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***THE STORY
OF WAITSTILL
BAXTER***

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The Story of Waitstill Baxter

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE STORY OF WAITSTILL BAXTER

SPRING

I. SACO WATER

II. THE SISTERS

III. DEACON BAXTER'S WIVES

IV. SOMETHING OF A HERO

V. PATIENCE AND IMPATIENCE

VI. A KISS

VII. "WHAT DREAMS MAY COME"

SUMMER

VIII. THE JOINER'S SHOP

IX. CEPHAS SPEAKS

X. ON TORY HILL

XI. A JUNE SUNDAY

XII. THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

XIII. HAYING-TIME

XIV. UNCLE BART DISCOURSES

XV. IVORY'S MOTHER

XVI. LOCKED OUT

AUTUMN

XVII. A BRACE OF LOVERS

XVIII. A STATE O' MAINE PROPHET

XIX. AT THE BRICK STORE

XX. THE ROD THAT BLOSSOMED

XXI. LOIS BURIES HER DEAD

XXII. HARVEST-TIME

XXIII. AUNT ABBY'S WINDOW

XXIV. PHOEBE TRIUMPHS

XXV. LOVE'S YOUNG DREAMS

WINTER

XXVI. A WEDDING-RING

XXVII. THE CONFESSIONAL

XXVIII. PATTY IS SHOWN THE DOOR

XXIX. WAITSTILL SPEAKS HER MIND

XXX. A CLASH OF WILLS

XXXI. SENTRY DUTY

XXXII. THE HOUSE OF AARON

XXXIII. AARON'S ROD

"IVORY! IVORY!"

XXXIV. THE DEACON'S WATERLOO

XXXV. TWO HEAVENS

THE STORY OF WAITSTILL BAXTER

[Table of Contents](#)

SPRING

[Table of Contents](#)

I. SACO WATER

[Table of Contents](#)

FAR, far up, in the bosom of New Hampshire's granite hills, the Saco has its birth. As the mountain rill gathers strength it takes

“Through Bartlett's vales its tuneful way,
Or hides in Conway's fragrant brakes,
Retreating from the glare of day.”

Now it leaves the mountains and flows through “green Fryeburg's woods and farms.” In the course of its frequent turns and twists and bends, it meets with many another stream, and sends it, fuller and stronger, along its rejoicing way. When it has journeyed more than a hundred miles and

is nearing the ocean, it greets the Great Ossipee River and accepts its crystal tribute. Then, in its turn, the Little Ossipee joins forces, and the river, now a splendid stream, flows onward to Bonny Eagle, to Moderation and to Salmon Falls, where it dashes over the dam like a young Niagara and hurtles, in a foamy torrent, through the ragged defile cut between lofty banks of solid rock.

Widening out placidly for a moment's rest in the sunny reaches near Pleasant Point, it gathers itself for a new plunge at Union Falls, after which it speedily merges itself in the bay and is fresh water no more.

At one of the falls on the Saco, the two little hamlets of Edgewood and Riverboro nestle together at the bridge and make one village. The stream is a wonder of beauty just here; a mirror of placid loveliness above the dam, a tawny, roaring wonder at the fall, and a mad, white-flecked torrent as it dashes on its way to the ocean.

The river has seen strange sights in its time, though the history of these two tiny villages is quite unknown to the great world outside. They have been born, waxed strong, and fallen almost to decay while Saco Water has tumbled over the rocks and spent itself in its impetuous journey to the sea.

It remembers the yellow-moccasined Sokokis as they issued from the Indian Cellar and carried their birchen canoes along the wooded shore. It was in those years that the silver-skinned salmon leaped in its crystal depths; the otter and the beaver crept with sleek wet skins upon its shore; and the brown deer came down to quench his thirst

at its brink while at twilight the stealthy forms of bear and panther and wolf were mirrored in its glassy surface.

Time sped; men chained the river's turbulent forces and ordered it to grind at the mill. Then houses and barns appeared along its banks, bridges were built, orchards planted, forests changed into farms, white-painted meetinghouses gleamed through the trees and distant bells rang from their steeples on quiet Sunday mornings.

All at once myriads of great hewn logs vexed its downward course, slender logs linked together in long rafts, and huge logs drifting down singly or in pairs. Men appeared, running hither and thither like ants, and going through mysterious operations the reason for which the river could never guess: but the mill-wheels turned, the great saws buzzed, the smoke from tavern chimneys rose in the air, and the rattle and clatter of stage-coaches resounded along the road.

Now children paddled with bare feet in the river's sandy coves and shallows, and lovers sat on its alder-shaded banks and exchanged their vows just where the shuffling bear was wont to come down and drink.

The Saco could remember the "cold year," when there was a black frost every month of the twelve, and though almost all the corn along its shores shrivelled on the stalk, there were two farms where the vapor from the river saved the crops, and all the seed for the next season came from the favored spot, to be known as "Egypt" from that day henceforward.

Strange, complex things now began to happen, and the river played its own part in some of these, for there were

disastrous freshets, the sudden breaking-up of great jams of logs, and the drowning of men who were engulfed in the dark whirlpool below the rapids.

Caravans, with menageries of wild beasts, crossed the bridge now every year. An infuriated elephant lifted the side of the old Edgewood Tavern barn, and the wild laughter of the roistering rum-drinkers who were tantalizing the animals floated down to the river's edge. The roar of a lion, tearing and chewing the arm of one of the bystanders, and the cheers of the throng when a plucky captain of the local militia thrust a stake down the beast's throat,—these sounds displaced the former war-whoop of the Indians and the ring of the axe in the virgin forests along the shores.

There were days, and moonlight nights, too, when strange sights and sounds of quite another nature could have been noted by the river as it flowed under the bridge that united the two little villages.

Issuing from the door of the Riverboro Town House, and winding down the hill, through the long row of teams and carriages that lined the roadside, came a procession of singing men and singing women. Convinced of sin, but entranced with promised pardon; spiritually intoxicated by the glowing eloquence of the latter-day prophet they were worshipping, the band of "Cochranites" marched down the dusty road and across the bridge, dancing, swaying, waving handkerchiefs, and shouting hosannas.

God watched, and listened, knowing that there would be other prophets, true and false, in the days to come, and other processions following them; and the river watched and listened too, as it hurried on towards the sea with its story

of the present that was sometime to be the history of the past.

When Jacob Cochrane was leading his overwrought, ecstatic band across the river, Waitstill Baxter, then a child, was watching the strange, noisy company from the window of a little brick dwelling on the top of the Town-House Hill.

Her stepmother stood beside her with a young baby in her arms, but when she saw what held the gaze of the child she drew her away, saying: "We mustn't look, Waitstill; your father don't like it!"

"Who was the big man at the head, mother?"

"His name is Jacob Cochrane, but you mustn't think or talk about him; he is very wicked."

"He doesn't look any wickeder than the others," said the child. "Who was the man that fell down in the road, mother, and the woman that knelt and prayed over him? Why did he fall, and why did she pray, mother?"

"That was Master Aaron Boynton, the schoolmaster, and his wife. He only made believe to fall down, as the Cochranites do; the way they carry on is a disgrace to the village, and that's the reason your father won't let us look at them."

"I played with a nice boy over to Boynton's," mused the child.

"That was Ivory, their only child. He is a good little fellow, but his mother and father will spoil him with their crazy ways."

"I hope nothing will happen to him, for I love him," said the child gravely. "He showed me a humming-bird's nest, the first ever I saw, and the littlest!"

“Don't talk about loving him,” chided the woman. “If your father should hear you, he'd send you to bed without your porridge.”

“Father couldn't hear me, for I never speak when he's at home,” said grave little Waitstill. “And I'm used to going to bed without my porridge.”

II. THE SISTERS

[Table of Contents](#)

THE river was still running under the bridge, but the current of time had swept Jacob Cochrane out of sight, though not out of mind, for he had left here and there a disciple to preach his strange and uncertain doctrine. Waitstill, the child who never spoke in her father's presence, was a young woman now, the mistress of the house; the stepmother was dead, and the baby a girl of seventeen.

The brick cottage on the hilltop had grown only a little shabbier. Deacon Foxwell Baxter still slammed its door behind him every morning at seven o'clock and, without any such cheerful conventions as good-byes to his girls, walked down to the bridge to open his store.

The day, properly speaking, had opened when Waitstill and Patience had left their beds at dawn, built the fire, fed the hens and turkeys, and prepared the breakfast, while the Deacon was graining the horse and milking the cows. Such minor “chores” as carrying water from the well, splitting

kindling, chopping pine, or bringing wood into the kitchen, were left to Waitstill, who had a strong back, or, if she had not, had never been unwise enough to mention the fact in her father's presence. The almanac day, however, which opened with sunrise, had nothing to do with the real human day, which always began when Mr. Baxter slammed the door behind him, and reached its high noon of delight when he disappeared from view.

"He's opening the store shutters!" chanted Patience from the heights of a kitchen chair by the window. "Now he's taken his cane and beaten off the Boynton puppy that was sitting on the steps as usual,—I don't mean Ivory's dog" (here the girl gave a quick glance at her sister), "but Rodman's little yellow cur. Rodman must have come down to the bridge on some errand for Ivory. Isn't it odd, when that dog has all the other store steps to sit upon, he should choose father's, when every bone in his body must tell him how father hates him and the whole Boynton family."

"Father has no real cause that I ever heard of; but some dogs never know when they've had enough beating, nor some people either." said Waitstill, speaking from the pantry.

"Don't be gloomy when it's my birthday, Sis!—Now he's opened the door and kicked the cat! All is ready for business at the Baxter store."

"I wish you weren't quite so free with your tongue, Patty."

"Somebody must talk," retorted the girl, jumping down from the chair and shaking back her mop of red-gold curls. "I'll put this hateful, childish, round comb in and out just

once more, then it will disappear forever. This very afternoon up goes my hair!”

“You know it will be of no use unless you braid it very plainly and neatly. Father will take notice and make you smooth it down.”

“Father hasn't looked me square in the face for years; besides, my hair won't braid, and nothing can make it quite plain and neat, thank goodness! Let us be thankful for small mercies, as Jed Morrill said when the lightning struck his mother-in-law and skipped his wife.”

“Patty, I will not permit you to repeat those tavern stories; they are not seemly on the lips of a girl!” And Waitstill came out of the pantry with a shadow of disapproval in her eyes and in her voice.

Patty flung her arms round her sister tempestuously, and pulled out the waves of her hair so that it softened her face. —“I'll be good,” she said, “and oh, Waity! let's invent some sort of cheap happiness for to-day! I shall never be seventeen again and we have so many troubles! Let's put one of the cows in the horse's stall and see what will happen! Or let's spread up our beds with the head at the foot and put the chest of drawers on the other side of the room, or let's make candy! Do you think father would miss the molasses if we only use a cupful? Couldn't we strain the milk, but leave the churning and the dishes for an hour or two, just once? If you say 'yes' I can think of something wonderful to do!”

“What is it?” asked Waitstill, relenting at the sight of the girl's eager, roguish face.

“PIERCE MY EARS!” cried Patty. “Say you will!”

“Oh! Patty, Patty, I am afraid you are given over to vanity! I daren't let you wear eardrops without father's permission.”

“Why not? Lots of church members wear them, so it can't be a mortal sin. Father is against all adornments, but that's because he doesn't want to buy them. You've always said I should have your mother's coral pendants when I was old enough. Here I am, seventeen today, and Dr. Perry says I am already a well-favored young woman. I can pull my hair over my ears for a few days and when the holes are all made and healed, even father cannot make me fill them up again. Besides, I'll never wear the earrings at home!”

“Oh! my dear, my dear!” sighed Waitstill, with a half-sob in her voice. “If only I was wise enough to know how we could keep from these little deceits, yet have any liberty or comfort in life!”

“We can't! The Lord couldn't expect us to bear all that we bear,” exclaimed Patty, “without our trying once in a while to have a good time in our own way. We never do a thing that we are ashamed of, or that other girls don't do every day in the week; only our pleasures always have to be taken behind father's back. It's only me that's ever wrong, anyway, for you are always an angel. It's a burning shame and you only twenty-one yourself. I'll pierce your ears if you say so, and let you wear your own coral drops!”

“No, Patty; I've outgrown those longings years ago. When your mother died and left father and you and the house to me, my girlhood died, too, though I was only thirteen.”

“It was only your inside girlhood that died,” insisted Patty stoutly, “The outside is as fresh as the paint on Uncle

Barty's new ell. You've got the loveliest eyes and hair in Riverboro, and you know it; besides, Ivory Boynton would tell you so if you didn't. Come and bore my ears, there's a darling!"

"Ivory Boynton never speaks a word of my looks, nor a word that father and all the world mightn't hear." And Waitstill flushed.

"Then it's because he's shy and silent and has so many troubles of his own that he doesn't dare say anything. When my hair is once up and the coral pendants are swinging in my ears, I shall expect to hear something about MY looks, I can tell you. Waity, after all, though we never have what we want to eat, and never a decent dress to our backs, nor a young man to cross the threshold, I wouldn't change places with Ivory Boynton, would you?" Here Patty swept the hearth vigorously with a turkey wing and added a few corncobs to the fire.

Waitstill paused a moment in her task of bread-kneading. "Well," she answered critically, "at least we know where our father is."

"We do, indeed! We also know that he is thoroughly alive!"

"And though people do talk about him, they can't say the things they say of Master Aaron Boynton. I don't believe father would ever run away and desert us."

"I fear not," said Patty. "I wish the angels would put the idea into his head, though, of course, it wouldn't be the angels; they'd be above it. It would have to be the 'Old Driver,' as Jed Morrill calls the Evil One; but whoever did it, the result would be the same: we should be deserted, and

live happily ever after. Oh! to be deserted, and left with you alone on this hilltop, what joy it would be!"

Waitstill frowned, but did not interfere further with Patty's intemperate speech. She knew that she was simply serving as an escape-valve, and that after the steam was "let off" she would be more rational.

"Of course, we are motherless," continued Patty wistfully, "but poor Ivory is worse than motherless."

"No, not worse, Patty," said Waitstill, taking the bread-board and moving towards the closet. "Ivory loves his mother and she loves him, with all the mind she has left! She has the best blood of New England flowing in her veins, and I suppose it was a great come down for her to marry Aaron Boynton, clever and gifted though he was. Now Ivory has to protect her, poor, daft, innocent creature, and hide her away from the gossip of the village. He is surely the best of sons, Ivory Boynton!"

"She is a terrible care for him, and like to spoil his life," said Patty.

"There are cares that swell the heart and make it bigger and warmer, Patty, just as there are cares that shrivel it and leave it tired and cold. Love lightens Ivory's afflictions but that is something you and I have to do without, so it seems."

"I suppose little Rodman is some comfort to the Boyntons, even if he is only ten." Patty suggested.

"No doubt. He's a good little fellow, and though it's rather hard for Ivory to be burdened for these last five years with the support of a child who's no nearer kin than a cousin, still he's of use, minding Mrs. Boynton and the house when

Ivory's away. The school-teacher says he is wonderful at his books and likely to be a great credit to the Boyntons some day or other."

"You've forgot to name our one great blessing, Waity, and I believe, anyway, you're talking to keep my mind off the earrings!"

"You mean we've each other? No, Patty, I never forget that, day or night. 'Tis that makes me willing to bear any burden father chooses to put upon us.—Now the bread is set, but I don't believe I have the courage to put a needle into your tender flesh, Patty; I really don't."

"Nonsense! I've got the waxed silk all ready and chosen the right-sized needle and I'll promise not to jump or screech more than I can help. We'll make a tiny lead-pencil dot right in the middle of the lobe, then you place the needle on it, shut your eyes, and JAB HARD! I expect to faint, but when I 'come to,' we can decide which of us will pull the needle through to the other side. Probably it will be you, I'm such a coward. If it hurts dreadfully, I'll have only one pierced to-day and take the other to-morrow; and if it hurts very dreadfully, perhaps I'll go through life with one ear-ring. Aunt Abby Cole will say it's just odd enough to suit me!"

"You'll never go through life with one tongue at the rate you use it now," chided Waitstill, "for it will never last you. Come, we'll take the work-basket and go out in the barn where no one will see or hear us."

"Goody, goody! Come along!" and Patty clapped her hands in triumph. "Have you got the pencil and the needle and the waxed silk? Then bring the camphor bottle to revive

me, and the coral pendants, too, just to give me courage. Hurry up! It's ten o'clock. I was born at sun-rise, so I'm 'going on' eighteen and can't waste any time!"

III. DEACON BAXTER'S WIVES

[Table of Contents](#)

FOXWELL BAXTER was ordinarily called "Old Foxy" by the boys of the district, and also, it is to be feared, by the men gathered for evening conference at the various taverns, or at one of the rival village stores.

He had a small farm of fifteen or twenty acres, with a pasture, a wood lot, and a hay-field, but the principal source of his income came from trading. His sign bore the usual legend: "WEST INDIA GOODS AND GROCERIES," and probably the most profitable articles in his stock were rum, molasses, sugar, and tobacco; but there were chests of rice, tea, coffee, and spices, barrels of pork in brine, as well as piles of cotton and woolen cloth on the shelves above the counters. His shop window, seldom dusted or set in order, held a few clay pipes, some glass jars of peppermint or sassafras lozenges, black licorice, stick-candy, and sugar gooseberries. These dainties were seldom renewed, for it was only a very bold child, or one with an ungovernable appetite for sweets, who would have spent his penny at Foxy Baxter's store.

He was thought a sharp and shrewd trader, but his honesty was never questioned; indeed, the only trait in his character that ever came up for general discussion was his extraordinary, unbelievable, colossal meanness. This so eclipsed every other passion in the man, and loomed so bulkily and insistently in the foreground, that had he cherished a second vice no one would have observed it, and if he really did possess a casual virtue, it could scarcely have reared its head in such ugly company.

It might be said, to defend the fair name of the Church, that Mr. Baxter's deaconhood did not include very active service in the courts of the Lord. He had "experienced religion" at fifteen and made profession of his faith, but all well-brought-up boys and girls did the same in those days; their parents saw to that! If change of conviction or backsliding occurred later on, that was not their business! At the ripe age of twenty-five he was selected to fill a vacancy and became a deacon, thinking it might be good for trade, as it was, for some years. He was very active at the time of the "Cochrane craze," since any defence of the creed that included lively detective work and incessant spying on his neighbors was particularly in his line; but for many years now, though he had been regular in attendance at church, he had never officiated at communion, and his diaconal services had gradually lapsed into the passing of the contribution-box, a task of which he never wearied; it was such a keen pleasure to make other people yield their pennies for a good cause, without adding any of his own!

Deacon Baxter had now been a widower for some years and the community had almost relinquished the idea of his

seeking a fourth wife. This was a matter of some regret, for there was a general feeling that it would be a good thing for the Baxter girls to have some one to help with the housework and act as a buffer between them and their grim and irascible parent. As for the women of the village, they were mortified that the Deacon had been able to secure three wives, and refused to believe that the universe held anywhere a creature benighted enough to become his fourth.

The first, be it said, was a mere ignorant girl, and he a beardless youth of twenty, who may not have shown his true qualities so early in life. She bore him two sons, and it was a matter of comment at the time that she called them, respectively, Job and Moses, hoping that the endurance and meekness connected with these names might somehow help them in their future relations with their father. Pneumonia, coupled with profound discouragement, carried her off in a few years to make room for the second wife, Waitstill's mother, who was of different fibre and greatly his superior. She was a fine, handsome girl, the orphan daughter of up-country gentle-folks, who had died when she was eighteen, leaving her alone in the world and penniless.

Baxter, after a few days' acquaintance, drove into the dooryard of the house where she was a visitor and, showing her his two curly-headed boys, suddenly asked her to come and be their stepmother. She assented, partly because she had nothing else to do with her existence, so far as she could see, and also because she fell in love with the children at first sight and forgot, as girls will, that it was their father whom she was marrying.

She was as plucky and clever and spirited as she was handsome, and she made a brave fight of it with Foxy; long enough to bring a daughter into the world, to name her Waitstill, and start her a little way on her life journey,—then she, too, gave up the struggle and died. Typhoid fever it was, combined with complete loss of illusions, and a kind of despairing rage at having made so complete a failure of her existence.

The next year, Mr. Baxter, being unusually busy, offered a man a good young heifer if he would jog about the country a little and pick him up a housekeeper; a likely woman who would, if she proved energetic, economical, and amiable, be eventually raised to the proud position of his wife. If she was young, healthy, smart, tidy, capable, and a good manager, able to milk the cows, harness the horse, and make good butter, he would give a dollar and a half a week. The woman was found, and, incredible as it may seem, she said “yes” when the Deacon (whose ardor was kindled at having paid three months' wages) proposed a speedy marriage. The two boys by this time had reached the age of discretion, and one of them evinced the fact by promptly running away to parts unknown, never to be heard from afterwards; while the other, a reckless and unhappy lad, was drowned while running on the logs in the river. Old Foxy showed little outward sign of his loss, though he had brought the boys into the world solely with the view of having one of them work on the farm and the other in the store.

His third wife, the one originally secured for a housekeeper, bore him a girl, very much to his disgust, a girl named Patience, and great was Waitstill's delight at this

addition to the dull household. The mother was a timid, colorless, docile creature, but Patience nevertheless was a sparkling, bright-eyed baby, who speedily became the very centre of the universe to the older child. So the months and years wore on, drearily enough, until, when Patience was nine, the third Mrs. Baxter succumbed after the manner of her predecessors, and slipped away from a life that had grown intolerable. The trouble was diagnosed as "liver complaint," but scarcity of proper food, no new frocks or kind words, hard work, and continual bullying may possibly have been contributory causes. Dr. Perry thought so, for he had witnessed three most contented deaths in the Baxter house. The ladies were all members of the church and had presumably made their peace with God, but the good doctor fancied that their pleasure in joining the angels was mild compared with their relief at parting with the Deacon.

"I know I hadn't ought to put the care on you, Waitstill, and you only thirteen," poor Mrs. Baxter sighed, as the young girl was watching with her one night when the end seemed drawing near. "I've made out to live till now when Patience is old enough to dress herself and help round, but I'm all beat out and can't try any more."

"Do you mean I'm to take your place, be a mother to Patience, and keep house, and everything?" asked Waitstill quaveringly.

"I don't see but you'll have to, unless your father marries again. He'll never hire help, you know that!"

"I won't have another mother in this house," flashed the girl. "There's been three here and that's enough! If he brings anybody home, I'll take Patience and run away, as Job

did; or if he leaves me alone, I'll wash and iron and scrub and cook till Patience grows up, and then we'll go off together and hide somewhere. I'm fourteen; oh, mother, how soon could I be married and take Patience to live with me? Do you think anybody will ever want me?"

"Don't marry for a home, Waitstill! Your own mother did that, and so did I, and we were both punished for it! You've been a great help and I've had a sight of comfort out of the baby, but I wouldn't go through it again, not even for her! You're real smart and capable for your age and you've done your full share of the work every day, even when you were at school. You can get along all right."

"I don't know how I'm going to do everything alone," said the girl, forcing back her tears. "You've always made the brown bread, and mine will never suit father. I suppose I can wash, but don't know how to iron starched clothes, nor make pickles, and oh! I can never kill a rooster, mother, it's no use to ask me to! I'm not big enough to be the head of the family."

Mrs. Baxter turned her pale, tired face away from Waitstill's appealing eyes.

"I know," she said faintly. "I hate to leave you to bear the brunt alone, but I must!... Take good care of Patience and don't let her get into trouble.... You won't, will you?"

"I'll be careful," promised Waitstill, sobbing quietly; "I'll do my best."

"You've got more courage than ever I had; don't you s'pose you can stiffen up and defend yourself a little mite?... Your father'd ought to be opposed, for his own good... but I've never seen anybody that dared do it." Then, after a

pause, she said with a flash of spirit,—“Anyhow, Waitstill, he's your father after all. He's no blood relation of mine, and I can't stand him another day; that's the reason I'm willing to die.”

IV. SOMETHING OF A HERO

[Table of Contents](#)

IVORY BOYNTON lifted the bars that divided his land from the highroad and walked slowly toward the house. It was April, but there were still patches of snow here and there, fast melting under a drizzling rain. It was a gray world, a bleak, black-and-brown world, above and below. The sky was leaden; the road and the footpath were deep in a muddy ooze flecked with white. The tree-trunks, black, with bare branches, were lined against the gray sky; nevertheless, spring had been on the way for a week, and a few sunny days would bring the yearly miracle for which all hearts were longing.

Ivory was season-wise and his quick eye had caught many a sign as he walked through the woods from his schoolhouse. A new and different color haunted the tree-tops, and one had only to look closely at the elm buds to see that they were beginning to swell. Some fat robins had been sunning about in the school-yard at noon, and sparrows had been chirping and twittering on the fence-rails. Yes, the winter was over, and Ivory was glad, for it had

meant no coasting and skating and sleighing for him, but long walks in deep snow or slush; long evenings, good for study, but short days, and greater loneliness for his mother. He could see her now as he neared the house, standing in the open doorway, her hand shading her eyes, watching, always watching, for some one who never came.

“Spring is on the way, mother, but it isn't here yet, so don't stand there in the rain,” he called. “Look at the nosegay I gathered for you as I came through the woods. Here are pussy willows and red maple blossoms and Mayflowers, would you believe it?”

Lois Boynton took the handful of budding things and sniffed their fragrance.

“You're late to-night, Ivory,” she said. “Rod wanted his supper early so that he could go off to singing-school, but I kept something warm for you, and I'll make you a fresh cup of tea.”

Ivory went into the little shed room off the kitchen, changed his muddy boots for slippers, and made himself generally tidy; then he came back to the living-room bringing a pine knot which he flung on the fire, waking it to a brilliant flame.

“We can be as lavish as we like with the stumps now, mother, for spring is coming,” he said, as he sat down to his meal.

“I've been looking out more than usual this afternoon,” she replied. “There's hardly any snow left, and though the walking is so bad I've been rather expecting your father before night. You remember he said, when he went away in

January, that he should be back before the Mayflowers bloomed?"

It did not do any good to say: "Yes, mother, but the Mayflowers have bloomed ten times since father went away." He had tried that, gently and persistently when first her mind began to be confused from long grief and hurt love, stricken pride and sick suspense.

Instead of that, Ivory turned the subject cheerily, saying, "Well, we're sure of a good season, I think. There's been a grand snow-fall, and that, they say, is the poor man's manure. Rod and I will put in more corn and potatoes this year. I shan't have to work single-handed very long, for he is growing to be quite a farmer."

"Your father was very fond of green corn, but he never cared for potatoes," Mrs. Boynton said, vaguely, taking up her knitting. "I always had great pride in my cooking, but I could never get your father to relish my potatoes."

"Well, his son does, anyway," Ivory replied, helping himself plentifully from a dish that held one of his mother's best concoctions, potatoes minced fine and put together into the spider with thin bits of pork and all browned together.

"I saw the Baxter girls to-day, mother," he continued, not because he hoped she would give any heed to what he said, but from the sheer longing for companionship. "The Deacon drove off with Lawyer Wilson, who wanted him to give testimony in some case or other down in Milltown. The minute Patty saw him going up Saco Hill, she harnessed the old starved Baxter mare and the girls started over to the Lower Corner to see some friends. It seems it's Patty's

birthday and they were celebrating. I met them just as they were coming back and helped them lift the rickety wagon out of the mud; they were stuck in it up to the hubs of the wheels. I advised them to walk up the Town-House Hill if they ever expected to get the horse home."

"Town-House Hill!" said Ivory's mother, dropping her knitting. "That was where we had such wonderful meetings! Truly the Lord was present in our midst, and oh, Ivory! the visions we saw in that place when Jacob Cochrane first unfolded his gospel to us. Was ever such a man!"

"Probably not, mother," remarked Ivory dryly.

"You were speaking of the Baxters. I remember their home, and the little girl who used to stand in the gateway and watch when we came out of meeting. There was a baby, too; isn't there a Baxter baby, Ivory?"

"She didn't stay a baby; she is seventeen years old to-day, mother."

"You surprise me, but children do grow very fast. She had a strange name, but I cannot recall it."

"Her name is Patience, but nobody but her father calls her anything but Patty, which suits her much better."

"No, the name wasn't Patience, not the one I mean."

"The older sister is Waitstill, perhaps you mean her?"—and Ivory sat down by the fire with his book and his pipe.

"Waitstill! Waitstill! that is it! Such a beautiful name!"

"She's a beautiful girl."

"Waitstill! 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' 'Wait, I say, on the Lord and He will give thee the desires of thy heart.'—Those were wonderful days, when we were caught up out of the body and mingled freely in the spirit

world." Mrs. Boynton was now fully started on the topic that absorbed her mind and Ivory could do nothing but let her tell the story that she had told him a hundred times.

"I remember when first we heard Jacob Cochrane speak." (This was her usual way of beginning.) "Your father was a preacher, as you know, Ivory, but you will never know what a wonderful preacher he was. My grandfather, being a fine gentleman, and a governor, would not give his consent to my marriage, but I never regretted it, never! Your father saw Elder Cochrane at a revival meeting of the Free Will Baptists in Scarboro', and was much impressed with him. A few days later we went to the funeral of a child in the same neighborhood. No one who was there could ever forget it. The minister had made his long prayer when a man suddenly entered the room, came towards the coffin, and placed his hand on the child's forehead. The room, in an instant, was as still as the death that had called us together. The stranger was tall and of commanding presence; his eyes pierced our very hearts, and his marvellous voice penetrated to depths in our souls that had never been reached before."

"Was he a better speaker than my father?" asked Ivory, who dreaded his mother's hours of complete silence even more than her periods of reminiscence.

"He spoke as if the Lord of Hosts had given him inspiration; as if the angels were pouring words into his mouth just for him to utter," replied Mrs. Boynton. "Your father was spell-bound, and I only less so. When he ceased speaking, the child's mother crossed the room, and swaying to and fro, fell at his feet, sobbing and wailing and imploring

God to forgive her sins. They carried her upstairs, and when we looked about after the confusion and excitement the stranger had vanished. But we found him again! As Elder Cochrane said: 'The prophet of the Lord can never be hid; no darkness is thick enough to cover him!' There was a six weeks' revival meeting in North Saco where three hundred souls were converted, and your father and I were among them. We had fancied ourselves true believers for years, but Jacob Cochrane unstopped our ears so that we could hear the truths revealed to him by the Almighty!—It was all so simple and easy at the beginning, but it grew hard and grievous afterward; hard to keep the path, I mean. I never quite knew whether God was angry with me for backsliding at the end, but I could not always accept the revelations that Elder Cochrane and your father had!"

Lois Boynton's hands were now quietly folded over the knitting that lay forgotten in her lap, but her low, thrilling voice had a note in it that did not belong wholly to earth.

There was a long silence; one of many long silences at the Boynton fireside, broken only by the ticking of the clock, the purring of the cat, and the clicking of Mrs. Boynton's needles, as, her paroxysm of reminiscence over, she knitted ceaselessly, with her eyes on the window or the door.

"It's about time for Rod to be coming back, isn't it?" asked Ivory.

"He ought to be here soon, but perhaps he is gone for good; it may be that he thinks he has made us a long enough visit. I don't know whether your father will like the boy when he comes home. He never did fancy company in the house."