you." His professional interest was aroused. He turned up the lamp and examined Shock thoroughly.

"What have you been doing? What's the cause of this thing?" he enquired, at length, as if he feared to ask.

Shock gave him an account of his ten days' experience in the mountains, sparing nothing. The doctor listened in an agony of self-reproach.

"It was my fault," he groaned, "it was all my fault."

"Not a word of that, doctor, please. It was not in your hands or in mine. The Lost River is lost, not by any man's fault, but by the will of God. Now, tell me, what do I need?"

"Nothing, nothing at all but rest and sleep. Rest for a week," said the doctor.

"Well, then," said Shock, "I want you to come and look after me for a week. I need you; you need me; we'll help each other."



"Oh, God! Oh, God!" groaned the doctor, "what is the use? You know there is no use."

"Doctor, I told you before that you are saying what is both false and foolish."

"I remember," said the doctor bitterly. "You spoke of common sense and honesty."

"Yes, and I say so again," replied Shock. "Common sense and honesty is what you need. Listen—I am not going to preach, I am done with that for to-night—but you know as well as I do that when a man faces the right way God is ready to back him up. It is common sense to bank on that, isn't it? Common sense, and nothing else. But I want to say this, you've got to be honest with God. You've not been fair. You say you've prayed——"

"God knows I have," said the doctor.

"Yes," said Shock, with a touch of scorn in his voice, "you've prayed, and then you went into the same old places and with the same old companions, and so you find yourself where you are to-night. You cannot cure any man of disease if he breaks every regulation you make when your back is turned. Give God a chance, that's all I ask. Be decently square with Him. There's lots of mystery in religion, but it is not there. Come along now, you are going home with me."

"No, sir," said the doctor decidedly. "I shall fight it out alone."

"Will you walk, or shall I carry you?" said Shock quietly.

The doctor gazed at him. "Oh, confound you!"

he cried, "I'll—— He stopped short and putting his face down upon the table again he burst into a storm of sobs and cried, "Oh, I am weak, I am weak, let me go, let me go, I am not worth it!"

Then Shock got down beside him, put his arm around his shoulder, and said: "I cannot let you go, doctor. I want you. And your Father in Heaven wants you. Come," he continued after a pause, "we'll win yet."

For half an hour they walked the streets and then turned into Father Mike's quarters.

"Father Mike," said Shock, opening the door, "we want coffee, and I'm hungrier than I've been for three days."

"Come in," said Father Mike, with a keen glance at the doctor, "come in, brother mine. You've earned your grub this day."