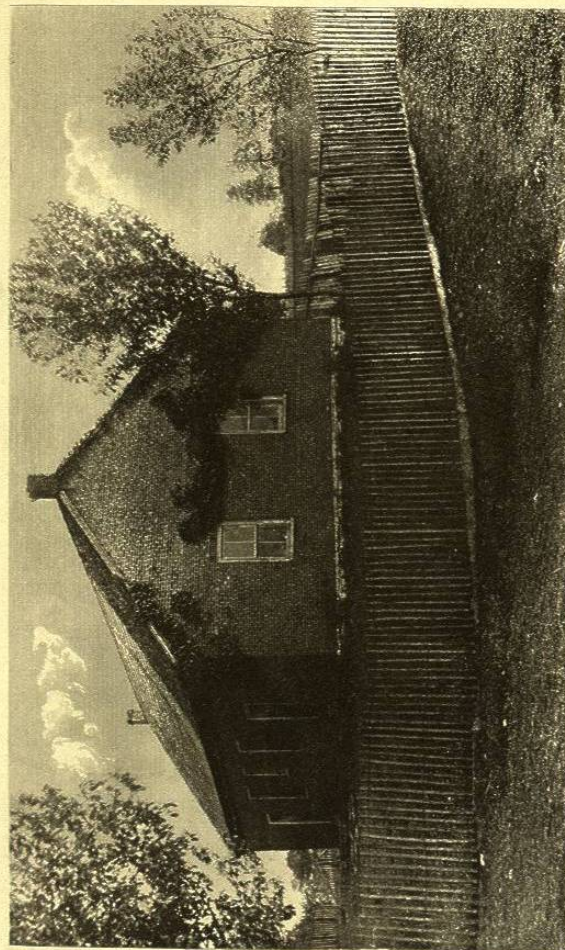


to plead for learning and religion was the one first set up in the Kentucky wilderness as a house of religious liberty; and the lad was a great-grandchild of the founder of that church, here emerging mysteriously from the depths of life four generations down the line.

### III

THE church which David's grim old Indian-fighting great-grandfather had dedicated to freedom of belief in the wilderness, cutting off a parcel of his lands as he had hotly sworn and building on it a schoolhouse also, stood some miles distant across the country. The vast estate of the pioneer had been cut to pieces for his many sons. With the next generation the law of partible inheritance had further subdivided each of these; so that in David's time a single small farm was all that had fallen to his father; and his father had never increased it. The church was situated on what had been the opposite



THAT FIRST HOUSE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN THE WESTERN WILDERNESS.

boundary of the original grant. But he with most of the other boys in the neighborhood had received his simple education in that school; and he had always gone to worship under that broad-minded roof, whatsoever the doctrines and dogmas haply preached.

These doctrines and dogmas of a truth were varied and conflicting enough; for the different flocks and herds of Protestant believers with their parti-colored guides had for over fifty years found the place a very convenient strip of spiritual pasture: one congregation now grazing there jealously and exclusively; afterwards another.

On this quiet bright Sunday morning in the summer of 1865, the building (a better than the original one, which had long before been destroyed by accidental burning) was overcrowded with farming folk, husbands and wives, of all denominations in the neighborhood, eager to hear the new plea, the new pleader. David's father and mother, intense sectarians and dully

pious souls, sat among them. He himself, on a rearmost bench, was wedged fast between two other lads of about his own age—they dumb with dread lest they should be sent away to this university.

The minister soon turned the course of his sermon to the one topic that was uppermost and bottommost in the minds of all.

He bade them understand now, if they had never realized it before, that from the entrance of educated men and women into the western wilderness, those real founders and builders of the great commonwealth, the dream of the Kentuckians had been the establishment of a broad, free institution of learning for their sons. He gave the history of the efforts and the failures to found such an institution, from the year 1780 to the beginning of the Civil War; next he showed how, during those few awful years, the slow precious accumulations of that preceding time had been scattered; books lost, apparatus ruined, the furniture of lecture rooms

destroyed, one college building burned, another seized and held as a hospital by the federal government; and he concluded with painting for them a vision of the real university which was now to arise at last, oldest, best passion of the people, measure of the height and breadth of the better times: knowing no North, no South, no latitude, creed, bias, or political end. In speaking of its magnificent new endowments, he dwelt upon the share contributed by the liberal-minded farmers of the state, to some of whom he was speaking: showing how, forgetful of the disappointments and failures of their fathers, they had poured out money by the thousands and tens of thousands, as soon as the idea was presented to them again—the rearing of a great institution by the people and for the people in their own land for the training of their sons, that they might not be sent away to New England or to Europe.

His closing words were solemn indeed; they related to the college of the Bible, where his own labors were to be performed.

For this, he declared, he pleaded not in the name of the new state, the new nation, but in the name of the Father. The work of this college was to be the preparation of young men for the Christian ministry, that they might go into all the world and preach the Gospel. One truth he bade them bear in mind: that this training was to be given without sectarian theology; that his brethren themselves represented a revolution among believers, having cast aside the dogmas of modern teachers, and taken, as the one infallible guide of their faith and practice, the Bible simply; so making it their sole work to bring all modern believers together into one church, and that one church the church of the apostles.

For this university, for this college of the Bible especially, he asked, then, the gift and consecration of their sons.

Toward dusk that day David's father and mother were sitting side by side on the steps of their front porch. Some neigh-

bors who had spent the afternoon with them were just gone. The two were talking over in low, confidential tones certain subjects discussed less frankly with their guests. These related to the sermon of the morning, to the university, to what boys in the neighborhood would probably be entered as students. Their neighbors had asked whether David would go. The father and mother had exchanged quick glances and made no reply. Something in the father's mind now lay like wormwood on the lips.

He sat leaning his head on his hand, his eyes on the ground, brooding, embittered.

"If I had only had a son to have been proud of!" he muttered. "It's of no use; he wouldn't go. It isn't in him to take an education."

"No," said the mother, comforting him resignedly, after a pause in which she seemed to be surveying the boy's whole life; "it's of no use; there never was much in David."

"Then he shall work!" cried the father,

striking his knee with clenched fist. "I'll see that he is kept at work."

Just then the lad came round from behind the house, walking rapidly. Since dinner he had been off somewhere, alone, having it out with himself, perhaps shrinking, most of all, from this first exposure to his parents. Such an ordeal is it for us to reveal what we really are to those who have known us longest and have never discovered us.

He walked quickly around and stood before them, pallid and shaking from head to foot.

"Father!" —

There was filial dutifulness in the voice, but what they had never heard from those lips — authority.

"I am going to the university, to the Bible College. It will be hard for you to spare me, I know, and I don't expect to go at once. But I shall begin my preparations, and as soon as it is possible I am going. I have felt that you and mother ought to know my decision at once."

As he stood before them in the dusk and saw on their countenances an incredible change of expression, he naturally mistook it, and spoke again with more authority.

"Don't say anything to me now, father! And don't oppose me when the time comes; it would be useless. Try to learn while I am getting ready to give your consent and to obtain mother's. That is all I have to say."

He turned quickly away and passed out of the yard gate toward the barn, for the evening feeding.

The father and mother followed his figure with their eyes, forgetting each other, as long as it remained in sight. If the flesh of their son had parted and dissolved away into nothingness, disclosing a hidden light within him like the evening star, shining close to their faces, they could scarce have been struck more speechless. But after a few moments they had adjusted themselves to this lofty annunciation. The mother, unmindful of what she had just said, began to recall

little incidents of the lad's life to show that this was what he was always meant to be. She loosened from her throat the breast-pin containing the hair of the three heads braided together, and drew her husband's attention to it with a smile. He, too, disregarding his disparagement of the few minutes previous, now began to admit with warmth how good a mind David had always had. He prophesied that at college he would outstrip the other boys from that neighborhood. This, in its way, was also fresh happiness to him; for, smarting under his poverty among rich neighbors, and fallen from the social rank to which he was actually entitled, he now welcomed the secondary joy which originates in the revenge men take upon each other through the superiority of their children.

One thing both agreed in: that this explained their son. He had certainly always needed an explanation. But no wonder; he was to be a minister. And who had a right to understand a minister? He was entitled to be peculiar.

When David came in to supper that night and took his seat, shame-faced, frowning and blinking at the candle-light, his father began to talk to him as he had never believed possible; and his mother, placing his coffee before him, let her hand rest on his shoulder.

He, long ahungred for their affection and finding it now when least expected, filled to the brim, choked at every morsel, got away as soon as he could into the sacred joy of the night. Ah, those thrilling hours when the young disciple, having for the first time confessed openly his love of the Divine, feels that the Divine returns his love and accepts his service!

#### IV

AUTUMN came, the university opened wide its harmonious doors, welcoming Youth and Peace.

All that day a lad, alone at his field work away off on the edge of the blue-grass lands, toiled as one listening to a