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## DAVE'S OLD FRIENDS.

Mr. David Dunham came into the village to hunt up his kith and kin. He was Mr. David Dunham now, with a new suit on and money in his pocket; whereas the thriftless, barefoot youth who had tramped out of town by this road eight years ago, whistling, and with his hands in his pockets, had been recognized a long through the village as "I've," which cognomen expressed in brief his social position and advantages. Yet those who had known the care-free sunburned lad might have discovered traces of him still in the frank gray eye and easy bearing of the stranger.

It was Main street up which he was sauntering. It was bordered as of old by a hem of emerald grass, nibbled close by an occasional stray cow or wandering goat. It was speckled breezily with sunshine and shadow from the over-arching trees, which sheltered the comfortable well-to-do mansions.

Dave, as I have said, had disappeared down that respectable street years ago, with an old straw hat on his head and whistling a snatch of a song. He came back, whistling still, with a new hat, and a few gray hairs streaking the black locks beneath it and perhaps that was all the difference. He thought so. How could he be so signally changed when everything here was so like that he remembered?

Beyond this he recollected, was a trading street, a thrifty avenue, with shops little and big, where country wares, plows, brooms, queen's-ware, silk dresses, and ribbons were sold from opposite counters, and trade was varied and brisk; there was the old coffin shop, and the beer-house with the overflowing glass but yet empty on the creaking sign before it. And after a spell of business the little street meandered off in the direction of the sea-shore, and forgot its calling, wandering along the pebbly beach in sight of far-off sails and smoky distances. Down there under the cliffs the old scow used to swing in the shallows—the old scow in which he used to go paddling about with Hannah—Hannah who never shirked work, and always helped him to bail out. He wanted to see her and "the girls," her prudent elder sisters who were wont to anathematize her when she came home, barefoot and muddy, with her blue apron full of clams.

David had seen many changes since he lived up in that old red farm-house with the old farmer and his wife, the torment of the girls and the comrade of Hannah. He had wintered up in the pine-woods, far up in the solitudes of Maine, floating down with the men on rafts when the spring freshets came. He knew the sap and freedom of primitive life and once he had been nearly wrecked on the rapids; but he always remembered the old water-logged craft and the little girl in the check apron—black-eyed, pock-marked, and agile—who had paddled about in it with him. Did such girls ever grow to be women? he wondered. He tried to make a situation in his mind that suited Hannah, but she didn't suit the situation. Impossible to imagine the quaint, willful little thing settle down into the ordinary avocations of women. He must wait—wait till he got to the old farm-house.

The tide was coming in, and there was a familiar smell of salt air and shell-fish all about the place as he approached.

But the old red house was shut up; no smoke issued from the chimney, no sign of life was visible in window or doorway. A lovely ash tree near the fence turned up its changeful leaves mockingly as if old; a solitary bird, startled by his

footsteps, winged its way from the branches.

"This does look like change!" muttered Mr. David to himself, eyeing the weed-grown garden lingeringly. What spell could have fallen on the old busy life that kept the place astir?

"Must have moved," he concluded, as he went down the hill to the road below.

At that moment the village school broke up, and out burst a orinocopia of youngsters, shouting and flying along the road.

"My lad," said Mr. David, catching at one of the hindmost as he scudded past, "can you tell me where old Farmer Nichols has moved to?"

The boy eyed the stranger with rustic shyness, wriggling himself from the detaining hand. It was vexatious to be stopped in that way.

"Guess you haven't been long in these parts," he said, giving his hat a knowing thrust on one side.

"No, not long. Where has the old man gone?"

"To the berrin-ground, I reckon," said the boy, viciously, unable to resist the jest. "Old Sexton Simms 'll tell you where," he added, looking back as he sped after his comrades.

Old Sexton Simms had been a village institution in David's young days. No change had overtaken him, it seemed. A thin and wrinkled little man, bloodless as a last year's mosquito, he pondered the stranger's face with a wise and side-wise glance, as though studying an illegible inscription.

"Shouldn't 'a knowed you no more'n the dead," he cried, when Mr. David mentioned his name; "though I *did* think, soon's ever I set eyes on ye, you must be some one or nuther. The old folks? Oh yes, the old folks? Oh yes, the old folks is gone, both on 'em; died within six months of each other, over three year ago come next spring. The old place has been in limbo ever since."

"And the girls?"

"Married and settled—leastways Jane and Betsey. Jane's done first-rate—first-rate. She's Squire Johnson's wife, up there in the big house yonder. And Betsey, she always was a sharp one, I thought, but somehow or another her husband isn't a bit forehanded."

"And Hannah?" was on David's lips, but an old customer came in and absorbed the sexton's attention.

David concluded to make his way to Squire Johnson's.

At the moment of coming to this conclusion a few big drops fell ominously from a hot and thunderous sky, but the white house was just in sight, and he made a bee-line for it. The shower increased to a flood, but there was no shelter midway, and he hurried on.

At the gate of the mansion stood a gig, from which a stout lady at that moment descending dubiously, tucking up her raiment and preparing to make a run for the house. She eyed sharply the stranger standing there under the dripping umbrella.

Mr. David held open the gate "Jane?" he said, stepping forward and offering the shelter of the umbrella. "I've been eight years coming, but have just arrived in time, you see!"

"I a!" said the lady, starting back. She still retained the sharp, incisive voice he remembered, surviving over all these years, though the former Jane was vanished utterly, crowded out by a matronly figure in flowing skirts.

David's brown, bearded face bore a boyish smile as he spoke, and perhaps that helped Mrs. Johnson's memory.

She had to accept the umbrella, and consequently the escort; but



LIGHT HOUSE, YAQUINA BAY, OREGON.

she hesitated at the doorway, looked down at David's boots, and wiped her own significantly as she glanced at the blazing Brussels that ornamented her parlor.

Mr. David repeated the process patiently; she could not help asking him in. Jane was pious and patronizing—a well-to-do woman. David had been a troublesome lad, to be sure; but that one must let some things pass.

He staid till the shower was over, and the Squire came in—a plain little man in gold spectacles—who said, cheerfully, when supper was announced.

"Come along in, do, Mr. Dunham, and take a dish of tea."

The only fault, Jane often declared, that she had to find with Johnson was that he *wasn't* particular in choosing his company.

"And where's Miss Simmons he asked as he sipped his tea."

"Gone over to Dobson's, and I suppose got caught in the shower."

After supper the two men smoked a pipe together and talked of crops, the weather, and business in general. Jane was no fool, as she often observed. She gathered that David was part owner in a shipyard, and had built some tidy craft himself. Another time she would not be so particular about the door mat.

In the midst of the talk and smoke Miss Simmons came floating in, in a flutter of muslin and ribbons, breathless, bright and coquettish. "I just ran over between the drops," she said, shaking out her curls with jeweled fingers.

Miss Simmons was a pretty girl from the city. She had wit, she had wealth, it was said, and was quite a belle. She played, she sang, she chatted brightly. She smiled on Mr. David, and rattled off his favorite old tunes. It was new to him to have any one especially for him, sparkle and warble and plume themselves for him. Miss Simmons' clear voice and high-keyed notes, her tall and graceful figure, her noiseless, easy movements, charmed him. "A splendid girl!" he said to himself; "and how smooth her skin is, whereas Hannah—" Hannah was pock-marked.

Hannah! He steadied his voice and said, "How is Hannah?" as if the whole party had been making allusion to her.

Sister Jane colored up. "Don't talk to me about Hannah!" she said.

And they didn't talk. At that moment Miss Simmons struck up a brilliant bravura on the piano, and when it died, like a shower of sky-rockets, Mr. David Dunham took his leave.

The next day he hung about the village, dropping in upon one or another old acquaintance. Finally he stumbled into the brimming household where Betsey presided. Betsey had settled in life, as the sexton said—settled like a building on fill-made ground. She had been

trim, she had been sharp, a model woman, with a flavor of crab-apple about her; she had grown slipshod and vinegarish. A devoted mother was Mrs. Betsey Jones, as Jane had piously intimated, querulously satisfied that she, at least, was doing duty, and looking out rainily on the rest of the world, expecting to share her burdens.

"I never go anywhere, never!" she said, "or I might have known you were in town. Dear, dear, to think how time goes! Jim"—turning to her eldest, a barefoot, sunburned lad—"I thought you were to run errands for your aunt Hannah this afternoon. It's the only thing to keep 'em out of the way," she added, "and the least Hannah can do."

"Where is Hannah?" asked Mr. David at last.

"La! don't you know? Well, to be sure! Why, Hannah was always odd, you know. Jane offered her a home, and I'm sure I had no evil of work for her; but she's dreadfully set, is Hannah, and she's—"

"Married?"

"Bless you, no! There's no chance for Hannah now, since she refused Jasper Hendricks; and Jane is mortally offended with her."

"Why?" queried the listener, impatiently.

"Why, she's keeping shop down in the village."

"I guess I'll take a turn down and see her," said Mr. David, abruptly, as Jim sped out of the door, followed by a troop of smaller fry.

"Here, you Jim and Joe, come back!" cried the mother. "Hannah's 'mazin' particular and teehy, and don't like to see so many on 'em round barefoot."

However, the troop were off, and if Hannah had errands for all those nimble feet, she must have been a busy woman. Jim, hitching up his trousers and holding on to his shred of a hat, shot down the quiet street, and vanished at the corner where the old pump stood.

"Jim?" called Mr. David, "hold on a bit, I'm coming, too."

"Hurry up, then," said Jim. "I have lots to do, said aunt Hannah—"

"You like your aunt Hannah, do you, Jim?"

"You may bet your life on that," answered Jim, contentiously. "She's one of the regulars, she is I tell you!" and Jim wound up his pleasing information with a long, low whistle of indefinite applause.

Keeping the boy in sight, Mr. David presently came in front of a quiet, cozy little shop with a great tree before it. In the miniature show-window hung a bright array of ribbons, over which the swaying leaves cast flickering shadows, a pot of geranium with scarlet blossoms glittered against the snowy curtain within. A wholesome, well-swept, cherry-looking place. David did not wait to buy any ribbons. He couldn't decorate himself with millinery; but as he looked within

the doorway and saw a quiet, shaded sitting room just back of the shop, and a quiet little figure, in a pink dress and black silk apron, sewing busily, his heart gave a great leap. He wanted to kiss that little woman, who, all unconscious of being seen, threaded her needle and hummed a blithe song to herself.

A beautiful inner picture, as though he were looking through the depths of a camera at some chaste image, ideal, shining, out of his reach altogether. She seemed to him a lady in a dream, apart from the ways of common life. Yet she kept the little shop under the tree.

I do not think Mr. David would have had courage to break the spell that seemed to separate him from his old friend, had not Jim, bursting in, announced his presence.

A quiet little woman, David had said; this did not seem a very quiescent personage, however, this flushed and tremulous somebody, like and yet not like the old Hannah, who came toward him with eloquent eyes and hands outstretched, crying, "Dave!" like a note of old pathetic music.

Ah, that was a welcome! At the moment David thought it cheaply bought with eight years of absence.

Hannah bustled about to get supper; she set out her little round tea-table; she laid the snowy cloth; she spread her little store of dainties; she poured out a fragrant cup of tea, she hovered about him like a fluttering bird, chirping joyously.

"A snug little place, Hannah," said Mr. David at last, speaking out of his fullness of content; "but your sisters feel sore about it; they don't like your living here alone. The fact is, they think you have lowered yourself, and all that. What put it into your head?"

"An angel, perhaps," said Hannah, solemnly, wiping her glowing, tearful eyes, as she looked at him.

"David, after father and mother died, and I had ~~frayed~~ away my soul caring for them and trudging about with Betsey's babies, I grew wrothy and sick!—and there came to me an inexpressible desire to own myself. I felt a sort of miserable pity for myself, just as I would have felt for any other poor slave with slavery in prospect for life. I longed to keep myself high and pure. I shuddered at the thought of my degradation as a dependent drudge in other people's households."

"And did you not want to marry?" David did not know what imprompted the words which burned his lips as they dropped from them. He mended them praiseworthy by adding, "Jasper Hendricks, for instance?"

But Hannah answered calmly: "No, David, *that* would not have helped me. So I took the dear little shop and waited—"

"For what?" said David bluntly.

Hannah blushed, stooping low over her teacup.

"For customers," she said, as Jim came blundering in on one of his innumerable "chores."

That night Mr. David Dunham could not sleep. Hannah's face, her pleasant voice, her sunny little shop, haunted him. Such a woman would be like sunrise in a man's life. But Hannah did not want to marry; Hannah hugged her independence; or she was waiting—waiting, as she had said for somebody. Somehow Mr. David did not find his way to the little shop where Hannah dwelt in maidenly serenity quite as soon as he had anticipated. He lingered about the village; he took Miss Simmons out for a drive now and then; and one Sunday he responded to Mrs. Johnson's pious interest in him by taking a seat in her pew. It was a hot, sunny day,

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