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'Mrs. Avery isn't here this morning?' said Mrs. Gross, as she shook hands with the minister.

'No, she wasn't feeling very well, and I told her she would better stay in out of the cold,' said Mr. Avery. 'She is rather saving her strength for the missionary meeting to-morrow.'

With face drawn down into severe lines, Mrs. McCord stood by, listening. 'Mrs. Gross, I'd like to see you a minute, privately,' she said, as soon as the minister turned to another member of his flock. He was at the church door shaking hands with the last stragglers after services, and Mrs. McCord had already shaken hands and assured him how much she enjoyed the sermon. 'I have a little matter I wish to speak to you about.'

Mrs. Gross sighed, and walked meekly after Mrs. McCord. Mrs. Gross was plump and rosy, while Mrs. McCord was thin and angular, but the latter ruled with a rod of iron where she ruled at all. 'I do hope you'll be careful not to mention that Mrs. Avery was not at church this morning,' she said, in a whisper. 'Mr. Avery is new, and he needs all the support we can give him.'

'I don't know that there's anything wrong in asking about the minister's wife,' said Mrs. Gross striving to pluck up courage to

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talk back to Mrs. McCord, as her husband was ever advising her to do.

'But the way you said it! It just sounded as if you thought she ought to be in her place. Outside are doing a great deal of talking about Mrs. Avery, and it behooves the church people to stand by her. If it got out that the wife of an official member, publicly complained about the minister's wife, gossips would make great capital of it. I hope you will be more careful.'

'Are you really, Mary?' asked Mr. Gross, rescuing his meek wife from Mrs. McCord's clutches. 'I have been waiting these fifteen minutes. How do you do, Mrs. McCord? Fine sermon, wasn't it?'

'Indeed it was,' assented Mrs. McCord. 'I was just telling your wife that we must stand by the minister and his family. There is some criticism from people outside the church about his delivery and his pulpit methods, but if we stand by him he'll go along all right.'

'Oh, he'll get along first-rate,' said Mr. Gross, while his wife pinched his arm black and blue. 'If gossips and people who think they can run everything in and out of the church will let him get a start, he'll get a good start.'

'Just what I said to your wife,' said Mrs. McCord. 'My words exactly!'

Mrs. Gross stopped trying to warn her husband, and instead coughed loudly into her handkerchief. She might have known that Mrs. McCord would never be touched by the plainest of plain hints, for she considered herself the pattern for the whole congregation. Every unkind word she ever heard about the minister she always hastened to tell him, so he would be 'on his guard,' and among the members of the congregation she acted like a very busy wasp stinging here and there, as she went about telling this one what to do and that one how to act. Every one knew her, and all made allowance for her, but it required heroism to have patience with her petty directions and fussy ways.

'You must come up to the parsonage this week,' Mr. Avery was saying to a young lady as they reached the door. 'My niece, Cordelia Everton, is coming to visit us, and I hope all the young folks will come in to see her. She is just out of high school, and we think her a very lively, interesting girl.'

'Now the next thing somebody will be saying is that things are too gay at the parsonage,' said Mrs. McCord, as they reached the street. 'It beats all how faultfinding and cranky some folks are. I'm going to tell Mr. Avery to be on his guard against anything of that sort. For my part, I always have enough to do to attend to my own affairs, but some people are prone to gossip. I heard the other day that Mrs. Warfield said she thought Mr. Avery's sermons sounded as if he got them out of a book, and I intend to call and ask her to be extremely careful what she says. You know how a thing like that runs through a town, and I think the sooner it's hushed up the better.'

Finally the McCords—Mrs. McCord and her little, dried up husband—turned down their street, and Mr and Mrs. Gross went on alone. 'Did you ever see such a woman?' burst out Mr. Gross. 'She would make an interesting character for a novelist. Always running with her little bits of gossip to the parsonage, and always telling everybody in the congregation their duty. I'd give a pretty penny to see her meet her match some day—but she never will. There's only one like her in this part of the world, or the whole globe for that matter.'

The next day Cordelia Everton arrived, and to all observers seemed to be a modest, pretty young girl in a stylish but plain costume, who greeted the members of the congregation who happened to be at the station, and to whom her uncle introduced her while waiting for the hack, with charming friendliness. Before the end of the week she knew a number of people, and seemed to be enjoying her stay in the little city immensely.

'How do you do?' said Mrs. McCord, as Cordelia opened the door for her one cold winter day. 'Is Mrs. Avery at home? Our calling on Mrs. Warfield, is she? Isn't that odd? I came to see her particularly this afternoon about Mrs. Warfield. Well, I might come in and sit down a few minutes by the fire. It's a dreadful day, but when I have a duty to perform I never let the weather stand in my way. I feel real worried about your aunt being over there. You know Mrs. Warfield isn't a member of our church, and it is so important that people are careful what they say to her. I heard on good authority that she said Mr. Avery's sermons sounded as if they were taken out of a book, so I thought I'd put our pastor on his guard.'

'Wasn't that lovely?' said Cordelia. 'I think that is the finest compliment Uncle James ever received. He is so scholarly and precise in his language, but often people forget to mention it. Mrs. Warfield must be a delightful person.'

'Well, er—that is—yes, I do think, Mr. Avery uses very good language,' said Mrs. McCord. 'I said so.'

'Here comes auntie!' cried Cordelia, springing up to help that lady remove her wraps. 'Auntie, Mrs. McCord came to tell you some-

(Continued on page seven.)

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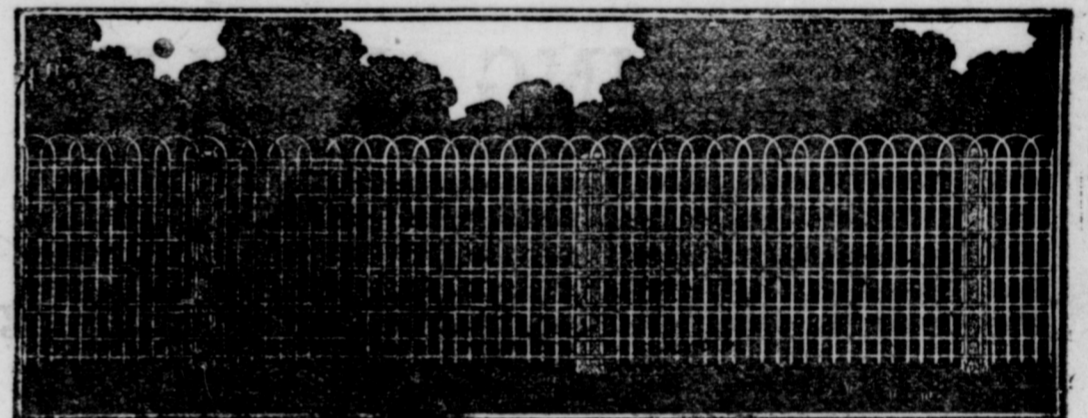
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5.33 P. M.—EXPRESS—From Fort Fairfield, Caribou, Presque Isle, Grand Falls, Edmundston and Riviere du Loup.
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