

# **Dave Dodge**

## **Duck Lake Tales of the Canadian Backwoods**

**by Rev. Egerton Ryerson Young, 1840-1909**

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## Chapter I

### The Burning of »Duck Lake Hotel«.

When Dodge slunk away into the bush, with the Warden's threat upon him, he ground his teeth in silent rage. Was he not one of the first settlers here?—yes, he and old John Miller were the first that came into that section to take up land. They had wrested it from a wilderness, had built roads through it, and had induced others to come in and settle. They had organised the district, built the school, and made it what it is to-day.

The truth of the matter was that while Dave Dodge and John Miller were the first settlers, Miller was first, and plunged into the bush with his axe and stout heart. He soon had a clearing and a log cabin, to which he brought a bride as capable and stout-hearted as himself. Then came in Dodge, a shrewd, unscrupulous man, fond of drink, and when drunk, surly and quarrelsome; but he was a sociable fellow when sober, and had some other good qualities.

He took up land by the lake. A situation that was somewhat superior to John Miller's, and in time, because of its location on the lake front, proved the more valuable possession. He built himself a little shanty, and spent most of his time hunting and trapping. When lumbermen came in, he shrewdly fore-stalled them by cutting all the pine himself and selling it—on the plea of clearing his land for farming. He thus netted himself some good hard cash, enlarged his house, and went to a neighbouring village, where he secured a wife. Several other men came in and took up land, and Miller petitioned the Government for a grant to build a road through their district. This was readily given, for the Government was ready to encourage its settlers, especially in new districts. Miller was given the contract for a portion of the road, and Dodge secured it for another section. Miller sought a road expert, and, though the condition of his section was the worst imaginable from rocks, ledges, ravines, still his road is creditable to this day, and the bridges were well made. Dodge had a much leveller piece of ground, and only a couple of narrow streams to bridge; but from the first his road was dangerous, and was a nightmare to all travellers after dark. Within three months, Miller with the other settlers had to turn out and rebuild the bridges and relay most of Dodge's corduroy road. The most important part of the business to Dodge seemed to be to draw the money from the Government. With that money he secured permission to turn his house into a backwoods saloon and lay in his first supply of liquor. When the lumbermen had camps near by he held high carnival every night, and began to think himself the most important man in the whole district.

Instead of helping to secure the school, he threw every obstacle possible in its way. He bullied the settlers, and tried to drive Miller from his purpose. But he fought in vain. The Government's inducements to the settlers were tempting, and the needs of their children were pressing, and so John Miller had the

honour of leading his fellow settlers in a bee to build their log schoolhouse, which he saw was the very best that could under the circumstances be built. From that time the contest for improvement was fought by John Miller, and his determined enemy was always the saloon-keeper, Dave Dodge. But this was only a small portion of the inimical work of Dodge. His saloon became the centre of backwoods brawls, and evils that wrecked many lives and even some of the homes of the settlers. The place became so lawless that the Government had to take special measures to maintain order.

But as Dodge went home from the little Parsonage he was full of self-righteousness and self-justification. All that was good and beneficent in the neighbourhood he and Miller had done, and, in his estimation, Miller's honour by no means outshone his. And now, after all this service to his district, and the tourists beginning to find out the beauties of the country, and to flock in scores and hundreds in the summer-time, thus making hotel business very profitable, to have this upstart of a Warden to threaten lifelong imprisonment over his head because of his mistakes—not to say diabolical sins—against his fellows, if he did not leave the country within a week!

Lanky was awed by Dodge's manner, and had not been with him for years without knowing when silence was the better part of discretion. When Dodge reached his home, a very little provocation was needed to bring heavy penalty upon the first culprit. This one, unfortunately, happened to be his wife. The poor overworked creature had lain down on her hard couch in the kitchen and had gone to sleep. Two passing shantymen had called for a drink, and finding the bar-room unoccupied and no one in the house but a sleeping woman, had helped themselves. Then, with a liberal supply of bottles of whisky and other liquors, they hastened away.

Raging as he was when he entered his bar-room, Dodge saw that nearly every bottle of liquor in sight was gone. He hurried into the kitchen, only to find his wife asleep.

„Who's been here to buy whisky?“ he demanded of his wife.

The wife sprang to her feet, rubbing her eyes.

„Eh?“ she asked.

„Who's been here for liquor?“ he thundered again.

„No one that I know,“ she replied. Then with an oath, he said—

„You've allowed some rascals to rob me, you sleeping idiot!“ and with another oath of rage he struck her full in the face. With a screech the poor woman fell back on the couch with a broken nose.

Dodge hastened back into the bar-room, and after consoling himself that his till was not touched—whisky provoking the thieves sooner than gold—he pulled out another case of liquor, uncorked a bottle of whisky, and without the assistance of a glass poured it down his throat. When Dodge finished his drink, it was only to fall into a profound stupor. The demon of thirst was aroused, and when he awakened it was only to demand more whisky.

When John Miller came home from his visit to the Parsonage he told his wife many things, but he did not mention the sentence that hung over Dave Dodge. He pondered over it, and became more quiet than ever. His prayers at the family altar, night and morning, took on a greater intensity. He did not forget to pray for his pastor's recovery, for God's blessed Spirit and sustaining power to dwell with More in beginning the new life, and for grace to increase in the hearts of all the neighbours; he earnestly besought God to purify their hearts

from all manner of evil thoughts, prejudice, and unforgiveness, and also that God would gird His saints with power to lay down their lives, if need be, for their fellows. He chose his passages of Scripture carefully, reading the sixth chapter of Matthew, the twelfth of Romans, and the fourth of Ephesians.

Mrs Miller noted these things and tried to fathom their meaning, but though she was usually very shrewd she did not succeed.

„John,“ she said one day, „do you despair of our preacher’s life?“

„Oh no, Mary. Thanks to God and kind friends, he is coming around all right.“

„Is More holding true?“ she ventured again.

„As true as steel, praise His name!“

„Then, John, why are you growing so white and quiet like? I never heard you pray so in your life.“

„Mary, my good wife, I never needed God’s light and grace so much. The Warden has ordered Dave Dodge to leave the country within a week—dear me, and this is—this is the morning of the fourth day now. And you know, and God knows, that I haven’t fully forgiven him for burning our barn.“

„No, I don’t know that,“ replied Mrs Miller, stoutly. „You didn’t send him to jail, as he ought to have gone. You have pardoned him time and again for killing sheep and hogs. He stole a calf. You merely told him that he did it, and you could prove it. He drove you off with curses. You have prayed for him, night and morning, and never allowed an unkind word to be said about him.“

„And would you speak one now? Why, where will he go to? He is ‘most as old as me, and we have always lived here together. What would I do without him?“

„Why, you’d have a chance to live in peace, and his dirty, little hell-hole would be shut up.“

Mrs Miller seldom spoke as warmly. She had a large heart, and forgave many things; but her faith and love were limited. Dave Dodge was beyond the pale, and she could not understand why her husband clung so tenaciously to the old rascal.

„Mary,“ said Miller, quietly, „I want you to pray earnestly for me, for I am going to see Dave to-day, and see what I can do for him.“

„I’ll pray that God will send you back to me alive,“ said Mrs Miller. And added quickly, when she saw the look that came upon her husband’s kindly face, „Yes, John, I believe that you are right. May God bless you, whatever happens!“

„And God bless you, my dear, and fill you with the sweet love of Jesus!“

Then John Miller turned his attention to his morning’s work. After it was all completed, he dressed himself with much care, and bidding his wife good-bye, he went down the road to the „Duck Lake Hotel.“

On the same morning, the fourth day of Dodge’s debauch, his wife, poor creature, with her bandaged face, became alarmed at his terrible condition, and begged of Lanky and Huddy not to supply him with any more liquor. So the men desisted.

Dodge was in his bedroom over the kitchen and helplessly stupid. He begged, pleaded and coaxed, but all in vain. Then he stormed and threatened. His strength came to him suddenly as that of ten men, and he sprang up in a fury. The men ran for their lives down to the kitchen. They locked the door going into the bar-room, and then fastened the kitchen door on the outside. Dodge came down, breathing curses and threatenings. When he found the door to the bar-room locked, his fury knew no bounds. He sought a billet of wood, but found

none; then, to the horror of the people watching through the windows, he opened the stove door, took out a stick of wood that was burning a little at one end, and with that pounded open the bar-room door. Then, throwing down the stick, he made a rush for a bottle of liquor; but in doing so he fell, and in falling brought down a shelf of bottles. Some of these broke. The liquor ran out, took fire when it touched the burning stick, and spread with astonishing rapidity. Dodge jumped up, seized a bottle of whisky and hurried back to the kitchen, unmindful of the flames. Then he hastened upstairs, and getting into his bed he broke the top off the bottle on the side of the bed, drank deeply, and fell into a stupor.

The flames made terrific headway in the dry old house, and as the smoke began to pour out of the bar-room door, Mrs Dodge exclaimed—

„Oh! my Dave will be burned—my Dave will be burned!“ And before the men could stop her she had pulled away the barricade at the kitchen door, and run in and up the stairs.

The men secured some pails, and, bringing water from the lake, dashed it ineffectually on the burning building. The fire raged with most fury in the bar-room up to the roof, and then back to the kitchen. So the stairs had not caught fire.

## **Chapter II**

### **To the Rescue.**

While the men were engaged in throwing water on the building Mr Miller came running up, his face full of horror at the sight of the fire, and almost breathless from running.

„Where’s Dave Dodge?“ he asked of the men.

„Inside, raving drunk!“ replied Lanky.

„Where’s his missus?“

„Inside too. Trying to get old Dave out.“

„And you here, not trying to help her!“ said Miller, with a look of contempt and scorn at the cowards.

Then, turning, he whipped off his coat, and holding it over his head as a shield, he plunged into the smoke. He found the stairs, and saw Mrs Dodge shaking her drunken husband and trying to awaken him to a sense of his perilous position.

„Oh, Mr Miller, save Dave, won’t you?“ she cried, and sank to the floor unconscious from the smoke.

„You first,“ said the good old man, as he threw a blanket over her head and gathered the woman up in his stout arms.

He carried her downstairs and handed her out to the men, and then rushed back for Dave, seized him by the head and arms and dragged him downstairs, and had him nearly out of danger outside the door when the roof fell. Some of the burning timbers fell on Mr Miller and pinned him to the ground, burning him severely as they did so. The men, roused by the old man’s heroism, rushed to his rescue. They got Dodge away with little injury, but before Mr Miller was released he was terribly burned. However, he was delighted and full of

thanksgiving to God that he had rescued the people, and though the building might go, no lives would be lost.

Mr Miller told Lanky to go and secure help and take them all to his place, and tell Mrs Miller to get an extra bed ready.

Lanky sped away to secure help, while Huddy took charge of the patients. He wanted to help Mr Miller, but though he was suffering intensely he said—

„No, my man, dash some water in the woman’s face and bring her to.“

Huddy obeyed, and was rewarded by the woman opening her eyes and looking around in alarm.

„Where’s Dave?“ she asked.

„Over there, beside Mr Miller,“ replied Huddy.

„Oh yes, now I know,“ she said. „Mr Miller saved him.“

„Yes, he did missus, and you too.“

„Then let me up,“ she said; but in trying to raise herself she fell back in weakness.

Huddy then attempted to see what effect a little water would have on Dodge’s face.

„Where am I?“ he growled, opening his eyes.

„You were pretty nearly gone,“ said Huddy, „only John Miller pulled you out of the fire.“

„Where is he?“

„Right here, nearly killed from trying to rescue you.“

Dodge rose on his elbow. He looked stupidly at the burning building, and tried to comprehend the situation; but his drugged senses were slow and halting.

„Is that my house?“

„It is,“ replied Huddy, amused at the man’s stupidity and the distortions of his face as he tried to see clearly.

„Who set it on fire?“

„You did, when you chased us and went for more liquor.“

„Chased you?“

„Yes, you chased Lanky and me, broke open the bar-room door with a burning stick of wood from the kitchen stove. You knocked some liquor down, got some more, and ran back to bed. Don’t you remember?“

„You’re a liar!“

„Why, there’s your poor broken-nosed missus. Ask her. Do you remember smashing her nose?“

Dodge looked as black as thunder at Huddy.

„Then, as true as you did that, you did the whole thing.“

„And who brought me here, out of my bed?“

„John Miller, I told you. There he lies, behind you, nearly smashed and burned to death when the roof fell.“

„John Miller, John Miller! When the roof fell!“ said Dodge, half stupidly to himself. „Why did John Miller save me? I never did him a good turn in my life.“

„Better ask him why he saved you,“ suggested Huddy.

„Where is he?“

„Oh, Dave, Dave, come here! I am so glad that Mr Miller got you out safely,“ said Mrs Dodge, as she looked over at her husband.

Dodge looked at her for a moment.

„What’s the matter with you, missus?“ he asked half kindly.

„Why, man,“ said Huddy, „she nearly died trying to save you; but she couldn't, and then Mr Miller had to save you both, see.“

Dodge reached over and took his wife's extended hand, and pressed it half-unconsciously, half-affectionately. The world was whirling around him. He remembered distinctly hitting his wife, and now she nearly perished trying to rescue him. He remembered a hundred mean, tricky, dishonest things he had done to John Miller, but that John Miller should come and drag him out of his burning house he did not comprehend so distinctly.

„And what was John Miller doing in my house?“ he asked.

„Come here, Dave, and I'll tell you,“ said Mr Miller, when he heard the question.

Dodge struggled to his feet with a blanket around him and walked over as a man in a dream. Though suffering great pain, and his exertion increased it fourfold, he held up his blackened and badly burned hand to Dodge.

„Take that, Dodge, and say that you forgive me.“

„Forgive you!“ stammered Dodge.

„Yes; God says that we are to forgive one another as He, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. I've had some hard thoughts about you, Dave; I want them forgiven.“

„I should think you had.“

„Will you forgive them?“ repeated Mr Miller, almost pleadingly.

„The score's all on the other side, Miller. Don't say anything more about it,“ said Dodge, as he dropped his hand and turned to see all who had come. Lanky returned with Woods, Farley, Mr Green, the school-teacher, and half a dozen boys.

The teacher took charge of the wounded while the other men looked after the burning hotel. The sides had now fallen, and all that was left was only a mass of burning and smoking timbers and debris. There was some danger of the fire spreading to the stable, in which Dodge had some cows and hogs. But the men soon stopped this, and made any further damage from the fire an impossibility.

Mr Green had some stretchers made of blankets that had been brought, and birch-poles cut from the forest, and then, on the instruction of Mr Miller, had the three wounded ones carried over to his house.

When Mrs Miller first heard the news of the fire and the accident to her husband, she was nearly prostrated, but the request for another bed quickly roused her housewifely instincts, while the idea of receiving Dodge and his wife brought many mingled motives into play. When the men arrived with the patients, Mrs Miller busied herself to get them all properly attended to. Mr Miller was taken to his own bed, Dodge was put in the spare bedroom, while Mrs Dodge, who had nearly recovered, was permitted to rest on the parlour lounge.

Mrs Miller brought out her ointments, and the teacher applied them to the wounds; but Mr Miller's condition was so serious that he ordered Huddy to get the best horse he could find in the neighbourhood and hasten away to Sandy Bay for the doctor. Mr Miller was very quiet and patient.

„Thank you, my dear,“ he said to his wife; „that will do now. Let me rest, and you 'tend Dave. He got some burns too.“

And so the good old body drew up the blanket, tucked it around her husband, pulled the blind down, and left.

When she came to Dodge, she found that the teacher had bathed him and anointed his wounds. He was sitting up in the bed, robed in one of Mr Miller's spotless nightgowns. In spite of all the care and attention, the cleansing water and soothing ointment, he was not sure of himself and was very restless.

„Lie down and rest,“ said the teacher.

But Dodge treated him with a far-away look. The young man could not understand his thoughts, he seemed to say, and so he kept silent. But when Mrs Miller entered his face changed.

„I'm ashamed to come under your roof, Mrs Miller,“ he said.

„You well might be, Dave, for you've been a bad man to us, burnin' our barn, killing our sheep, and stealing our calves. You've got a lot to answer for. I hope that you'll repent of your sins ere it is too late,“ said the good woman; but she busied herself to fix the pillows and sheets and make the man more comfortable.

„Perhaps I'd better not bother you any more,“ said Dodge, „and get the men to take me to some other home.“

„And where will you go to, Dave? John's the best friend you've got in the whole place.“

„I thought he was my worst enemy.“

„That shows what a blind fool you were, Dave. John has prayed for you night and mornin', and he wouldn't hear a word said agin ye, though you did him many a mean turn sure enough. May the good Lord forgive you, Dave!“

Dodge groaned in spirit under the woman's honest, straightforward words. The axe was not „laid“ at the root of the tree. It was in the hands of a pure, stout-hearted woman, and was, in purest honesty and unconsciousness, wielded with accuracy against a tree of stubborn bitterness. Dodge's mind was very much alert. The journey through the woods had brought fresh air to his lungs, and the pain of his wounds awoke every slumbering faculty. The events of the morning were related again and again amongst his carriers until he understood the enormity of his own actions and the prompt and heroic work of John Miller. The unstinted kindness of the teacher, who told him that Mr Miller had instructed him to render Dodge any assistance that he could, greatly impressed him. Dodge would have been less than a man if such kindness and self-sacrifice had not roused his noblest manhood. The actions of Mrs Miller were full of kindness; while her words—so full of truth—reminded him of the evil nature that was not dead, but only dormant or stunned within him. As he thought of it all, he shut his eyes for a moment.

„Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?“ he groaned in agonising thought.

Mrs Miller turned from tidying up the room and looked at him.

„That's the right kind of a cry, Dave. You're not the first man that cried it, either.“

„Was ever a man so guilty and sinful?“

„Well, Dave, whether he was or not, I'm not the one to say, but the teacher will read about the one in the Bible who was wretched because of his sins, and cried to be relieved. The preacher or John will tell you how you may get peace, and you'll come out all right yet.“

„Do you think so, Mrs Miller?“

„Well, Dave, John has faith in you, and I'm beginnin' to have some too, and I know that the Lord Jesus is no respecter of persons. He can save you as well as

He can save anybody, and He just loves a good, heavy lift, Dave. Yes, He does, when a chap's away down, man or woman. He loves to get right down under them and lift them right up. 'For when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly.' He's got to go down a long way to get you, hasn't He, Dave?"

„Yes,“ groaned Dave.

„Well, Dave, look to Jesus Christ. The teacher's here, and he'll read to you about the *wretched man*. I'll send ye up some nice gruel in a few minutes.“

And the good woman hastened away to the kitchen to prepare gruel and other good things for all her patients.

## Chapter III

### The Gall of Bitterness.

The teacher opened his Bible as he was requested, and read the seventh chapter of Romans. Old Dave seemed to be in an agony of thought, and did not appear to drink in much of the truth of the chapter. But Paul's dramatic ending, so descriptive of the power of sin, indulged, over the body, and the threatened consummation of sin, death, roused the hearer. „O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?“ he repeated over and over. It seemed to be the phrase that suited his mental and moral condition, and he lashed himself with it; for he was, indeed, in the gall of bitterness and the bondage of iniquity, and, at the time, did not know that such a spirit of contrition presaged a way of liberty.

The teacher had ceased reading at the end of the chapter, and, perceiving Dodge's face covered with perspiration and hearing his groans, which now became audible, he turned to see if he could relieve him, for he thought his sufferings were physical.

„What can I do for you, Mr Dodge?“ he inquired.

„Read on,“ said Dodge.

The teacher, to his own astonishment, for he had never seen the Spirit working in this wise in a strong-willed man, now realised that the wrestling and pain in Dodge were less physical than mental and spiritual. He wished that the preacher were present, for he was sure that he would not only most truly appreciate such a wrestling of the Spirit, but he would also know what words of direction and encouragement to give the man.

While better educated than Dodge, the teacher had neither Dodge's strength of mind or will, nor his long record of defiant sinfulness. The teacher belonged to that goodly class of people who have a desire to do right, and whose lives are morally correct, but who for a long time have lived in the moonlight of their own consciences and the starlight of the world's literature. When the teacher came into the clearer light of Christ, it was like the breaking of a calm, beautiful summer's day, in the easy, joyful coming of the morning twilight and then the sunlight.

But with Dodge the experience was vastly different. With him it was the bursting of the sun at noonday upon the land, where the morning had known only the darkness and devastation of a cyclone.

The blaze of the light of Christ, streaming into his heart, revealed to him the terrible havoc of sin, his soul in open rebellion to its Maker and the harbourer of iniquity; and his body, under such rebellion, sold to sin: the end of which was death, eternal death. In this light, the man reeled, dazzled, and seeing his soul laden with the seeds of eternal death rather than the means of salvation offered, he cried in his agony: „O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?“

The teacher had taken up the Bible to read on; but the man's visible anguish disturbed him, and he persistently thought of physical relief.

„Read on, I say,“ said Dodge, somewhat imperiously; „read on! Let's hear the end of it, even if it lands me in hell!“

The teacher felt shocked at the man's words, then he wanted to smile, but remembering Dodge's recent actions under liquor, he became fearful that Dodge's mind was again giving way. Dodge looked at him with blazing eyes.

„Read on, young man.“

The teacher sat down again and quietly read the next chapter, the wonderful eighth chapter of Romans. Dodge drank in the truth as a thirsty man. Then there was freedom offered from sin and death, freedom in Christ Jesus, freedom through the Spirit, life by being led by the Spirit, a son of God, the witness of the Spirit, the justification and glorification of God's elect!

Long ere Mr Green had finished the chapter Dodge's wrestling had ceased, the perspiration had dried from his brow, and he was very still and quiet.

„Thank you,“ he said to Mr Green, when he had finished. It was the first time he had said „Thank you“ to any one for years. „Come and read the last chapter to me again to-morrow.“

„Here, Mr Green!“ called Mrs Miller; „come and get some broth for Dave.“

The teacher hastened to the hall, and found Mrs Miller at the foot of the stairs with a tray, the chief thing upon which was a large bowl of steaming chicken broth. Taking the tray, the teacher came back to Dodge, and after fixing him with great care of his wounds, in his bed, he placed the tray in front of him. The first few spoonfuls nearly choked him, because his thoughts seemed to place a lump in his throat, but his appetite was much better after he had swallowed some of the broth. Then followed the bread and butter and the jam and a cup of tea.

Dodge then felt so refreshed that he wanted to get up.

„No,“ said the teacher. „You can't do that, for two reasons. You have many bruises and burns, and are still a weak man. You will have to await doctor's orders. And then, you know, you have no clothes. Yours were all burned in the hotel!“

„Well, what a fix!“ exclaimed Dodge, with a smile and without an oath, which caused him to be somewhat surprised at himself. He was truly beginning to be a new man.

„Send some one to Sandy Bay—Thompson, the storekeeper, knows my size—and get a whole rig out. He owes me money, and can turn it over to my account.“

„You won't need it for three or four days anyway.“

„I'll be ready to get into it as soon as it comes,“ said Dodge, emphatically.

While Dodge was thus making good progress towards recovery, John Miller was suffering intense pain and slowly getting weaker. The doctor arrived, and

pronounced the injuries to the backbone and other parts of the most serious nature.

This report did not cause a word of complaint to escape the good old man. With infinite patience he submitted to the treatment, and assisted by the medicines given to relieve his pain he went peacefully to sleep. Mrs Miller was not made fully aware of the danger of her husband; but when Mr Green had the whole truth wrung out of him by his imperious patient, Dodge was overwhelmed in agony and remorse.

„Hurry up those clothes, Green, for I must be up, and see if I can't save that man's life. I'm a worthless wretch compared to him. I hope that my wife is helping all that she can.“

„Yes, she is a bit unsteady yet, but she is rendering Mrs Miller good help in the kitchen.“

„Why doesn't she come to see me?“ said Dodge, a little peevishly.

„Perhaps she awaits the request of her lord,“ replied the teacher, with a smile.

„That's so, Green. I was forgetting what a brute I have been to her. Go and tell her I want to see her.“

With pleasure Green hastened to the kitchen and told Mrs Dodge that her husband was anxious to see her.

A sudden pallor sprang into the woman's face, and she looked appealingly at Mrs Miller.

„Go, dear,“ said the motherly body. „He'll only do you good now.“

Thus relieved, but with much fear and trembling, she entered Dodge's chamber. After showing her in, the teacher closed the door and went back, to see if he could not aid Mrs Miller in rearranging her household and look after the farm.

Mrs Miller told him that Mrs Dodge had thrown herself heart and soul into the kitchen work, and that she was all right there. Green then went outside, and was surprised and delighted to see that all the stock had been carefully put in, fed and bedded. To whom belonged the credit he did not know until the next morning, when he found Lanky carrying two brimming pails of milk to the kitchen.

„How's Mr Miller?“ was his first question, which was quickly followed by, „And how's Dave?“

„Mr Miller is very quiet, but will have a hard time, if he ever gets well,“ said Mr Green, with a sad face. „But Dodge is much better, and wants a whole outfit of clothes. Will you be so good as to go to Sandy Bay to Thompson's for him?“

„Sure,“ said Lanky; „when I put the stock to pasture I'll go.“

## **Chapter IV**

### **The New Suit.**

The September day that had dawned was one of rarest beauty. The meadows, with their cattle slowly moving about and grazing, hung as in an azure haze; while the trees of the forest were painted in their autumnal colours. A little stream ran past Mr Miller's barn, and it shone like a band of silver in the

morning light. Dave Dodge saw all this from his bed, and wondered if something new had not come into the world. It seemed changed, and it was in a way inexpressible to him.

While he was thus looking and wondering, his wife came in with some breakfast. She had lost her fear; but her face was very pale, and her nose was cruelly marked. In their interview the previous evening, the light was so dim that Dodge had not noticed the effects of his cruelty. Now, in the morning light he saw, and his heart smote him.

„Here’s some breakfast, Dave,“ said his wife, with a smile; „I fixed it all myself.“

Dave turned to speak; but he choked.

„Oh, Dave,“ exclaimed his wife, for fear had not been driven very far from her heart, „don’t look at me like that!“

Then a tear glistened in each of Dodge’s eyes.

„What’s the matter, Dave?“ asked the woman, tenderly, putting down the tray and coming to the man’s side.

„You said you forgave me all, Mary,“ stammered the man.

„Yes, I did, Dave, I’m so glad to. Now, won’t you eat your breakfast?“

„Does it hurt you yet?“ asked Dodge.

„What?“

„Why, your nose!“

„I haven’t thought much about it, I’ve been so happy after what you said last night. Never mind the nose, Dave, if the heart’s in the right place.“

„Do you think it can be healed?“

„It doesn’t make much matter.“

„It will always remind me of my cruelty.“

„And keep us both humble, eh, Dave?“

„Well, Mary, I guess that you’re getting on faster than I am in the good way, and I’m glad.“

„Now, Dave, eat your breakfast, or it’ll be cold.“

So he ate his breakfast with much relish, while his wife fixed up his bedclothes and waited upon him with her heart full of a new hope and a new joy.

The day passed quietly. The teacher read again the eighth chapter of Romans, and regretted the illness that prevented the preacher from coming to explain things; but Dave’s strong mind was in keen sympathy with that of the Apostle Paul, and the Word itself was sufficient for him.

Mr Miller put in a very poor day, for his pain was great. The doctor came again, and his face darkened. When Dodge found out the truth, he begged and pleaded that he might be allowed to rise.

„Can’t you rig me up a suit out of Mr Miller’s clothes?“ he asked of the teacher. „He and I are near of a size.“<sup>2</sup>

„But your burns would be chafed?“

„Let them be.“

„And spoil the clothes?“

„Bring that doctor in here,“ demanded Dodge. The doctor came.

„Doctor, I’m going to get up, and if you can fix my wounds so as to save the clothes, I’ll be obliged.“

„You are better in bed, but if you will get up I’ll fix your burns.“

„I will get up—so go ahead.“

The doctor anointed the wounds afresh, put some absorbent cotton gently upon them, and bound the wounds more tightly than he had previously done. The teacher got some of Mr Miller's garments, and made Dodge fairly presentable.

The doctor almost expected to see Dodge sink back into bed from pain and dizziness, or at least to hear him groan, but none of these things happened. Whatever agony he suffered his attendants were not made aware of it.

„Now I'm fit,“ exclaimed Dodge; and he stood up and walked to the door. „Where's John Miller?“

When he was shown into Mr Miller's room he found Mrs Miller ready to serve him some tea.

„You look tired, Mrs Miller. Let me wait on John, and you take a rest,“ said Dodge, with a courtesy and a kindness, and also with a steadiness of body, that surprised the spectators.

„Why, Dave, are you so well?“ exclaimed Mrs Miller. She had refused to let any one else, not even the teacher, wait upon her husband; but she unhesitatingly handed the tea-things over to Dodge.

When on his best behaviour, Dodge knew as well as any one how to wait upon and serve with courtesy his hotel guests, and now when his love and reverence were awakened, he was all that could have been demanded by the most fastidious.

„He won't eat much,“ wailed Mrs Miller, as she watched Dodge coddling up her husband.

„You get some nice things once in a while,“ replied Dodge, „and leave the rest to me.“

„And so I will, Dave,“ she declared, „for I see you can do more with John than I can.“

And then she left the room, while the doctor and the teacher, who were at the door, went downstairs with her, leaving the two men alone.

With his left arm tenderly under Mr Miller's head, Dodge coaxed him to sip his tea. Mr Miller was supremely happy in that embrace, while his new self-constituted nurse, with set lips, was determined to do his duty whichever way it lay.

„Do you think you can talk a little, John?“ asked Dodge, very quietly, after he had induced his patient to take all the broth.

„I'm most too happy for anything, Dave. Bless the Lord!“

„What makes you so happy? You must be 'most racked to death with pain!“

„Not all the pain in the world can separate me from the love of Christ, Dave; and then He has given you to me. That makes me happy. Just to have you here. I've been wondering when you'd come. Oh, how kind and tender you are, Dave, and I love you! My prayers for you are answered.“

Dodge sat down on a low chair by the bedside and buried his face in the bedclothes. He wept. Perhaps from weakness and his sudden exertion, but also from the welling up of his heart in response to the all-conquering love of Christ, as he saw it and felt it in John Miller. It was some time before he spoke again. Mr Miller lifted his hands in praise to God, and then let his right one fall with his blessing upon Dodge's head. Dodge let it lie there for a few minutes. It sent seraphic thrills through his whole being. Then he removed it to his lips and kissed it.

He rose quickly and washed his tear-stained face, for he heard a tap on the door. Then he opened it, and met the teacher.

„Lanky has returned with your new clothes, and here’s a letter from Thompson to you.“

He quickly tore open the envelope and read amongst other things—

„I am very glad to send you a suit, and I also enclose a hundred dollars, which may be serviceable to you just now.“

„Bless his heart, that was thoughtful of him!“ exclaimed Dodge. „I wonder if he has been converted.“

„That’s not impossible,“ replied the teacher. „Lanky was telling your wife of a wonderful revival down that way when I left.“

„That’s it. It takes the grace of God to make men considerate.“

The next morning, Dodge put on his new suit, and renewed his attentions to his patient.

After giving him his breakfast, Dave was reading the Bible to Mr Miller, as well as his full heart and overflowing tears would let him.

At that moment Mrs Miller ushered in Warden Fitzgerald. Dodge rose quickly and brushed away his tears with his coat-sleeve.

„I am very sorry to see you here, Mr Miller,“ he said kindly, as he pressed Mr Miller’s hand.

„I have my reward, bless God!“ replied Mr Miller.

„What’s that?“ asked the Warden, with a smile.

„Dave. God has given me Dave’s love.“

The Warden turned and beheld a new man. The coarse, villainous look and defiant eyes had disappeared with the dirty, greasy clothes. A man with earnest demeanour, but eyes full of tenderness, even tears, and clad in clean new clothes, stood before him. He gazed with intense, even critical scrutiny; but Dodge did not resent that now. He coveted such examination, and wished that every bit of his wickedness might be exposed and purged away.

„This is wonderful!“ exclaimed the Warden.

Dave smiled through the tears in his eyes.

„Yes,“ said Mr Miller, „it is wonderful, praise be to our Lord. He can do wonders.“

„Your week was up yesterday, Dodge,“ said the Warden, with mock imperiousness.

„I should like to stay to nurse Mr Miller back to health.“

„Nurse Mr Miller back!“ exclaimed the Warden.

„Yes, he’s John’s nurse,“ put in Mrs Miller; „and he’s a good one too. He can make John eat, and do things I can’t. I hope you won’t send him away now, Mr Fitzgerald. Whatever would I do without him?“

„Dodge, you have a better and more successful advocate here than any lawyer you ever had. May God continue to bless you, and make you a blessing, is all that I can say, except to add a hope that He may extend His mercy to me.“

„He will, bless Him!“ said Mr Miller.

„And that order to leave, Mr Fitzgerald?“ put in Dodge, not quite satisfied.

„It hangs over old Dave Dodge’s head,“ said the Warden, with a significant smile, „and if he ever comes back to these parts, woe betide him!“

„He’ll never come back,“ said Dave.

„Amen,“ said Mr Miller.

