The Happy End

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THE HAPPY END

BY

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DEDICATION

These stories have but one purpose—to give pleasure; and they have been made into a book at the requests of those I have fortunately pleased. It is, therefore, to such friends of my writing that they are addressed and dedicated. However, this is not an effort to avoid my responsibility: but to whom? Not to critics, not middlemen, nor the Academies of which I am so reprehensibly ignorant; not, certainly, to my neighbor. They brought me, in times of varying difficulty, food; and for that excellent reason I am forced to conclude that, then as now, I am responsible to my grocer.
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THE maid, smartly capped in starched ruffled muslin and black, who admitted them to the somber luxury of the rectory, hesitated in un-concealed sulky disfavor.

“Doctor Goodlowe has hardly started dinner,” she asserted.

“Just ask him to come out for a little,” the man repeated.

He was past middle age, awkward in harsh ill-fitting and formal clothes and with a gaunt high-boned countenance and clear blue eyes.

His companion, a wistfully pale girl under an absurd and expensive hat, laid her hand in an embroidered white silk glove on his arm and said in a low tone: “We won’t bother him, Calvin. There are plenty of ministers in Washington; or we could come back later.”

“There are, and we could,” he agreed; “but we won’t. I’m not going to wait a minute more for you, Lucy. Not now that you are willing. Why, I have been waiting half my life already.”

I

A gaunt young man with clear blue eyes sat on the bank of a mountain road and gazed at the newly-built house opposite. It was the only dwelling visible. Behind, the range rose in a dark wall against the evening
sky; on either hand the small green valley was lost in a blue haze of serried peaks. The house was not imposing; in reality small, but a story and a half, it had a length of three rooms with a kitchen forming an angle, invisible from where Calvin Stammark sat; an outside chimney at each end, and a narrow covered portico over the front door.

An expiring clatter of hoofs marked the departure of the neighbor who had helped Calvin set the last flanged course. It seemed incredible that it was finished, ready — when the furniture and bright rag carpet had been placed — for Hannah. “The truck patch will go in there on the right,” he told himself; “and gradually I’ll get the slope cleared out, corn and buckwheat planted.”

He twisted about, facing the valley. It was deep in grass, watered with streams like twisting shining ribbons, and held a sleek slow-grazing herd of cattle.

The care of the latter, a part of Senator Alderwith’s wide possessions, was to form Calvin’s main occupation — for the present anyhow. Calvin Stammark had larger plans for his future with Hannah. Some day he would own the Alderwith pastures at his back and be grazing his own steers.

His thoughts returned to Hannah, and he rose and proceeded to where a saddled horse was tied beside the road. He ought to go back to Greenstream and fix up before seeing her; but with their home all built, his impatience to be with her was greater than his sense of propriety, and he put his horse at a sharp canter to the left.

Calvin continued down the valley until the road turned