

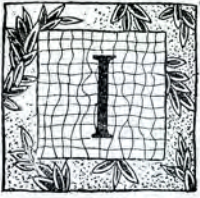
COMPENSATION

BY ABRAM S. ISAACS

WHEN Eve her paradise forsook,
 She cast a swift despairing look
 At Eden in its loveliness;
 Then, conscious of her sad distress,
 From heaven she stole a bit of sky
 To beam forever in her eye.
 A star that circled in a dance
 She seized to radiate her glance;
 A tiny rose that blossomed there
 She plucked to make her cheeks as fair,
 And snatched a trembling drop of dew
 To purify her heart anew;
 And so, amid all hopes and fears,
 A bit of Eden woman bears.

THE WIFE OF YOUR MINISTER

BY A. J. PARRY



It may be safely affirmed that while many of the earlier exactions of service from pastors' wives by their parishes have had their day and ceased to be, it remains true that churches still expect their pastor's wife to act as their assistant pastor. This is true of country, and largely of city churches. It is as true to-day as it ever was.

It is the purpose of this article to inquire whether this is a reasonable expectation.

There are undoubtedly women of exceptional physical strength and endurance whose husbands are in the ministry. When such women feel called to the duties of assistant pastor, and can discharge them without detriment to the interests of their families, pastors and people alike should be profoundly grateful. But how many times have we all heard the remark from Tryphena and Tryphosa (by which names we will represent certain lay sisters): "What is the reason that ministers' wives are always sick? I hardly ever knew one who was well!"

The truth of this remark must be admitted, and it is a fact for which I have long sought an explanation. Whether the clerical mind prefers the fragile and delicate organization in women, which in the wear and tear of mature life inevitably leads to ill health; whether religious women are apt to be unhealthy, or unhealthy women are apt to be religious; or whether the ministers themselves are tiresome persons to live with, or the churches, with all their real kindness and sympathy, a little exhausting in their demands, I am as yet unable to determine.

But when this remark of Tryphena and Tryphosa reaches the pastor's wife, who stands self-convicted of her own particular and especial "attacks," the thumb-screws of which are perhaps at the very moment being tightened, you may be sure she winces under it. Being a quick-witted and somewhat sensitive woman it means to her: "Oh, dear, what a failure our pastor's wife is! Always sick when she is especially needed! I have headaches myself, but I have learned not to give up."

Thus does the minister's wife interpret Tryphena and Tryphosa. What does she do in consequence? What does the worn-out horse do under the spur that draws blood? He rallies his failing energies for one last quivering effort to do what is expected of him and then collapses, and, finally, if you inquire what has become of him, you will learn that he is dead, or turned out in a vacant lot to spend the remaining years of his uselessness. If you inquire concerning the pastor's wife who has attempted to respond to the spur of the congregation's criticism, you will find her also dead, or in a sanitarium.

However, the spur of the congregation's criticism is not the only spur which urges on the pastor's wife. She knows that she is expected to act as assistant pastor; the thought of being a disappointment to her husband and his people is intolerable to her. She cannot fall below the ideal set before her. Furthermore, her whole heart is in her husband's work. She sees the opportunities for doing good, for comforting sorrowful hearts, and winning immortal souls, and a woe, she feels, is on her if she fails to do her part. She loves the people among whom she works, and gladly gives herself for them. None the less, for this reason, the demands of life upon her inevitably become too complex.

Let me give you, for the sake of definiteness, a little sketch of one of my own friends, Mrs. Dr. Dormer, and I will promise that the details of her life are facts, not fancies. Regarding her name, I cannot, perhaps, take so strong ground. I choose Mrs. Dormer as a fair illustration of the conscientious pastor's wife of the day, neither below nor above the average.

The Rev. Dr. Dormer is a man of unusual energy and capacity for work. He is pastor of a church of eight hundred and fifty members, in a city of moderate size. He admires Mrs. Dormer profoundly, and considers her capable of doing everything superlatively well. Like most men, he overwhelms his wife one day with his solicitude for her, and the next day stimulates her in every fiber of her being to overwork by his evidently "great expectations." Mrs. Dormer has good mental capacity, is physically very frail, religiously fervent in spirit, with an especial interest in foreign missions.

Mr. Dormer's salary is thirty-five hundred dollars, out of which he pays seven hundred for house rent, provides for his wife and four children, gives "the Lord's tent" in charities, and sustains the plainly essential life insurance. It will be readily appreciated that Mrs. Dormer can have very little sewing done under these financial conditions. A view of the domestic situation, then, shows us a large house to be kept in order—and in company order, too, for there are frequent visitors at the Dor-

mers—chiefly ministerial—with the help of only one servant; the table to be furnished with appetizing but economical food; and three little girls, one boy, and one man to be sewed for, and mended for by one woman's hands, besides the aforesaid woman's own dressmaking to be "personally conducted." Please bear in mind the fact that Mrs. Dormer has the sick headaches and impaired nervous system of most American women of thirty-five, and that the little Dormers all have weak stomachs (the ministerial inheritance) and then tell me, dear sisters, has she not already enough to tax her vital energy to the utmost?

But now remember the social side of Mrs. Dormer's life. She receives on an average four calls a day, social or professional; she entertains her own and her husband's Bible classes once or twice a year; also the choir, and the deacons, and the brother ministers of the city, and the Pastors' Club, and the visiting brethren who drop down all the way along. She must attend teas and receptions, and read papers on literary themes occasionally, and in every way seek to do her husband credit socially.

This brings us to her church life. Let me tell you what she described to me the other day, not at all in a complaining fashion, but as a summary of an average week's church work. On Sunday she attended morning service and taught a large class of young men; the afternoon was devoted to her children's moral and spiritual nature, which she feels is getting a little shabby; in the evening she attended a prayer meeting and a preaching service. Monday morning's mail brought a request that she attend a large missionary meeting on Wednesday at the other side of the city, and speak for fifteen minutes on a given theme. Two days already crowded with work in which to prepare for the ordeal, the thought of which made her tremble, and the fulfillment of which would be sure to make her ill, for Mrs. Dormer is a timid woman. In the same mail came a letter from a lady in a former parish, five hundred miles distant, asking her to send suggestions for the work and reading of her missionary society. Mrs. Dormer has a large correspondence of this character. Monday afternoon was devoted to calling on sick persons whose cases had been mentioned to her on Sunday.

Tuesday afternoon came an Aid Society meeting; Tuesday evening a Pink Tea, Mrs. Dormer's presence at both absolutely imperative.

Wednesday was free from church duties except a committee meeting of the King's Daughters, and the calls to be made, which are always weighing heavily on Mrs. Dormer's spirit. There are three hundred names on her calling list, besides numerous sick and wounded not on the list, and Tryphena and Tryphosa frequently deplore that they "see so little of their pastor's wife in their homes."

Thursday was the afternoon of the missionary meeting, with a gathering of the Y. P. S. C. E. in the evening, of which organization Mrs. Dormer is an active member. "But," you will say, "she is thirty-five." Yes, but she is young enough for Christian endeavor, although old enough to preside over the mothers in Israel when they gather for missionary meetings. After the Y. P. S. C. E., occurred the weekly church prayer-meeting, which Mrs. Dormer must always attend.

Friday afternoon was the afternoon for the Mothers' Meeting, which Mrs. Dormer led, inwardly conscious while she talked with sweet serenity of training the little ones, that her own little ones were making a general training day at home, and quite possibly scandalizing Tryphosa, who lives next door.

Saturday was left blank for a sick headache.

Now, if you will consider that wherever Mrs. Dormer goes she is beset with requests for various services which I have not even suggested; that she is appealed to constantly for direction and material by programme committees; that she is sought after by benevolent societies outside of the church; that she must write on an average ten letters a week; that she must read every missionary publication which comes into the house, you will, I think, begin to wonder how long before the grave or the sanitarium will claim its own.

And Mrs. Dormer is not one of the notable ministers' wives. She is only an ordinary, quiet little woman, trying "to do her best."

What is to be done for Mrs. Dormer before it is everlastingly too late?

I would myself suggest a merciful economy in the use of the spur, and to this end I will tell you certain things not to do:

Do not say, "Mrs. Dormer has not been in my house in fourteen months." Do not blame her if she does not come in fourteen years.

Do not remind her every time you see her of her failure to attend this meeting, or that.

Do not allude more than is needful in her presence to the devotion and activity of your former pastor's wife, or of the wife of some other pastor in town.

Do not make her president of all your societies, or chairman of all your committees.

Do not forget that she is a woman, and a wife, and a mother, before she is an assistant pastor.

Do not forget that her time is not paid for.

Do not begrudge her the intimate friendship of a few kindred spirits. You have your own special friends. Why should she, of all women, be called upon to forego this privilege?

And finally, if she is wise enough and brave enough to say, "I will not destroy the life which God has given me by slow suicide. I will not break up my home and leave my husband and children desolate by overtaxing myself in work which God does not exact, or he would have supplied the strength wherewith to meet it. I will content myself with the influence I can exert as a good and happy Christian woman in my home, and will do in the church only that which I can do without the sacrifice of life and strength." If the time comes when Mrs. Dormer has the courage to take this position, go to her, Tryphena and Tryphosa, and tell her she is doing right, and that you glory in her independence.